

SOGESCI-BVWB
Annual General Meeting on February 11, 2005

In 2004 our society was traditionally active with three tools:

- the ORBEL18 conference
- the Sogesci-BVWB Prize
- the Sogesci-BVWB scientific publications.

The ORBEL18 conference in Brussels January 22-23, 2004, organized in the Royal Military Academy by the chairmen Marc Despontin and Frank Plastria (VUB), was a scientific success. The number of participants was 83 and the number of contributing papers was 41. Plenary sessions about «Kernels from Di-Graphs: Application to Selecting, Ranking and Clustering Problems» by R. Bisdorff, and «Tariffication problems in networks» by S. Hoesel, were very much appreciated by the audience.

During this conference the Sogesci-BVWB prize 2004, sponsored by OM Partners, was awarded to François Warichet (UCL) with his Master's thesis (under the supervision of Laurence Wolsey): "The solution of a problem of portfolio formulated in mixed-integer quadratic programming".

The publication of the journal 4OR, in co-operation with the French and the Italian OR societies, is strengthening its growing reputation of a high quality journal. During its second year of existence, it was - on about 330 pages - covering high quality papers, among which there were three invited surveys, one educational paper, thirteen regular scientific contributions, one industrial topic, and seven PhD summaries. This last category is characterizing the "national" nature of our journal. The high quality of the other contributions will assure its international value and recognition in the future. We are thankful to the dynamic team, which was responsible for this initiative. We thank Marc Pirlot and Frank Plastria for most of the work done in kicking-off this project and in the follow-up during the last year. Good luck to the team of editors. There is no shortage of papers for the next year, but it is however everybody's task to contribute to the success of this initiative by encouraging our members to submit their work for publication in our journal.

The average time between submission-acceptance and publication is very short, compared to many other journals: mostly less than one year. It is however too early to produce any meaningful statistical material about lead-time matters.

The distribution of 4OR is done among 500 members in Belgium, France and Italy, and among a number of libraries.

Let me briefly mention some other activities of the year 2004.

- The web-site of the society, physically located on a server of the Royal Military Academy, under the address www.orbel.be, was maintained by personnel of the Royal Military Academy (RMA) without extra costs. However the response time with respect to the implementation of changes was considered not satisfactory. A webmaster (F.Glineur) was appointed. A regular backup is kept at the RMA, but the address www.orbel.be is pointing to an FUSL-site, while a regular update is made at the RMA. This procedure will be under evaluation during 2005.
- A very positive fact is related to our constant presence on the EURO scene. Traditionally our Belgian colleagues are actively involved in a wide range of European OR activities. We are proud to have such important delegates of Sogesci-BVWB in the EURO Board and Council. On behalf of our society I would like to congratulate especially Philippe Vincke, past president of EURO, and Jacques Teghem, main editor of EJOR, for the dynamic style with which they represented us in EURO and IFORS.
- The initiative of the president to edit and to distribute an ORBEL Newsletter is much appreciated by the currently about 130 members of our society. Input can be sent to orbel@fusl.ac.be.
- A workshop on "Data-mining" is on the way to be organized by Gerrit Janssens (LUC) in Brussels.
- A meeting with S. Fagot from OM Partners took place, during which the communication procedure of the Sogesci-BVWB prize was discussed. This should lead in 2005 to a wider visibility of this initiative.
- Our society sponsored a scientific activity organized by R. Bisdorff

Concerning young people, we should try to attract more young scientists and practitioners from industry. Therefore according to our current policy, student participants in ORBEL Conferences become automatically member for one year. The number of members remained more or less stable over the last few years. The very large majority comes however from an academic environment. Among us there are very few pure practitioners. The challenge met by our society is to attract indeed young people and real practitioners. This will again be one of the concerns of our president in 2005.

Concerning our Financial situation I would like to mention our current stability and security, partly thanks to the subsidies which are offered by the French Community of Belgium, supporting the activities of our society and supporting the publication of our journal.

Unfortunately, our society had also some less pleasant experiences. First of all, after a couple of years of hesitation Sogesci-BVWB decided to withdraw its representation of Belgium in IAPR. The far too limited interest of our members about the activities around Pattern Recognition did not justify any more this representation duty, and the recurrent yearly membership fee related to it. Secondly we regret that our friend and colleague Fernand Broeckx passed away. He was during many years one of our most active members, twice president and a highly appreciated fund-raiser for our society. Farewell Fernand. Thank you for everything. Thirdly, very recently we got the extremely sad news of the completely unexpected fatal accident of our local secretary at the RMA, Lieven Verhellen. He was since 16 years the local logistical support when we organized an activity at the RMA, and he was a reliable point of contact of the society with its legal home base in Brussels. We will miss you Lieven.

Dear colleagues, I wish you personally and the Sogesci-BVWB a very productive year, strengthening the position of OR in an academic and industrial environment, in the public and in the private sector.

Hugo Pastijn, Delegate Administrator