

# Tips for navigating a successful and rewarding career

Louise Ryan



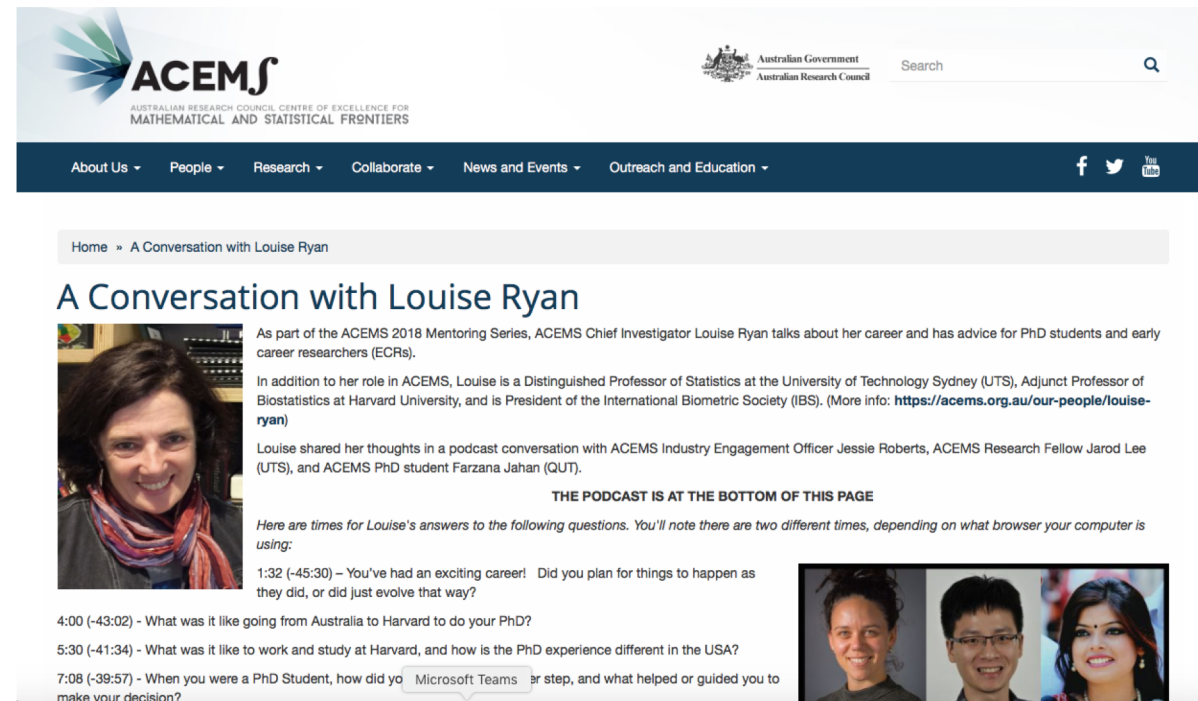
# Some sources

Statistical Science Conversations --- I like the one I did with Nan Laird a few years ago:

[https://projecteuclid.org/download/pdfview\\_1/euclid.ss/1449670859](https://projecteuclid.org/download/pdfview_1/euclid.ss/1449670859)

A podcast I did with the Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence in Mathematical and Statistical Frontiers:

<https://acems.org.au/conversation-louise-ryan>



The screenshot shows the ACEMS website header with the logo and navigation menu. The main content area features a large portrait of Louise Ryan and a list of podcast questions with timestamps. A small video player at the bottom right shows three people in a video call.

**ACEMS**  
AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR  
MATHEMATICAL AND STATISTICAL FRONTIERS

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## A Conversation with Louise Ryan

As part of the ACEMS 2018 Mentoring Series, ACEMS Chief Investigator Louise Ryan talks about her career and has advice for PhD students and early career researchers (ECRs).

