The International Conferences on Teaching Statistics (ICOTS) are the most important means of interchange that the International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) offers to the community of professionals and researchers concerned with statistics education. ICOTS history started 24 years ago, when the Education Committee of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) decided to hold an International Conference on Teaching Statistics. The success of ICOTS-1 (1982, Sheffield, UK), ICOTS-2 (1986, Victoria, Canada), ICOTS-3 (1990, Dunedin, New Zealand) demonstrated that statistics teachers felt a strong need to unite, talk, and discuss the problems experienced in the course of their daily activities. In the meantime, it gave specialists in statistics, psychology and statistics education a forum to present the results of their research. Since the creation in 1991 of IASE as a section of ISI, IASE continued organizing ICOTS every four year (ICOTS-4, 1994, Marrakech, Morocco; ICOTS-5, 1998, Singapore; ICOTS-6, 2002, Cape Town, South Africa). ICOTS-7 ‘Working Co-operatively in Statistics Education’ is the first ICOTS conference at the South American continent and was attended by a total of 520 delegates from 55 countries. It was organized in collaboration with the Brazilian Statistical Association (ABE) with support by the American Statistical Association and other institutions (see list at ICOTS-7 webpage). The high number of Latin American delegates (over 170) reflects the mature state of statistics education in Latin America. Their participation was stimulated by reducing the fees for these delegates and by running some activities in Spanish and Portuguese. The conference was a great success thanks to the excellent work by the International Programme Committee and in particular to the efforts by Carmen Batanero, Susan Starkings, Lisbeth Cordani, John Harraway and John Shanks, as well as all Topic Organizers and organizers of contributed papers and of posters. The efficient local organization and hospitality by Pedro Morettin, Lisbeth Cordani, Pedro Silva, Clelia Toloai, Gílenio Borges, Wilton Bussab and their team, as well as the warm atmosphere and natural beauty of Salvador resulted in an excellent conference. Two main results are the beautiful web page managed by John Shanks and the ICOTS-7 Proceedings CD Rom, edited by Allan Rossman and Beth Chance, with over 350 paper and 120 poster abstracts. The ICOTS-7 Proceedings are freely accessible at the IASE website on the IASE publication page.

Special Interest Groups of Latin American educators started working one year before ICOTS-7 via Internet forums and met twice during the conference: SIG1 ‘Training Mathematics teachers to teach Statistics in Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries’, SIG 2 ‘Young Latin American researchers in Statistics education’ and SIG 4 ‘Curricular development in Statistics education in Latin America’. Also the exhibition of concrete models in mathematics and statistics of the ‘Laboratório de Ensino de
Matemática, co-ordinated by Elinalva Vasconcelos, attracted many delegates. Special sessions and administrative meetings completed the programme.

In one of these special sessions, the forthcoming ICMI/IASE Study conference to be held in Monterrey, Mexico, June 30 - July 4, 2008, organized in collaboration with ICMI, the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction was announced. Also several activities of the IASE journal ‘Statistics Education Research Journal’ (SERJ) were organized by the SERJ editor Iddo Gal. Two workshops were run: one for current and new referees and the other for prospective authors. In the panel ‘Statistics Education Journals: co-operating not competing’, editors of SERJ, Teaching Statistics and Journal Statistics Education (JSE) discussed how to join and co-ordinate efforts. The theme ‘Working Co-operatively’ has many faces. International co-operation was clearly emphasized in sessions under topic 1 ‘Working co-operatively in Statistics education’, topic 9 ‘An international perspective on Statistics Education’ and in other invited paper sessions. Also in the seven plenary lectures, speakers enlightened different aspects of ‘working co-operatively’. Statistics education is indeed based on many different disciplines, such as: statistics, education, mathematics education, psychology, sociology and philosophy, which makes interdisciplinary co-operation for research beneficial for the advancement of statistics education research.

“After having had ICOTS conferences in different continents, the next conference ICOTS-8 will return to Europe where it started in 1982; this time it will be held at Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2010.”

Recent trends in teaching-learning theories emphasize the role of student activity and social interaction in learning. Co-operative learning is said to stimulate depth of understanding, acquisition of problem-solving skills and formation of positive attitudes toward the subject being taught. The traditional model of teaching as a ‘transmission’ is changing into a ‘transformation’ model of learning. Following the example of ICOTS-6 in South Africa, where teacher training activities were for the first time organized as a separate stream throughout ICOTS, the Local Organizing Committee and in particular Lisbeth Cordani, Liliana Carolina Costa and 20 lecturers and observers organized a series of workshops attended by 60 local school teachers. The active approach of these activities was highly appreciated by the participants and they are looking forward to more.

All this was possible thanks to financial support by the American Statistical Association and local support by the Universidade Federal da Bahia and the Instituto Anisio Teixeira. By supporting these local workshops IASE aims to stimulate statistics education in that part of the world where the conference takes place and aims to attract people to research in statistics education. During twenty four years of continuous critical work and progress in the field of statistics education, the ICOTS conferences have provided international fora for those involved in statistics education to exchange their ideas and to present their research and experiences in teaching statistics. This effort is reflected in the seven volumes of ICOTS Proceedings, which now constitute a valuable contribution to statistics education as a research discipline and a desired reference for teachers and researchers. In order to enhance the quality of the papers, the International Programme Committee organized, from ICOTS-6 onwards, a refereeing option for people submitting a paper.

The papers presented in the ICOTS-7 proceedings are the product of the effort of more than 500 educators, statisticians, psychologists, researchers and lecturers. The 220+ invited papers of the conference aim to present a synthesis of the main tendencies and developments in statistics education. They have been organized around the following 9 main topics:

2. Statistics education at school level.

The proceedings are completed with keynote lectures, about 110 contributed papers and about 120 summaries of posters.

A conference like ICOTS only can happen because of the commitment of a large number of people, from around the world, who are prepared to freely give much time and effort. We would like to pay tribute to the great support we received from so many people who helped in making the conference such a success.

After having had ICOTS conferences in different continents, the next conference ICOTS-8 will return to Europe where it started in 1982; this time it will be held at Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2010. Please already note the dates in your diary July 11-16, 2010; we are looking forward to meeting you there!

Visit our website at: http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~iase/