

The Newsletter of the
Transportation Science Section

April, 1996

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Well, it finally happened - my 1983 Ford Escort finally died (no flowers, please). I'll spare you the gorey details. It suffices to say that it didn't seem worth spending \$1500 to repair a car that is only worth \$150.

Why am I telling you this? It might be to remind you how valuable graduate students can be - they do a terrific job of pushing cars up hills - but it's not. The reason is that for the past several months I've been riding the bus (which is pretty unusual considering that I now live in the suburbs).

Because I am now riding the bus, I am

TSS NEWS
 AND NOTES

Dissertation Prize:
Winners

This years Dissertation Prize winners have been announced. First Prize was awarded to Bernard Gendron from the University of Montreal (supervised by T. Crainic and M. Florian). An Honorable Mention was awarded to Xu Jun Eberlein from MIT (supervised by D. Bernstein and N. Wilson).

Congratulations!

Nominations

Nominations for the next Dissertation Prize are now being accepted (for dissertations completed between June 1, 1995 and May 31, 1996).

Dissertation supervisors should submit six copies of the dissertation,

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reminded every day of the large number of interesting, important, and difficult transit-related questions that need to be answered. So, I want to remind you that the section recently launched an effort to increase the "transit presence" in our community. The effort is being led by Mark Hickman (mhickman@path2.its.berkeley.edu). If you've been interested in transit for years but afraid to get involved, or if you've suddenly found an interest in transit, or if you just want to help improve my commute, then I suggest you contact him.

David Bernstein
Princeton University
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six copies of an extended abstract (not bound with the thesis), and a nomination letter by July 15, 1996 to:

Patrick Jaillet
MSIS Department
Univ. of Texas,
Austin
Austin, TX 78712

Meeting Notice

The next business meeting of the TSS will be held on Monday May 6, 1996 in the Lincoln West Room from 6:45pm to 7:45pm.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Time flies when you're having fun! It may be a platitude, straight from the cliché department, but it conveys my feelings quite effectively as I approach the end of my two-year term. The past two years have seen rapid developments across the spectrum of environments that affect our Section. First and foremost has been the reality of INFORMS, the spectacular merger of ORSA and TIMS. To a large extent, much of the time since has been spent trying to understand the implications of this merger on our Section, and more important, the opportunities that it might create. This INFORMS reality is still too new to really be able to assess its impacts in any definitive way. At one level, the direct impacts perceived by the membership have been minimal-- we still hold successful sessions at the national meetings, award our prestigious Dissertation Prize and Lifetime Achievement Award, sponsor an excellent journal, and so on. Yet much has been happening in terms of the role of sections in the INFORMS hierarchy, a stronger affirmation as their core role in INFORMS, and a host of more flexible models for how sections do business with INFORMS-central.

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One of the opportunities in this new environment is the formation of "societies", intended to be semi-autonomous entities federated within INFORMS. Exactly what a society is/will be continues to be rather elusive, and will vary according to whom you might be talking to at any given time. The profile that has emerged is that of an upgraded form of section or technical interest group, or a merger/federation among several such sections. The society is envisioned as sponsoring a spectrum of activities, including specialty conferences, awards, a journal, and essentially running its own affairs financially. No such societies have been officially formed yet within INFORMS, though two or three candidates have already declared their intention to seek such status, including a society on probability applications. Discussions led by the Transportation Section have now been ongoing among the leaders of several other sections and SIGS, as well as former TIMS colleges, regarding a "society" involving the transportation-related entities (TSS, air and rail applications), as well as logistics and location. These discussions were initiated by Warren Powell during his presidency of the TSS, and have continued since, with Warren as coordinator, with greater urgency in light of INFORMS-related developments. A federated model has been sketched, and discussed with the membership of at least two entities (ours and air transport applications). While there seems to be general agreement, most of the entities, especially the smaller ones, have concerns about losing their defining identities in any larger grouping. Initial general agreement appears to exist on the notion of a society within which each section retains its separate identity and prerogatives, with the society providing more collective clout than would not otherwise be possible for any of the entities by themselves. Progress has been made, yet many details remain to be worked out.

Now that the rules to apply for society status have been made public by INFORMS, the time is right to continue the process and see some serious concrete progress on this front. I am sure the incoming section president, Theodor Crainic will make major strides in this process, having participated in the process since its inception.

One area where cooperation among the above-mentioned societies has been taking place is the coordination of session offerings at the national meetings, in order to minimize conflicts for authors and interested attendees. In previous meetings, it was not uncommon to have a session on airline network design sponsored by the TSS scheduled at the same time as a session on a similar topic sponsored by the air transportation applications SIG, or a session on intermodal fleet management sponsored by TSS scheduled in conflict with another intermodal transport session sponsored by the rail applications SIG. One of the obvious benefits of a society structure, or any collaborative model, is to eliminate or at least minimize such conflicts, generating a more coherent set of offerings in transportation/logistics/location-related subjects. Largely through the efforts of Marius Solomon, New Orleans was an impeccable example of such coordination, resulting also in the largest single cluster of sessions at that meeting. I am pleased that Marius has agreed to coordinate sessions again for the Atlanta meeting next Fall, and in the process formalize a model structure for such coordination on an ongoing basis. Initial success with partial cooperation was also evident through the efforts of R. Jayakrishnan for the Anaheim spring '94 meeting, as well as at the upcoming Washington meeting.

Externally, the transportation sector has continued to be fast changing and unpredictable, and to provide us with a an incredible array of technical and professional opportunities. A glance at employment classifieds in the April issue of OR/MS Today shows a preponderance of opportunities for transportation OR specialists. In fact, along with financial modeling and credit risk analysis, transportation is perceived as one of the growth areas for OR specialists. This should translate into larger membership for the Section; yet membership has been remarkably stable at about 300 members for many years. We have yet to develop an effective membership drive, and reach out to involve the many new entrants to the field. This is an area where concerted efforts will be required.

The upcoming Washington meeting is loaded with transportation-related sessions, in addition to our regular business meeting (ck. time and place elsewhere in this Newsletter). The latter will be a very special occasion as we present the Third Robert Herman Lifetime Achievement Award in Transportation Science.

Finally, I wish to thank all of you for the support you have given me and the other officers in the past few years. I truly appreciate the opportunity to have served the Section, and hope to continue actively in organizing and promoting TSS activities and initiatives.

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