In addition to her role in ACEMS, Louise is a Distinguished Professor of Statistics at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Adjunct Professor of Biostatistics at Harvard University, and is President of the International Biometric Society (IBS). (More info: <https://acems.org.au/our-people/louise-ryan>)

Louise shared her thoughts in a podcast conversation with ACEMS Industry Engagement Officer Jessie Roberts, ACEMS Research Fellow Jarod Lee (UTS), and ACEMS PhD student Farzana Jahan (QUT).

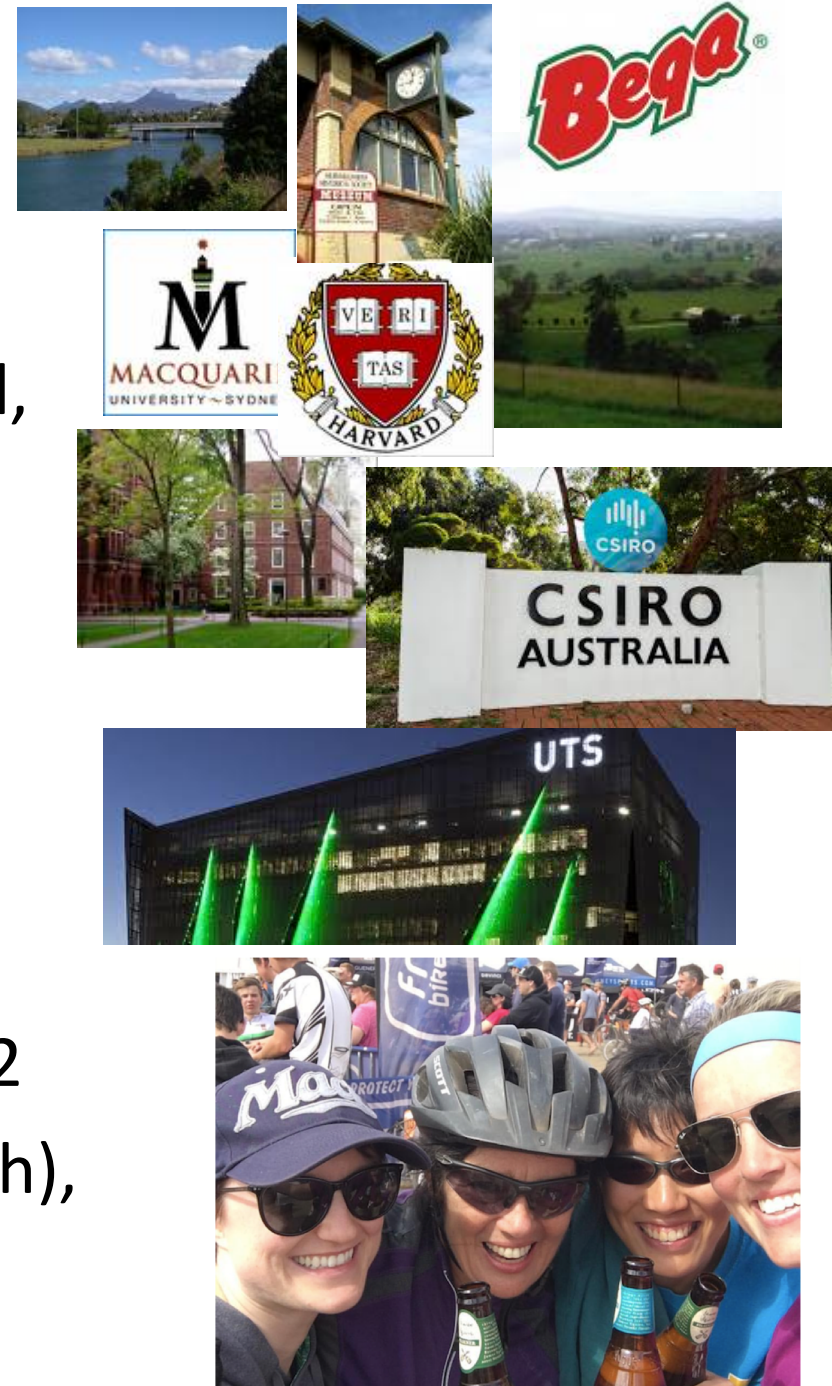
**THE PODCAST IS AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE**

