

Don't Let What Happens at JSM Stay at JSM!

How to get the most out your first Joint Statistical Meetings



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The largest congregation of statisticians in the world happens every August during the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM). More than 6,000 people attend these meetings, which are sponsored by 11 statistical societies, including the American Statistical Association. The meetings offer a variety of activities such as attending research presentations, interviewing for jobs, taking professional development courses and workshops, and browsing the exhibit hall. With so many opportunities, new attendees can be overwhelmed easily by their first JSM experience.

Based on my familiarity with attending meetings over the last 16 years and the experiences of student groups I have led, I'm going to tell you how to get the most out of JSM. If you would like to share your own recommendations, I encourage you to submit a comment at <http://stattrak.amstat.org>.

Before JSM

Most new attendees who choose to present their research do so in a contributed session via an oral or poster presentation. The deadline to submit an abstract for acceptance into the program

was in early February. For those who did this, additional proof of progress (e.g., drafts of a paper) for the presentation must be submitted by mid-May.

A preliminary program listing the presentation schedule is now available at www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016/onlineprogram. Because there may be more than 40 concurrent presentations at any time, it is best to arrive at JSM with an idea of which to attend. This can be done by examining the session titles and performing keyword searches in the online program prior to JSM.

Oral presentations are separated into invited, topic-contributed, and contributed sessions, with each session lasting 1 hour and 50 minutes. Invited and topic-contributed sessions include groups of related presentations that were submitted together and selected by JSM Program Committee members. These presentations each last for 25 or more minutes for invited and 20 minutes for topic-contributed. Contributed paper sessions include groups of 15-minute oral presentations. Unlike invited and topic-contributed sessions, contributed presentations are submitted individually and then grouped by JSM Program Committee members.

Poster presentations are also separated into invited, topic-contributed, and contributed sessions, with the vast majority in contributed sessions. These types of presentations involve speakers being available for questions next to their displayed poster during the entire session. Most posters are of the traditional paper format, but an increasing number now are in an electronic format. This latter format involves a large, high-definition TV that shows all at once or cycles through a small number of slides that would normally be printed on paper. Relatively new to JSM is a hybrid of an oral and poster presentation. The oral poster presentation component begins with a "speed session," in which five-minute presentations are given by each speaker. Later the same day, electronic posters are made available for these same presentations.

Online registration for JSM begins around May 1. For members of a sponsoring statistical society, the cost is \$430 during the early registration period. The cost increases to \$525 if you register at JSM. Registration for student members is only \$105, and this rate is available at any time. Also starting around May 1, you can reserve a hotel room through

the JSM website. A number of hotels near the convention center are designated as official conference hotels, and they discount their normal rates. However, even with a discount, you can expect to pay \$200 or more per night for a room.

Attending JSM can be expensive. Students have several options to reduce the cost burden. First, ask your adviser or department for funding. Many departments offer financial support for students who present their research at JSM. Students also may qualify for funding from the student activities office on their campus. For example, when I was a student, my department's statistics club received funding this way, which paid for most of my first JSM expenses.

In addition to school-based resources, many ASA sections sponsor student paper competitions that provide travel support to award winners. For example, the Biometrics Section of the ASA sponsors the David P. Byar Young Investigators Award, with \$2,000 awarded to the winner and separate \$1,000 awards given to authors of other outstanding papers. Most competitions require a completed paper to be submitted many months prior to JSM.

At JSM

JSM begins on a Sunday afternoon in late July. Business casual clothing is the most prevalent attire, but some attendees wear suits and others wear T-shirts and shorts. When you arrive at JSM, go to the registration counter at the convention center to obtain your name badge and conference program book. The program book will contain a map of the

convention center that can be useful for finding session rooms.

There is a significant online presence during JSM. A main resource is the JSM app that contains all the information found in the program book and more. Also, the ASA posts the most up-to-date news about JSM through its Twitter (@AmstatNews) and Facebook accounts. Attendees at JSM can use #JSM2016 to tag their JSM-related posts.

