

# useR! 2008

The international R user conference 'useR! 2008' took place at the Technische Universität Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany, August 12-14, 2008.

This world-wide meeting of the R user community focussed on

- R as the 'lingua franca' of data analysis and statistical computing;
- providing a platform for R users to discuss and exchange ideas about how R can be used to do statistical computations, data analysis, visualization and exciting applications in various fields;
- giving an overview of the new features of the rapidly evolving R project.

The program comprised invited lectures, user-contributed sessions and pre-conference tutorials.

More than 400 participants from all over the world met in Dortmund and heard more than 170 talks. It was a pleasure for us to see that the lecture rooms were available after heavy weather and some serious flooding of the building two weeks before the conference. People were carrying on discussions the whole time: before sessions, during the coffee and lunch breaks, and during the social events such as

- the reception in the Dortmund city hall by the Mayor (who talked about the history, present, and future of Dortmund), and
- the conference dinner in the 'Signal Iduna Park' stadium, the famous home ground of the football (i.e. soccer) team 'Borussia Dortmund'. Buses brought the participants to the stadium where a virtual game was going on: at least, noise was played, made by the more than 80000 supporters who regularly attend games in the stadium. After the dinner, Marc Schwartz got the birthday cake he really deserves for his work in the R community.

It was a great pleasure to meet so many people from the whole R community in Dortmund, people who formerly knew each other only from 'virtual' contact by email and had never met in person.

## Invited lectures

Those who attended had the opportunity to listen to several talks. Invited speakers talked about several hot topics, including:

- *Peter Bühlmann*: Computationally Tractable Methods for High-Dimensional Data
- *John Fox* and *Kurt Hornik*: The Past, Present, and Future of the R Project, a double-feature presentation including Social Organization of the R Project (John Fox), Development in the R Project (Kurt Hornik)
- *Andrew Gelman*: Bayesian Generalized Linear Models and an Appropriate Default Prior

- *Gary King*: The Dataverse Network
- *Duncan Murdoch*: Package Development in Windows
- *Jean Thioulouse*: Multivariate Data Analysis in Microbial Ecology – New Skin for the Old Ceremony
- *Graham J. Williams*: Deploying Data Mining in Government – Experiences With R/Rattle

## User-contributed sessions

User contributed sessions brought together R users, contributors, package maintainers and developers in the S spirit that 'users are developers'. People from different fields showed us how they solve problems with R in fascinating applications. The scientific program was organized by members of the program committee, including *Micah Altman*, *Roger Bivand*, *Peter Dalgaard*, *Jan de Leeuw*, *Ramón Díaz-Uriarte*, *Spencer Graves*, *Leonhard Held*, *Torsten Hothorn*, *François Husson*, *Christian Kleiber*, *Friedrich Leisch*, *Andy Liaw*, *Martin Mächler*, *Kate Mullen*, *Ei-ji Nakama*, *Thomas Petzoldt*, *Martin Theus*, and *Heather Turner*, and covered topics such as

- Applied Statistics & Biostatistics
- Bayesian Statistics
- Bioinformatics
- Chemometrics and Computational Physics
- Data Mining
- Econometrics & Finance
- Environmetrics & Ecological Modeling
- High Performance Computing
- Machine Learning
- Marketing & Business Analytics
- Psychometrics
- Robust Statistics
- Sensometrics
- Spatial Statistics
- Statistics in the Social and Political Sciences
- Teaching
- Visualization & Graphics
- and many more

Talks in Kaleidoscope sessions presented interesting topics to a broader audience, while talks in Focus sessions led to intensive discussions on the more focussed topics. As was the case at former useR! conferences, the participants listened to talks the whole time; it turned out that the organizers underestimated the interest of the participants for some sessions and chose lecture rooms that were too small to accommodate all who wanted to attend.

## Pre-conference tutorials

Before the start of the official program, half-day tutorials were offered on Monday, August 11.

In the morning:

- *Douglas Bates*: Mixed Effects Models
- *Julie Josse, François Husson, Sébastien Lê*: Exploratory Data Analysis
- *Martin Mächler, Elvezio Ronchetti*: Introduction to Robust Statistics with R
- *Jim Porzak*: Using R for Customer Segmentation
- *Stefan Rüping, Michael Mock, and Dennis Wegener*: Distributed Data Analysis Using R
- *Jing Hua Zhao*: Analysis of Complex Traits Using R: Case studies

In the afternoon:

- *Karim Chine*: Distributed R and Bioconductor for the Web
- *Dirk Eddelbuettel*: An Introduction to High-Performance R
- *Andrea S. Foulkes*: Analysis of Complex Traits Using R: Statistical Applications
- *Virgilio Gómez-Rubio*: Small Area Estimation with R
- *Frank E. Harrell, Jr.*: Regression Modelling Strategies

- *Sébastien Lê, Julie Josse, François Husson*: Multi-way Data Analysis
- *Bernhard Pfaff*: Analysis of Integrated and Co-integrated Time Series

At the end of the day, Torsten Hothorn and Fritz Leisch opened the Welcome mixer by talking about the close relationship among R, the useR! organizers, and Dortmund.

## More information

A web page offering more information on 'useR! 2008' is available at:

<http://www.R-project.org/useR-2008/>.

That page now includes slides from many of the presentation as well as some photos of the event. Those who could not attend the conference should feel free to browse and see what they missed, as should those who attended but were not able to make it to all of the presentations that they wanted to see.

The organizing committee:

*Uwe Ligges, Achim Zeileis, Claus Weihs, Gerd Kopp, Friedrich Leisch, and Torsten Hothorn*  
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