

## Miscellanea

Under the heading Miscellanea, essays will be published dealing with topics considered to be of general interest to the readers. All contributions will be refereed for their compatibility with this criterion.

### The Century-Old History of a Brand-New Journal

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This is the first issue of the new *Journal of Official Statistics* (abbreviated *JOS*). The purpose of the new *Journal* is to provide an international forum for topics in the art and work of official statistics. It takes the place of the *Statistisk tidskrift/Statistical Review*, which ceased to appear in 1984. In this note, the history of the latter is briefly sketched.

*Statistisk tidskrift* was first to appear in 1860, thus 125 years ago. Originally, the *Statistisk tidskrift* partly served as a publication for statistical data. It was particularly meant to facilitate a rapid presentation of statistical results, and it further contained a Statistical Yearbook of Sweden (from 1871).

But all from the start, the *Statistisk tidskrift* has also contained articles. Often these have been related to the activities of the *statistiska centralbyrån*, nowadays known in English as *Statistics Sweden* which is the central statistical office of Sweden. The articles were in those days mostly written by staff members of the office, but sometimes by others. They were exclusively in Swedish.

Statistics Sweden was established in 1858, thus just a couple of years before the *Statistisk*

*tidskrift* first appeared. Although the official statistics of Sweden is much older than that, the first few decades of the office were naturally an era of expansion. This is reflected in the early articles of the *Statistisk tidskrift*. In those years they often had the character of official documents, which put forward plans for various developments of the activities.

In the First Series of the *Statistisk tidskrift*, which lasted until 1913, there were also many articles of another kind. Work was presented which gave analyzing and interpreting treatments of statistical data materials. Even today, these analyzing articles may often appear surprisingly "modern" in their approach. The idea of presenting not only extensive statistical tables, but also something of the meaning of the data, is of course still very relevant. Among those articles there were some which dealt historically with statistics from older times. More occasionally the First Series could contain expository writings on statistical activities in other countries or on general methodology.

Shortly after 1910, some notable changes were made in the publication programme for the Swedish official statistics. From 1914 the Statistical Yearbook became a separate publication, *Statistisk årsbok*, nowadays known in

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English as *Statistical Abstract of Sweden*. The rapid presentation of short-term statistics was diverted into other publication series. It was further considered that other journals, which had started meanwhile, were suitable for articles on statistical topics. In that connection, the *Statistisk tidskrift* was discontinued after 1913, for nearly forty years to come.

In the late thirties and in the forties, suggestions were put forward to reintroduce the *Statistisk tidskrift*. There appeared to be a need for it as an adequate means of rapid statistics presentation. It would be useful for proper documentation of various investigations. The Second Series (or the New Series) of the *Statistisk tidskrift* then started at last in 1952.

An English name, *Statistical Review*, was added to the original one. English summaries of the articles were introduced, and English explanations were supplied in the tables of the *Statistisk tidskrift*, like in those of the *Abstract*.

The articles were now mostly of an expository kind. They often dealt with methods and organization of the work in the Swedish official statistics. Sometimes more general methodological questions were treated. There were further often articles presenting statistical data in a more or less analyzing way. – The authors were naturally very often staff members of Statistics Sweden, but there were also many others, such as university teachers. Shortly after its restart the *Statistisk tidskrift* began to publish occasional articles in English.

There were sections for book reviews and for short communications. The latter section contained reports from international meetings and from various investigations, and similar stuff. For a number of years, a yearly Chronicle of Statistics Sweden was also compiled for the *Statistisk tidskrift*. These sections were exclusively in Swedish.

In 1963 the publication programme of the Swedish official statistics was thoroughly

restructured. New publication series were created, namely *Allmän månadsstatistik*, and *Statistiska meddelanden*. They were designed to provide for a statistical data presentation which is generally as rapid as possible. This meant that the *Statistisk tidskrift* no longer had to serve as a publication for statistical data. But by then, the kinds of articles published in the *Statistisk tidskrift* had proved important enough to deserve a *Journal* of their own. So *Statistisk tidskrift/Statistical Review* went into its Third Series, relieved the duty of regular data presentation, and with extended space for articles.

The sixties brought great changes into statistical work. Electronic Data Processing was introduced. The new technology meant new practical possibilities to carry out tasks such as sample surveys and censuses. For instance, computer-based data files can be used as frames for surveys, with superior practicability. At least in Sweden, these technological advances were amplified by organizational changes. Some of the statistical work which until then had been done by other authorities was transferred to Statistics Sweden. Large computer-based registers were established, notably one over the whole Swedish population.

For the *Statistisk tidskrift* it became a natural task to convey information about these changes. Through many expository articles it can be seen how the new activities grew to make up a statistical office in its modern form. But there were also many articles on other topics such as general methodology, users' views on statistics, or statistical work in other countries.

One type of articles, however, lost its position. The analyzing presentation of statistical data, once common, became rare and finally almost disappeared. It is probably only fair to say that analysis was not of great concern at Statistics Sweden at that time. "Production" became the emphasized aspect

of statistical work. Lately there has been some revival of ambitions in statistical analysis. For such work, publications of a new, more popular kind are created.

To look now at the *Statistisk tidskrift* of recent years, it can be seen that methodology became the central theme. Basically, methodology can be dealt with from two points of view. Often articles describe methods, and their implementation, which are actually used in particular statistical work. On the other hand, some articles give expositions or discussions of methods which are of more potential interest for official statistics. In both cases, the same aim can be hoped to be served: to advance methodological knowledge. Even when particular applications are treated, the methods and experiences described may be expected to be of a wider potential interest for possible application elsewhere.

Articles appearing during this last period are still often related to the activities of Statistics Sweden, but not at all so predominantly as in earlier years. The method-

ological topics tend to assume a more universal character. The authors are often from outside Statistics Sweden, and articles in English are not uncommon. In addition to the specifically methodological articles, there are further sometimes more broad expositions, e.g. on statistical work in other countries.

So this is where we land. It may perhaps be said that official statistics in its modern form has now reached a more mature stage. At the very least, there is now some understanding about the nature of basic problems in the field. So it is appropriate to look for suitable solutions.

The basic statistical questions apparently have very much in common between various countries. The methodological cores of the problems are more or less universal. Accordingly such topics ought to be dealt with on an international level. Thus it seemed very natural to turn the *Statistisk tidskrift* into an international *Journal*, and from 1985 it is continued as the new *Journal of Official Statistics*.

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