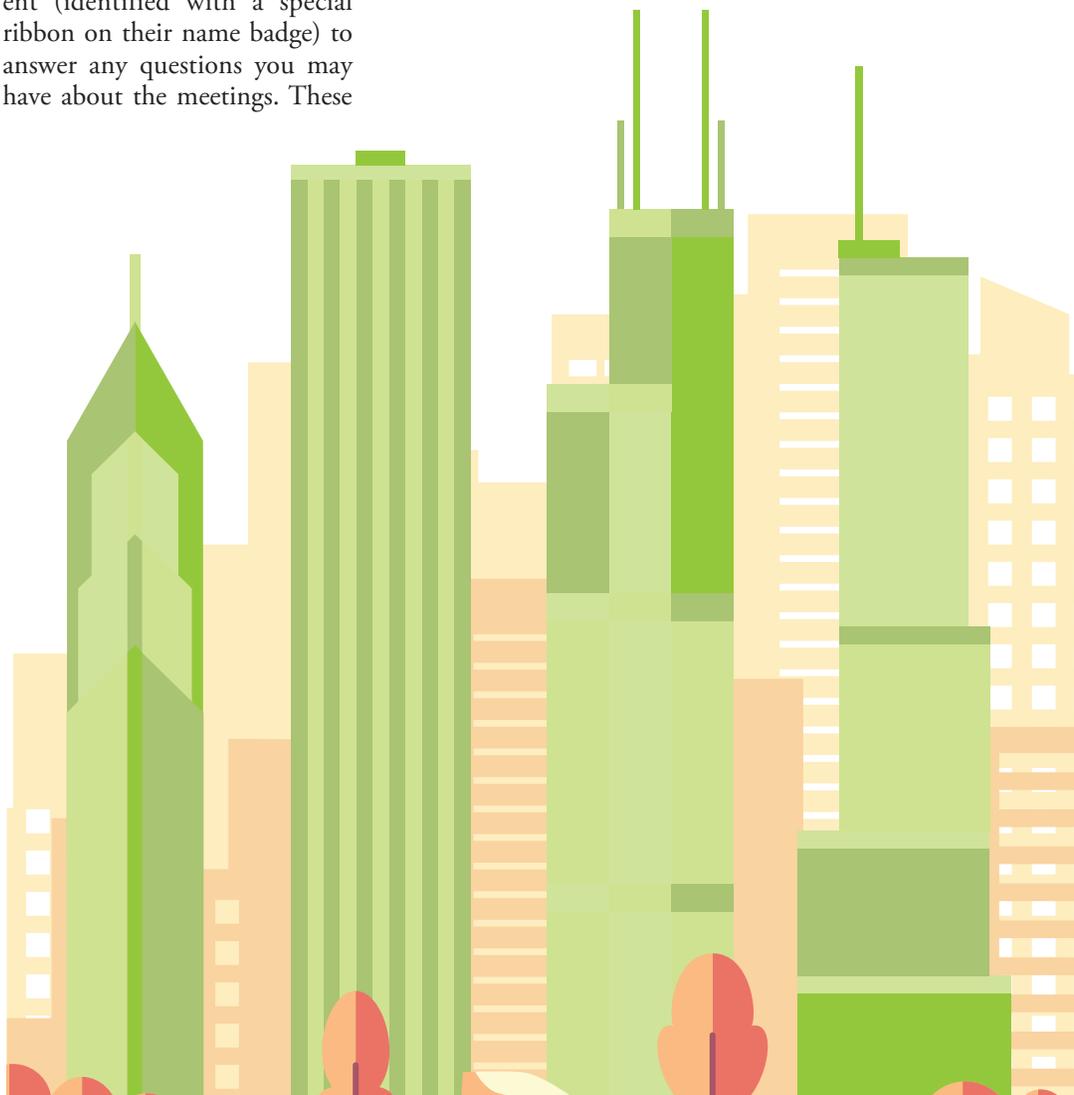
To welcome and orient new attendees, the JSM First-Time Attendee Orientation and Reception is scheduled for early Sunday afternoon. At this reception, docents will be present (identified with a special ribbon on their name badge) to answer any questions you may have about the meetings. These

docents will be available throughout the conference as well.

Later on Sunday evening, the Opening Mixer will be held in the exhibit hall. This event is open to all attendees, and drinks and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

In between the orientation and the mixer, the ASA Awards Celebration and Editor Appreciation session is held. Many first-time attendees are honored during it due to being awarded a scholarship or winning a student-paper competition.

The main sessions start Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Many of the research presentations are difficult to understand completely. My goal



IMPORTANT LINKS

JSM 2016: www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016

First-Time Attendees:
www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016/firsttimeattendees.cfm

Online Program:
www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016/onlineprogram

Job Seekers:
www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016/careerservice.cfm

Professional Development:
www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016/professionaldevelopment.cfm

Student Paper Competitions:
www.amstat.org/sections/studentpaperawards.cfm

for a session is to have 1–2 presentations in which I learn something relevant to my teaching or research interests. This may seem rather low, but these items add up after attending many sessions.

For attendees who teach introductory courses, the sessions sponsored by the ASA Section on Statistical Education are often the easiest to understand. Many of these sessions share innovative ideas about how to teach particular topics.

Introductory overview lectures are another type of session that has easier-to-understand topics. Recent lectures have included introductions to Big Data, bioinformatics, and complex survey sampling. There are also

many Professional Development courses and workshops available for an additional fee. However, you can attend a course for free by volunteering prior to JSM to be a monitor. Monitors perform duties such as distributing and picking up materials during the course. As an added benefit, monitors can attend one additional course for free without any duties. Those who are interested should contact Rick Peterson at rick@amstat.org.

Featured talks at JSM are usually scheduled for late afternoon on Monday through Wednesday. On Tuesday evening, the ASA presidential address is given, along with a number of awards and an introduction to the new ASA fellows. The fellows introduction is especially interesting because approximately 50 ASA members (<0.33% of all members) are recognized for their contributions to the statistics profession.

In addition to presentations, the JSM exhibit hall features more than 70 companies and organizations exhibiting their products and services. Many exhibitors give away free items (e.g., candy, pens, etc.). All the major statistics textbook publishers and software companies are there. Textbook publishers usually offer a discount on their books during JSM and often for a short time after. The exhibit hall also includes electronic charging stations and tables that can be used for meetings. It's also the location for the poster presentations.

The JSM Career Service provides a way for job seekers and employers to meet. Pre-registration is required, and the fee is discounted if you register before mid-July. The service works by providing an online

message center for job seekers and employers to indicate their interest in each other. Once a common interest is established, an interview can be arranged for during the meetings.

Other activities at JSM include the following:

Shopping at the ASA Store to purchase a statistics-themed T-shirt or mug

Attending an organized roundtable discussion during breakfast or lunch about a topic of interest (pre-registration is required)

Taking a little time off from JSM for sightseeing or attending a sporting event

After JSM

JSM ends in the early afternoon on Thursday. Don't let what happens at JSM stay at JSM! The first thing I do after the meetings is prepare a short review of my activities. Using notes I took during sessions, I summarize items from presentations I want to examine further. I also summarize meetings I had with individuals about research or other important topics. Much of this review process starts at the airport while waiting for my return flight.

If you give a presentation at JSM, you may submit a corresponding paper to be published in the conference proceedings. Papers are not peer-reviewed in the same manner as for journals, but authors are encouraged to have others examine their paper before submission. The proceedings are published online around November. Authors retain the right to publish their research later in a peer-reviewed journal. ■