Here are times for Louise's answers to the following questions. You'll note there are two different times, depending on what browser your computer is using:

- 1:32 (-45:30) – You've had an exciting career! Did you plan for things to happen as they did, or did just evolve that way?
- 4:00 (-43:02) - What was it like going from Australia to Harvard to do your PhD?
- 5:30 (-41:34) - What was it like to work and study at Harvard, and how is the PhD experience different in the USA?
- 7:08 (-39:57) - When you were a PhD Student, how did you Microsoft Teams or step, and what helped or guided you to make your decision?

# First, a brief history of me!

- Born Murwillumbah (date unspecified!), raised in Bega – both very small Australian country towns
- Undergrad at Macquarie University (started actuarial, switched to stats and maths), graduated 1978
- PhD at Harvard Stats (1983)
- Postdoc (1983) then faculty (1985) at Harvard Biostatistics, ending up as department chair in 2006
- Returned home as Chief of CSIRO Mathematics and Information Sciences in January 2009
- Joined UTS as Distinguished Professor in August 2012
- Today living much of the time in Cairns (tropical north), part time UTS. Lots of cycling and fun these days 😊







# So what to do instead?

- Work hard, seek excellence, seek knowledge
- Hone your communication skills (written and oral)
- Make sure you are in a positive environment with lots of mentors you can learn from and emulate
- Find something you care about
- Identify your strengths and weaknesses -- find a path(s) that minimizes impact of weaknesses and lets your strengths shine\*
- Be open to opportunity and willing to adapt your life plan – don't always pick the “safe” option
- But, know the “rules” --- how you will be judged/evaluated



\* Knowing strengths and weakness is part of general self-awareness, which is important! Tons has been written on it in context of job hunting strategies --- <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/guide/strengths-and-weaknesses/>

# Find something that gives you passion

Working super hard over a 40+ year career is hard! You need *really* good motivation to keep you going .....

- Tap into something with personal meaning for you
- This can include non-technical things
  - Students and/or teaching
  - Collaborations
  - Involvement in the professional societies



# Importance of good collaborations and being in a stimulating environment

- Critical for me since I never like working “solo”
- Technical versus applied collaborations – both very important, but also very different
- Good collaborators become professional friends

If you are in a place where you have some great collaborations, be very careful of disrupting that through change! Don't underestimate the importance of environment in helping you thrive

# Why (Bio)Statistics can lead to such a great career



To quote one of my heros, John Tukey, *“statistics allows us to play in everyone's backyard”*

