Practical Stats Newsletter for Aug 2010

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This month isn't a scheduled newsletter month, but I wanted to remind you that the price increase date for registration for our AES class is fast approaching. Our newsletters will always have content rather than a straight reminder/advertisement, so we hope you enjoy the speculations on software packages that you'll find in section 2. If you have benefitted from our newsletters or courses, please tell your contacts about our upcoming courses. It makes a difference. Word of mouth is still a major way that people find out about them. There are still openings in each.

1. Upcoming Courses

Applied Environmental Statistics
    Sept. 13-17, 2010 $1395 registration before August 30, 2010
Hampton Inn Tropicana $1495 on or after August 30th.
4975 S. Dean Martin Dr.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89118-1656

Untangling Multivariate Relationships
    Nov 15-16, 2010 $895 registration before Nov 1, 2010
Doubletree Atlanta-Buckhead $995 on or after Nov 1.
Atlanta, GA 30326

Nondetects And Data Analysis
    Nov 17-18, 2010 $895 registration before Nov 1, 2010
Doubletree Atlanta-Buckhead $995 on or after Nov 1.
Atlanta, GA 30326

You can always find our complete course listing at
http://www.practicalstats.com/new_classes/classes.html

2. Popularity of Statistical Software
A recent post online about the popularity of data analysis software
http://sites.google.com/site/r4statistics/popularity

might be of interest to many of you. It is an attempt to use online information to determine which stat software packages are increasing, staying constant, and decreasing in popularity. My summary of the 'findings', categorized into the classes of software we used in our Nov. 2007 and Aug-Sept 2008 newsletter reviews, are as follows. As always they are just my opinions, projections and thoughts. YMMV

1. R use is expanding rapidly. It is free, comprehensive, and actively being investigated. Some existing stat software is likely to drop by the wayside as a result.
2. Of the 'big three' packages, SAS usage is continuing steady. SPSS and especially S-Plus seem to be decreasing. TIBCO, the new owner of S-Plus, is developing Spotfire, based on R but will also use S commands and so absorb S-plus and its users fairly painlessly.
3. Of the 'intermediate' packages, Stata remains strong in medical applications, Minitab in business/quality control, and Statistica use appears steady. Others such as Systat, not so much. JMP is owned by SAS, so has lots of money behind it and probably will stay around due to that alone.
4. No 'small' packages ($600 and under, including shareware) are noticed in this type of survey. This is to be expected. But the advent of RExcel, the free add-on that lets R routines be called from within Excel, may challenge many of them.
5. New software including "Revolution-R", placing an easy front end with lots of graphics on top of R, is coming on. The president of Revolution Analytics is the former president of SPSS, who left to start the new company. Sounds like he might know something. This is being built as a SAS competitor, providing services to build custom data processing applications as much as selling the software itself.
6. Software for 'data mining' is different in objective to what we've reviewed in the past. So the page's listing of software for that objective is somewhat disjoint from and not applicable to what we've focused on up to now.

R is underneath Google and other online processing of data. That is its primary area of domination – cloud computing. It is the engine underneath other tools. For one example, the Seasonal Kendall and other trend analysis routines were made available online by CSIRO Australia. It runs the tests and generates reports, all using R underneath.
Looks like it is now only available internally, no longer to everyone over the net, but you might check out a presentation of their work at:
http://user2010.org//slides/Rustomji+Henderson+Mills+Qifeng.pdf

3. News from Practical Stats
The second edition of the Nondetects And Data Analysis textbook is progressing. In addition to the major changes of adding R commands to the examples and a multivariate analysis chapter, there is a new introduction called "Invasive Data". The intro to the first edition, discussing the Challenger accident, was one of the most discussed parts of the book. I enjoy writing these intros as commentaries, along with all the technical detail in the book itself. Changes occur throughout the book, including a slew of new references, clarification of IUPAC and USEPA definitions in the chapter on reporting limits, detail

on probability plots for censored data, etc. The book will be available sometime in 2011, if I keep writing.

'Til next time,

Practical Stats (Dennis Helsel)
-- Make sense of your data