

SOGESCI-BVWB

Annual General Assembly on February 5, 2009

Activity Report of the year 2008

In 2008 our society was traditionally active with the following tools:

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

In addition our society celebrated in 2008 its 50th anniversary on January 16.

The 50th anniversary celebration took place at the Royal Military Academy (RMA) in Brussels with academic sessions and a reception attended by many current members representing most Belgian and Luxembourg universities and institutions of higher education, by a member of the early days (P. Gennart), by members who promoted our society in the scientific communities of Europe and of the world during the last 30 years of the last century (J.-P. Brans and M. Roubens), by several past presidents of our society, by leading personalities of the host institute and by the Head of the Military House of the King. During the first academic session P.Gennart and I elaborated on the early history of our society, followed by M. Labbé, President of EURO, who emphasized the role of our society (and of J.-P. Brans) in the creation of EURO and in the further development and management of EURO. Two keynote speakers contributed to the success of this celebration. The first was L. Van Wassenhove (INSEAD) with "Supply Chain Management in the context of humanitarian disasters". The second was E.M.Romero (MoD Spain) with "Non-Lethal weapons effectiveness assessment development and verification". Both subjects were pointing to the early roots of operations research (OR). After the keynote addresses the president of our society, G. Janssens gave a status report of his endeavors related to our society's archives and his "Borsalino" project in which a digital version of our past scientific publications is made available. The celebration was closed with a status report (including way-ahead-thoughts) by the full editorial board of 4OR (D. Bouyssou, S. Martello, F. Plastria) about our current scientific publications.

The ORBEL22 conference took also place at the RMA in Brussels on January 17 and 18. More than 100 participants attended some 50 presentations in sessions covering a wide variety of topics, such as: OR in sheet metalworking, mathematical programming, production systems, graph theory, transport and distributions, stochastic problems, medical applications, maritime applications, aviation applications, queueing theory, travelling salesman problems, defence and the public sector applications, auctions and promotion campaigns, profit optimization in service industry, vehicle routing, MCDM and preference aggregation. Two plenary sessions were organized. The first staged S. Martello (Università di Bologna) with an excellent and most appreciated presentation of "Assignment Problems: the first 50 years", beautifully matching with our 50th anniversary celebration the day before, and announcing the publication of an important new book on the subject. The second plenary session was devoted to the credibility question about the well-known Shanghai ranking of institutions of higher learning world-wide. Interesting issues related to this topic were covered by D. Bouyssou (CNRS-LAMSADE, Université Paris Dauphine) in "Should we believe the Shanghai ranking?".

During this conference the Sogesci-BVWB prize 2008, sponsored by OM Partners, was awarded to Nicolas Gillis (UCL) for his thesis supervised by François Glineur: "*Approximation et sous-approximation de matrices par factorisation positive : algorithmes, complexité et applications*" (*Matrix approximation and underapproximation by nonnegative factorization: algorithms, complexity and applications*). This award, organized by the Belgian OR-society, (SOGESCI-B.V.W.B.), is bestowed on the author(s) of a scientifically oriented student's thesis with the exception of PhD theses.

The publication of the journal 4OR, in cooperation with the French and the Italian OR societies, is strengthening its growing reputation of a high quality journal publishing invited surveys, educational papers, regular scientific contributions (among which book reviews), industrial topics, and PhD

summaries. This last category is characterizing the "national" nature of our journal. We are grateful to the dynamic team, which was responsible for most of the work done: Denis Bouyssou, Silvano Martello and Frank Plastra.

During 2008 the sixth volume of 4OR has been published. It has appeared in its new size of 4 issues of around 100 pages each, and as always containing a survey paper by a renowned team of specialists. In addition it contained 8 research papers, 3 industry papers and 12 PhD thesis summaries.

The distribution of 4OR is done among some 650 members in Belgium, France and Italy.

The worldwide visibility of the journal, already strongly increased by its inclusion in online journal-packages to libraries, was further enhanced in 2008, as shown by the steadily increasing online access statistics. Starting with 2008 4OR is part of ISI's Science Citation Expanded List, and will obtain its first impact factor rating starting with 2009, to appear in 2010.

The team of editors announces that there is no shortage of papers for the next year, but it remains every member's task to contribute to the success of this initiative by submitting their work for publication in our journal, and encouraging others to do so as well. The average time between submission acceptance and publication is very short, compared to many other journals: mostly much less than one year. The accepted papers waiting for publication are, however, available online.

In 2009 the editorial board will know its first important restructuring, with the replacement of Denis Bouyssou by Philippe Baptiste as principal editor, and a modified and enlarged team of area editors.

Let me briefly mention some other activities of the year 2008.

- The following administrative meetings were well managed by the president and the board.

General Assembly, February 15, RMA. Administration Board, February 15, RMA, 12 participants.

Executive Committee, May 23, ULB, 7 participants. Administration Board, September 26, RMA, 10 participants. Executive Committee, November 28, RMA, 7 participants.

- The web-site of the society, physically located at ULB (EURO server), under the address www.orbel.be, was maintained by F. Glineur.

- 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), Jacques Teghem (past editor of EJOR), Raymond Bisdorff (Vice-President of EURO and Vice-President of IFORS representing EURO) and Martine Labbé (President of EURO) for the dynamic style with which they represented us in EURO and IFORS. In addition to these EURO mandates, several of our members were contributing to many EURO working groups.

- The initiative by E. Loute, already some years ago, to edit and to distribute an ORBEL Newsletter was much appreciated by our members. S. Wittevrongel took the responsibility to continue editing and distribute our ORBEL Newsletter. The board appreciates that this initiative will be continued in the future.

- The Borsalino project, under Gerrit Janssens' leadership, aiming to make the past Sogesci-BVWB publications electronically available, is now in its final state.

Concerning our financial situation I would like to mention our current stability and safety in these difficult international circumstances, thanks to the careful management of our treasurer, thanks to the organizers of the last ORBEL conferences, thanks to the careful management of our memberships, and finally thanks to the subsidy offered by the French Community of Belgium for the support of the activities of our society.

At the beginning of 2009, I wish you all personally and the Sogesci-BVWB a very productive year 2009, strengthening the position of OR in an academic and industrial environment, in the public and in the private sector. The initiative taken by the organizers of the 23rd ORBEL conference to create an "Excellence in Industry Award" makes me confident believing that we progress towards achieving our long term objective: being a meeting place for industry and university.

Hugo Pastijn
Delegate Administrator