

The commission was appointed at the 2018 AGM to meet independently through this year to make specific recommendations to the 2020 AGM (and general membership) on how to revive Radstats and make it thrive in the future. The 'Mission Statement for the Commission was:

Motion approved: that we establish a commission to examine all aspects of RS's organisation (including aims and finance, the journal and all volunteer roles) and suggest what changes are necessary to ensure that RS is fit for purpose for the next two decades.

ISSUES

Aims:

- Problem: What are our Aims now? To what extent do they attract deter new recruits?
- Possible Solution?

Annual Sub

- Problems: Finance
- Possible solutions?: Donations if not as per NGOs on tele! At least some marketing; Supplement for those who want printed copy

Finance:

- Problem: Overspend needs to be curtailed. First step is to offer online-only access to Journal
- Other possible solutions: donations/ endowments, badges and marketing, more recruits, raise sub; reduce printing costs; cap on annual conference expenses; fee for Joining Pack for those accessing online only

Journal

- Problem: Financing printed colour
- Issues: Printed or not?; Colour or not?
- Possible Solution? Perhaps B&W printed, colour online

Recruitment

- Problems: stable numbers but growing older and possibly whiter;
- Possible Solutions: Active Marketing at Conferences; 6th Form Colleges, University presence; international marketing?

Troika:

- Problems: What is Management Role – is it clearly defined; current Personnel mostly absent
- Possible Solutions: Clear statement of tasks for Troika members; criteria for membership of Troika (a bit unrealistic?)

Volunteer Roles:

- Problem: many have been ‘in office’ or several years
- Proposed Solutions:
 1. Editor: recruit a stable and larger team?
 2. Conference Organiser (rotates annually:) Encourage more local participation
 3. Copy Editor: others to provide almost immediate feedback on submissions.
 4. List Manager: another recruit to help Alison

Website manager: another recruit to help Robin.

A number of individual contributions by Sean Demack, Alison Macfarlane DRAFT Progress Report has been produced by Alistair Cairns and is under discussion by Commission members. Following our November meeting concrete proposals will be circulated, and presented for approval (or not) on the Saturday meeting in London at the end of February.

Comments are welcome.

“The commission consists of Alistair Cairns (Administrator) Roy Carr-Hill (lead journal Editor), Sean Demack, Claire Griffiths and David Lamb (Treasurer). The group has had two meetings in York and has committed to a third in November.

There has been significant progress on repairs to some areas of Radical Statistics that needed rather urgent attention.

Not all credit is due to the commissioners of course but examples include:

A journal paper opt-out/online-only subscription option has been implemented, coinciding with a decision to stop printing expensive colour graphs and to make the issues available fully and immediately on-line. This alone should halt the overspends Radstats has experienced recently. It also helps move in a more environmental and open-access direction.

The dormant Essay competition is going to be reintroduced. It will initially be run by Dave Byrne.

Promotional materials have been chosen and made available or people to share, display etc.

And of course, to the credit of all involved, the new Radstats book has been published at Policy Press.

Due to reasons below, some issues regarding strengthening the journal and ensuring the 2020 Conference succeeds have also been discussed and worked on.

Some of the more intractable issue have not been so easy to strategize.

The Troika consists of one relatively uninvolved (whilst genuinely supportive) member. The last set of Troika was equally undersized, and for some time this body has not performed terribly well. This obviously leaves Radstats rather directionless and prone to unintended or unintentional drift.

[A much stronger Troika is essential to Radstats succeeding. Generally the Troika is served on a rolling three-year basis, but this could be revised; longer-serving 'core members' might be a better model. One idea might be to appoint one or two advisory Troika members to serve for a longer period, and recruit a remaining 'members representative' who could potentially bring fresh ideas into the mix.]

There is not a written constitution – creating one would not be overly difficult and might be wise.

Issue 124

The journal, while capably being steered by Roy, is not getting as many submissions as one might hope. (The quality of submissions is fine.)

The journal has attracted a recruit to help, in the form of Sean Demack. But attracting more Editors is important, and succession planning to help relieve Roy in the short term and allowing him to step down in the medium term needs much more input.

The journal is a mix of non-peer reviewed pieces with a standing offer of peer review upon request. If it were more strongly peer reviewed a publisher might be interested. Professional publishers are not always the most popular people in academia, but one could bring a level of support and help bring much more exposure to the journal. (The books would likely not have been nearly so successful without a professional publisher.)

It has been said that Radstats barely survives and also always thrives, that it is perpetually in a state of crisis and at the same time brilliance. That may be the case.

For Radical Statistics to continue to thrive brilliantly for the next fifty years needs more people to be more involved. Nothing radical here – tell a friend or colleague, ask for (business card size) promo cards and put them out at a conference, display a flyer, suggest a student submit an essay, invite someone to the conference. But these, while sensible and appreciated, do not fill the gaps described here.

Radstats needs existing and new members to participate. We need active participation in the Troika, we need people who enjoy the journal to join the Editorial board. Radstats needs more online content, probably in the form of blog posts, for the website. We need new ideas, and these will probably come organically from the future members; we are currently relying on too many ‘old hands’.

Again, the Commission has agreed to meet again in November, and will review all the previous ideas and discussions and make concrete proposals ahead of the 2020 conference, AGM & discussion on Radstats’ future.”