



A hundred years of Metron

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In July 1920, the first issue of *Metron* was published under the editorship of Corrado Gini. At the time he was professor at the university of Padua and, as the Editor, he also owned the property of the Journal. Moving to Rome in late 1925, he took the Journal with him. Since the 60s, the Journal is a property of the University “La Sapienza”, and it is still run by the staff in the Department of Statistical Sciences, formerly known as the Department of Statistics, Probability and Applied Statistics, defined by the union of the Institutes of Statistics and Probability. At the time the first issue of *Metron* saw the light, few of the Journals in Statistics that we currently know were already available to scholars, namely the *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv* (known since 2007 as *Advances in Statistical analysis*), *Biometrika*, the *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, and the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. However, *Metron* had the specific features that it was neither the result of a decision taken by a group of people, nor it did represent a scientific association, a well defined community, a scientific or academic institute. Rather, it was simply the product of the view Corrado Gini had on scientific research and how to disseminate it. It is therefore not unusual that only few Italian scholars were part of the Advisory and Editorial Board of the Journal, at least at the beginning.

I must admit that, when in 2001 I joined the Department, I had just a basic knowledge of the scientific profile of the Journal and its first Editor, mainly coming from having being exposed to the basic notions of Concentration and Mean Differences during the Introductory Statistics course I attended as an undergraduate student. While I had no direct knowledge of Corrado Gini, I was lucky to have the opportunity to share ideas on his impact as a scientist with Giovanni Maria Giorgi during the years we were the Executive Editor and the Editor in chief of the Journal, respectively. This huge volume of information is summarized in Giorgi [7], where the human and scientific profile of Corrado Gini is brilliantly and accurately described in the context of the developing (so-called) Italian school of Statistics. A further source of information about Gini and his scientific approach can be found in the paper by Scardovi [9], which is based on the Author’s personal memories of the time spent with Gini. I had the opportunity to proof-read the paper during a long flight to England through Brussels. I have to admit that I found the paper moving, lovely and confidential, and full of everyday personal stories that are usually not the core of discussions on Corrado Gini.

The story of *Metron* is so closely connected to that of its founder that it is quite difficult to disentangle the two, at least in the early years. Corrado Gini was the Editor from 1920 to 1964.

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An international Editorial board was present and mentioned in the cover until 1939, volume XIII. Initially, the Journal was published quarterly in a period spanning over two years, with issues appearing in July, December and April. After a while and with increasing volume of submissions from all over the world, the Journal stabilized as quarterly with issues appearing in April, August and December (at least approximately). During the first two decades, many well known papers appeared in the journal, Fisher [5,6], detailing the application of the results previously appeared in Fisher [4] on the distribution of the sample correlation coefficient, and the partial correlation coefficient, Tschuprow [10,11] on optimal allocation in stratified sampling, anticipating some of the ideas in Neyman [8], De Finetti [1], on the probability law of extremes, and Wilks [12], who chose the Journal as the appropriate outlet for some of the main results of his PhD thesis. This is just to mention a few, and it clearly gives a proof of the scientific reputation that the Editor and the Journal had at the time. The first two decades were characterized by a high quality of accepted manuscripts and, as proved by the remarks above, by a high quality of the Journal boards.

However, with the second world war, things changed substantially. First, starting with volume XIV in 1940 the editorial board was not mentioned in the Journal frontmatter; just the editorial secretary, composed by Italian members only, was mentioned. This was initially (1940–1941) motivated by the awful Italian racial laws, and adopted by the Editor to avoid the expulsion of Jews from the board. The board, however, was not present up to the 60s, volume XX; in its last configuration, before the change of the Editor in chief, due to Gini's death, the board was composed by leading figures in the fields of Statistics and Probability, including Francesco Paolo Cantelli (who was there since the very beginning), Leonard J. Savage, Stephen S. Wilks among others. A series of volumes (*La Biblioteca di Metron*), was dedicated in the 60s to disseminating the foundations of Statistics and Probability; it contains, among others, the well known *Sul modo di scegliere le probabilità iniziali* by De Finetti and Savage [2], summarized and translated in English in De Finetti [3]. However, and despite the efforts made by the Editors who followed Corrado Gini, that is Vittorio Castellano (1965–1980), Carlo Benedetti (1981–1990), Mario Badaloni (1991–2002), the Journal did not reach the scientific level and reputation it earned during the 20s and 30s, also because of the choice of staying with a local publisher.

It was with the new century and with past editors Giovanni Maria Giorgi (2003–2006 and 2013–2017) and Pier Luigi Conti (2007–2012) that the Journal has stepped into a new era, with new international Advisory and Editorial boards, and a new international Publisher, Springer-Verlag, that has greatly helped to give the Journal a new international breath. I should also mention, for their kind support during the first years, Maria Cristina Acocella and, in particular, Francesca Bonadei, both from Springer Italy. Now the management has changed and we have found in Ute Motz from Springer Heidelberg a very helpful colleague in our everyday work with the Journal.

In the first issue of the first volume, a preface by Corrado Gini, entitled *Programme*, was inserted and translated in four languages, Italian, French, English and German, reflecting both the very international habit of its founder and the scientific aim and scope of the Journal. In the *Programme*, Corrado Gini explained clearly the choice to open a new Journal in statistics, starting from the “(...) great difficulties in connection with modern statistics is that of becoming acquainted with the relevant literature”, due to the variety of disciplines statistics was involved in and, therefore, with the variety of scientific Journals one should look at to be aware of the developments in the statistical literature. *Metron* was intended to give an appropriate answer to such difficulties, being addressed to all those “(...) busied with statistics”, representing a “(...) bond of union between statistical workers in different branches”. A further aim was to be as international as possible since “(...) it is the wish of

the editors that the participation of non Italian writers shall become larger and larger". A hundred years after the *Programme* was clearly and publicly elicited, the aim and scope of the Journal is still the same; during the decades, the Journal has passed through lights and shadows, but we are still coherent with the original *Programme*, and the vision of Statistics as strongly connected to, and essentially motivated by, real life applications.

The present volume is intended to celebrate the Journal, and it is devoted to three issues which will be discussing some of the topics that have been more central to the Journal through the decades. We start with this issue and the discussion paper "From unidimensional to multidimensional inequality: a review" by Francesco Andreoli (University of Verona and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research) and Claudio Zoli (University of Verona). The paper summarizes recent and less recent, but still intriguing, developments on the measurement of inequality based on multidimensional features; this has been the occasion to gather comments from several, well-known, scholars that have been dealing with the subject during the past decades. Namely, Barry Arnold (University of California, Riverside), Kristof Bosmans (Maastricht University), Karl Mosler (University of Köln) and John Weimark (Vanderbilt University) have contributed to a great discussion on the topic, also highlighting some future research lines. We hope to have in a near future also the commentary by Nicolas Gravel (Aix-Marseille Université).

From my perspective, I have to say that it was and it is really an honour and a pleasure to be part of it.

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