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**Symposium 2005 :  
Methodological Challenges for  
Future Information needs**



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## CLOSING REMARKS

Jack Gambino<sup>1</sup>

It's both an honour and a pleasure for me to give the closing remarks for this, our twenty-second, methodology symposium. Once again, the organizers, participants and presenters have managed to exceed our expectations. I can't possibly do justice to the many excellent presentations that we've had the pleasure to attend these past three days, so let me focus on the two plenary ones: the keynote address and the Waksberg address.

As you all know, our keynote speaker, Fritz Scheuren, happens to be the very busy president of the American Statistical Association, so, given all the other items on his plate, we would have forgiven him if his presentation had turned out to be shallow or pedestrian. But those of us who have had the good fortune to cross his path over the years knew he would allow no such thing. Fritz gave us a new perspective on an area of survey sampling that we're only just starting to address in a comprehensive way. In fact, what Fritz referred to as paradata is something that we've started to look at seriously at Statistics Canada. For example, it is central to so-called "active collection management", which we heard about in a presentation this morning. The title of that presentation, "Active Management", could have been changed to "Using paradata on the fly".

Turning to the Waksberg address, let me first say a few words about what has now become the Waksberg series. In the few years of its existence, the papers that have been written by the recipients of the Waksberg award have provided us outstanding overviews of a wide range of topics that are important to survey methodologists. This year's presentation by Jon Rao extends the winning streak. I had the good fortune to get a near-final draft of Jon's Waksberg award paper about a week ago and I've managed to complete a first reading. Every so often, Jon writes an expository paper that gives his readers an overview of an important topic. I can assure you that his Waksberg paper is destined to join some of his other classic overviews, such as those on small area estimation and conditional inference. The paper deals in greater depth with the topics he discussed in his presentation on Wednesday. I expect the paper will become required reading for survey statisticians, especially young statisticians who want to know what the current "hot" or important topics are. Those of us who are not so young should heed Jon's advice on areas where practitioners can learn from existing theory and, conversely, where theoreticians can use their skills to tackle challenging practical problems. I encourage you all to read the paper carefully when it is published in *Survey Methodology*.

Of course, the keynote and Waksberg presentations are just two of many excellent presentations that we were treated to in the past three days. As I mentioned before, I can't possibly talk about many of these, but I'd like to mention one session in particular because it got me thinking about some important issues. The session is Wednesday afternoon's panel on ethical issues. In that session, reference was made to the hurdles that researchers have to go through to get access to data collected by national statistical agencies. Based on discussions I heard afterwards, it appears that this session has generated a healthy debate. The session was complemented by one on Thursday afternoon where, among other things, we heard from a manager of one of Statistics Canada's Research Data Centres. In addition, there was a closely-related session just minutes ago in this room, so this was a very strong sub-theme running through the conference. But the sessions I've just mentioned are just three of many that got us thinking. On behalf of all of you, I would like to thank all the presenters, especially those who travelled a long way to get here and share their ideas.

Next, I would like to thank the organizers of this year's symposium. The organizing committee consists of Pierre Lavallée, Owen Phillips, Claude Poirier, Michelle Simard, Paola Versolato and the chairman, Harold Mantel. But, they're just the tip of the iceberg: I know from personal experience that putting together this seemingly seamless event requires the work of literally dozens of people, and this conference is no exception. The team managed to put

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together a conference that featured two well-attended workshops and 18 sessions attracting 450 registrants from 24 countries. Please join me in thanking the team members for all their hard work.

My final duty today is to announce next year's symposium, but before doing so, please allow me to say a few words about M.P. Singh. As you all have heard by now, M.P. passed away just two months ago. M.P. played a key role in many of our symposia and was a driving force in getting them started in the 1980s. M.P. will be missed by all of us—I certainly will miss him as a friend and a mentor. If M.P. were here, I know exactly what he would say. He would tell the presenters to look at their papers and see if they can be submitted to *Survey Methodology*. So, on his behalf, I'm asking you to do just that. Harold Mantel, this year's symposium chairman, also happens to be M.P.'s deputy editor, so you can send your manuscripts to Harold for refereeing.

Next year's symposium will be entitled *Methodological Issues in Measuring Population Health*. It will take place on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and will be preceded by workshops on the 1<sup>st</sup>. I hope that many of you will be able to attend this more specialized conference.

So this ends the 22<sup>nd</sup> methodology symposium. Have a safe trip home, and for the out-of-towners, *bon voyage*.