Theory and  
methods

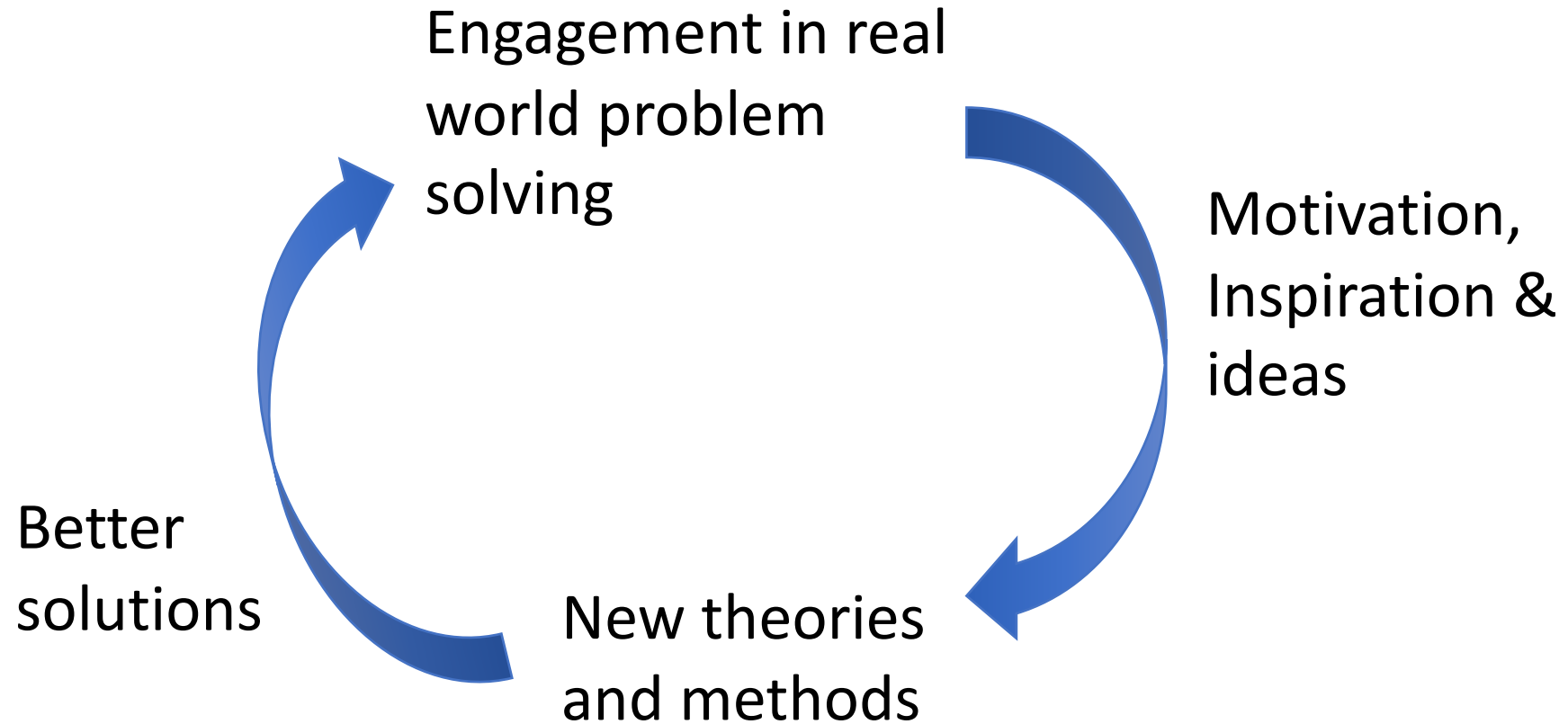


Practice

For me, the sweet spot involves a blend of both



# The virtuous cycle of collaboration



# Professional societies

- Networking
- Impact
- Travel

## How to get involved?

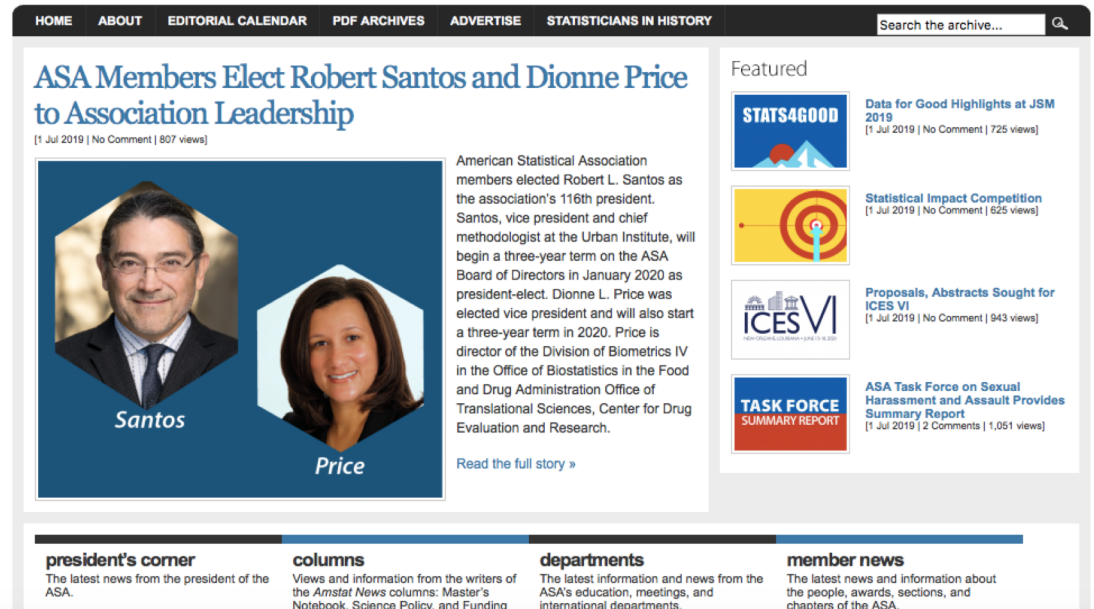
- To start, just go to meetings!
- Organize sessions
- Serve on committees
- Be a great reviewer for journals and eventually you will be an Editor!



