News

New Appointments in Centre for Bioinformatics and Biometry

22 JUNE | 2015

Due to the outstanding success that the Centre for Bioinformatics and Biometry in NIASRA has achieved in attracting significant industry-based research funding, three more appointments have been made recently. Mr Daniel Tolhurst, Professor Ari Verbyla and Dr Chong You have joined the team led by Professor Brian Cullis. Further details on these appointments are given below.

Daniel Tolhurst

Daniel graduated with a Bachelor of Medical Mathematics (first class honours) at the University of Wollongong in 2014, finding a niche in statistics applied to the agricultural sciences after completing an honours project under the supervision of Professor Brian Cullis. He has been working on a range of projects (including the GRDC funded National Variety Trials, analysis of hoop net crab experiments and lecturing STAT335 at UOW) and the main project he is funded by and involved in is experimental design and analysis for the Australian Prime Hard (APH) Project with Dr. Alison Smith. The key aims of this project are to (1) determine whether APH quality wheat can be produced outside of the current classification zones of Queensland and Northern New South Wales and (2) explore variety by environment (VxE) interaction along with that variation that can be attributed to non-genetic sources. The APH project involves the investigation of several quality traits for a number of wheat varieties of interest, with data obtained from so-called multi-phase experiments. The first phase is a field experiment (24 experiments throughout QLD, NSW, SA and WA, with 12 of these selected for quality testing) and either one or two subsequent laboratory phases. This affords the opportunity to generate valid statistical protocols via implementing experimental designs for each phase, including sufficient replication and randomisation. Both composite and individual replicate samples are used so that all information from the field is included while adhering to the budgetary and time constraints set out for the project.

Ari Verbyla

Ari Verbyla has joined the School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics as a member of NIASRA at 0.4-time on a 12 month contract. At UOW, Ari's position is funded through VSN International and will focus on the asreml-R package in R, particularly on generalized linear mixed models and their extensions. He looks forward to a fruitful 12 months.

Ari has a distinguished history of involvement in teaching and research in Statistics, mainly at the University of Adelaide. He was appointed as a Tutor in the Department of Statistics at the University of Adelaide in 1977 having completed his Honours and Masters degrees at the University of Melbourne. He then moved to the South Australian Institute of Technology as a Lecturer in 1981, and pursued a part-time PhD at the University of Adelaide. In 1986 he took up a lectureship in the Department of Statistics at the University of Melbourne, and submitted his PhD (graduating in 1987). He returned to the Department of Statistics at the University of Adelaide in 1987 as a limited term lecturer, obtaining tenure in 1990 and a senior lectureship in 1991. Ari was seconded to (and later joined) the Faculty of Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (FANRS) at the Waite Campus of the University of Adelaide in 1997, to be Director of BiometricsSA, a joint group of FANRS and the South Australia Research and Development Institute. This group grew

from 4 FTE to 11 FTE, 10 PhD students and research and consulting income over $350K per annum. During this time, Ari was funded 0.5-time by GRDC (through a project led by Brian Cullis) and was appointed to a Professorial Research Fellowship.

In 2006, Ari was seconded 0.5-time to CSIRO, continuing with the GRDC funded project until 2011. He moved to Far North Queensland in 2012 and finished with the University of Adelaide late in 2013. He subsequently took up a 0.5-position with CSIRO, working at the Atherton CSIRO site. He continues with this CSIRO work, now at 0.6-time.

Ari has been an invited speaker at 6 international conferences, 4 national conferences and presented a read/discussion paper for the journal Applied Statistics at a special meeting of The Royal Statistical Society at the International Biometric Society Conference, Cape Town, South Africa in 1998. He has 75 refereed publications.

Chong You

Chong's appointment at the University of Wollongong is funded by the Grains Research Development Corporation and she will work on research projects relevant to their activities, supervised by Professor Brian Cullis. Chong received her PhD in Mathematics and Statistics from the University of Sydney in Jan 2015. Prior to postgraduate study, Chong completed a Bachelor of Science (Advanced Mathematics) with First Class Honours in Statistics at the University of Sydney. During her undergraduate education, Chong was listed in the Dean's List of Academic Excellence and also was awarded the George Allen Scholarship and Australian Federation of Graduate Women (NSW) Prize in Mathematics. During her PhD candidature, Chong was supervised by A/Prof. Samuel Mueller and Dr. John Ormerod. Her research was focused on model selection and estimating model complexity in linear mixed models and Bayesian linear models. She has two publications in international journals and one under review at JASA. Chong has strong computing and data analysis skills in statistics with a sound knowledge of programming in the R. Her previous appointments include a data analyst at an online sale company Ourdeal (2013-2014) and a research assistant at the University of Sydney (2014-2015).

Last reviewed: 22 June, 2015

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