

## Preface

The Society for Artificial Intelligence and Statistics (SAIS) is dedicated to facilitating interaction between researchers in Artificial Intelligence and Statistics. The Society's main responsibility is to organize the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Statistics, AISTATS. We acted as programme chairs for the thirteenth event, which took place during May 13-15, 2010, at Chia Laguna in Sardinia, Italy. It was preceded in nearby Pula by the Cognitive Science and Machine Learning Summer School and followed in Chia by a one-day Workshop on Active Learning and Experimental Design.

AISTATS 2010 represented a major initiative in the hitherto biennial series of conferences in that it was the first in the series to be located in Europe, the intention being henceforth to hold annual conferences, alternately in Europe and on the other side of the Atlantic. That the new venture has been successful is confirmed by statistical evidence: there were 304 submissions, representing a 50% increase over 2009 and double that in 2007, and the number of participants, 217, corresponded to a similar degree of expansion. The overall acceptance rate of about 40% was maintained at about the same level as in 2009, resulting in 125 accepted papers, of which 24 were presented orally and 101 as posters. The submissions were handled by a Senior Programme Committee ("area chairs") consisting of the following 20 individuals:

Yasemin Altun, Max Planck Institute, Tübingen  
Francis Bach, Ecole Normale Supérieure  
Hal Daumé III, University of Utah  
Arnaud Doucet, University of British Columbia  
Mark Girolami, University of Glasgow  
Jim Griffin, University of Kent  
Carlos Guestrin, Carnegie Mellon University  
Dirk Husmeier, Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland  
Bani Mallick, Texas A&M University  
Iain Murray, University of Toronto  
Brendan Murphy, University College Dublin  
Kevin Murphy, University of British Columbia  
Omiros Papaspiliopoulos, Universitat Pompeu Fabra  
Thomas Richardson, University of Washington  
Matthias Seeger, Saarland University  
Nathan Srebro, Toyota Technological Institute at Chicago  
Erik Sudderth, Brown University  
John Winn, Microsoft Research Cambridge  
Ming Yuan, Georgia Institute of Technology  
Hui Zou, University of Minnesota

Each area chair looked after about 15 submissions and the papers were reviewed by a Programme Committee of 306 reviewers. Each paper was reviewed by at least three reviewers and no reviewer handled more than five papers. The initial review process was followed by a discussion phase among the reviewers, orchestrated by the area chairs. The authors were given the chance to respond to the reviews and their responses were made available to the reviewers for comment before decisions were made. The review process used the CMT online conference management system, which proved to work well in general. We are very grateful for the substantial and dedicated work of the area chairs and reviewers, who provided high-quality feedback in the context of demanding deadlines.

The schedule of the conference included two innovations that seemed to be well received. The first of these was the decision to hold the poster sessions in the second half of each morning, followed by a substantial afternoon break and the bulk of the oral presentations in the late afternoon/early evening. The second innovation was the introduction of "breaking news abstracts". These items were submitted as one-page abstracts, they were very lightly reviewed and they were presented as posters. However, they did not qualify for publication as papers in the Proceedings.

In addition to all the contributed material, each day began with an invited talk. Richard Gill (University of Leiden) spoke about *Forensic Statistics: Where Are We and Where Are We Going?*, Simon Tavaré's (Universities of Cambridge and Southern California) talk was entitled *Approximate Bayesian Computation: What, Why and How?*, and John Lafferty (Carnegie Mellon University) spoke about *Nonparametric Learning of Functions and Graphs in High Dimensions*. All three talks were enthralling and generated uniformly positive acclaim from participants.

We are very grateful to Charles Sutton, for generating financial sponsorship from PASCAL2, Intel, Microsoft and Google. Intel and Microsoft sponsored the morning coffee breaks, funding from Google and PASCAL2 covered invited speaker costs and further funding from PASCAL2 covered the venue costs for the conference and poster rooms. The conference was also cosponsored by the Institute of Mathematical Statistics.

We would like to thank Mauricio Alvarez for exemplary work in creating the conference booklet and schedule, as well as for receiving the final submissions and posting them in the *Journal of Machine Learning Research* online Conference and Workshop Proceedings, *Journal of Machine Learning Research* for hosting the Proceedings, Max Welling for much advice as the conference took shape, Alessandro Lusci of Chia Laguna, all the conference participants and those who submitted the record number of papers.

Most of all, we would like to thank Neil Lawrence who, as indefatigable General Chair, obtained support from PASCAL2, created the conference website, reconnoitred the venue and performed a multitude of tasks that were necessary to ensure an exceptionally successful event. To cap it all, he deserves all the plaudits for his initiative in being the one to propose the concept of AISTATS in Europe.

*Yee Whye Teh and Mike Titterton*  
*University College London and University of Glasgow*

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