The screenshot shows the homepage of The International Biometric Society. At the top left is the IBS logo (I, B, S in a grid). To its right is the text "The International Biometric Society". On the far right, there are language selection dropdowns and a login form with fields for "Username:" and "Password:", and buttons for "New Account", "Forgot", and "Login". Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, About IBS, Meetings, Membership, Publications, Education, Donate, History. The main content area features a banner for "The 30<sup>th</sup> International Biometric Conference" in "Seoul Korea IBC 2020" with a colorful flag graphic. Below the banner is a news snippet: "IBC2020 Short Course Offering Confirmed We are pleased to announce that the IBC 2020 Short Courses have been approved. Seven Short Course proposals have been ... Retiring Biometrics AE's Recognized For Outstanding Service!". On the right side, there are sections for "International Regions" with a world map and "Biometric Publications" with images of journals like "Biometrics", "Journal of Agricultural, Biological and Environmental Statistics", and "BIOMETRIC BULLETIN".

## AMSTATNEWS

The Membership Magazine of the American Statistical Association



The screenshot shows the homepage of AMSTATNEWS. At the top is a navigation menu: HOME, ABOUT, EDITORIAL CALENDAR, PDF ARCHIVES, ADVERTISE, STATISTICIANS IN HISTORY. On the right is a search bar labeled "Search the archive...". The main content area features a large article titled "ASA Members Elect Robert Santos and Dionne Price to Association Leadership" with a sub-headline "[1 Jul 2019 | No Comment | 807 views]". Below the title are two portrait photos: Robert Santos and Dionne Price. To the right of the photos is a text block: "American Statistical Association members elected Robert L. Santos as the association's 116th president. Santos, vice president and chief methodologist at the Urban Institute, will begin a three-year term on the ASA Board of Directors in January 2020 as president-elect. Dionne L. Price was elected vice president and will also start a three-year term in 2020. Price is director of the Division of Biometrics IV in the Office of Biostatistics in the Food and Drug Administration Office of Translational Sciences, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research." Below this text is a link "Read the full story »". To the right of the main article is a "Featured" section with four items: "STATS4GOOD" (Data for Good Highlights at JSM 2019), "Statistical Impact Competition", "Proposals, Abstracts Sought for ICES VI", and "ASA Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Assault Provides Summary Report". At the bottom of the page are four columns: "president's corner" (The latest news from the president of the ASA), "columns" (Views and information from the writers of the Amstat News columns: Master's Notebook, Science Policv. and Funding), "departments" (The latest information and news from the ASA's education, meetings, and international departments), and "member news" (The latest news and information about the people, awards, sections, and chapters of the ASA).

# Balance, balance, balance

- Seek a good balance of methods, application, teaching, professional society work
- Look after your physical and mental health
  - Friends and family
  - Hobbies and interests
  - Exercise
  - Healthy destressing

In my opinion, it is NOT possible to have everything.  
Life inevitably involves some tradeoffs .....



# Thanks for Listening!!



"I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED, WITH SUCH EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS, YOU SHOULD'VE KNOWN WE WOULDN'T HIRE YOU."