

■ Barbara B. Flynn, Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University

As you gear up for the start of the new semester, we bring you some interesting reading in this issue of *Decision Line*. For example, have you ever wondered whether electronic data collection was superior to paper-and-pencil surveys? What about the research potential of e-commerce applications, such as reverse auctions? We cover these and other interesting topics in this issue of *Decision Line*.

In Research Issues, Ken Boyer of Michigan State University, John Olson of DePaul University, and Eric Jackson of Michigan State University describe the pros and cons of using electronic collection of research data. While electronic data collection offers such benefits as the ability to include pictures, special formatting, audio and video links, and automatic data entry, it may also be intimidating to potential respondents who are less familiar with technology and may run the risk of lost data and viruses. The authors briefly summarize the literature on this interesting topic, as well as recounting their own experiences comparing the use of a disk survey and a paper survey as part of the same study. Check it out - you may find the results surprising!

In his Classroom feature article, Rick Hesse of Pepperdine University uses an Excel example to show how to use linear programming to conduct sensitivity analysis for models that are degenerate. Meanwhile, in the Doctoral Issues column, Marc Schneiderjans of the University of Nebraska presents his bill of right for doctoral students. In particular, he focuses on what a student should expect from a doctoral committee chair during all stages of the dissertation process (before, during, and after). He also provides important insights for doctoral students to consider before they select a doctoral committee chair.

In the E-Commerce feature, Diane Parente, Ray Venkataraman, John Fizel, and Ido Millet (Pennsylvania State University-Erie) discuss B2B online applications, particularly auctions and reverse auctions. In a reverse auction, the buyer hosts a site that lists needed products or services, and sellers bid on the price, using decremental bidding. In addition to potential price savings, reverse auctions offer the buyer ac-

cess to a potentially large number of suppliers, leading to a greater emphasis on supplier selection. The authors describe some of the unique features of online auctions, such as sniping and overtime, and discuss the tremendous research potential offered by the data that is available on online auctions and reverse auctions.

In Specialist with a Universal Mind, Andy Vazsonyi muses on the evolution of business models, from the scientific, mechanistic approach advocated by Taylor to the more recent Newtonian, biological models. He describes the fundamental paradox of the need for powerful computer networks to implement the humanistic models. In From the Bookshelf, Andy Ruppel of the University of Virginia continues the discussion of business models by focusing on four books related to measurement. He begins with *Parallax: Race to Measure the Cosmos*, which takes a history of science perspective to measuring the distance to the stars. The well-known text, *Decision Modeling with Microsoft Excel*, has a new edition which includes additional chapters and add-ins on a CD-ROM. *The Lady Tasting Tea* provides a set of interesting anecdotes about statistical debates and statisticians, described by Andy as "a stats book without the stats." He describes *Statistical Thinking: Improving Business Performance* as a statistics text that presents a sensible shift in the teaching of business statistics. It focuses on process modeling and shows how statistics can be used to improve business processes.

I hope you enjoy reading these interesting articles. We are still in the process of receiving applications for the new editor of *Decision Line*, so please let me know if you have any questions or if you are interested. It is a position that I have really enjoyed holding. Also, check out the call for papers for the new *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, which is now accepting manuscripts! ■



Barbara B. Flynn

is a professor of operations management at the Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University. She holds an A.B. in psychology from Ripon College, an M.B.A. from Marquette University and a

D.B.A. in operations management from Indiana University. Professor Flynn has held leadership positions in the Decision Sciences Institute, the Academy of Management and The Institute of Management Science. Her publications have appeared in *Decision Sciences*, *Management Science*, *Journal of Operations Management*, *International Journal of Production Research*, and other journals. Her current research interests include quality, JIT and operations strategy. Professor Flynn's research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Center for Innovation Management Studies, the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission and the U.S. Department of Education.

Barbara B. Flynn

Babcock Graduate School of Management
Wake Forest University
P.O. Box 7659, Reynolda Station
3102 Worrell Professional Center
Winston-Salem, NC 27109-7659
Voice: 336-758-3672
Fax: 336-758-4514
Barb.Flynn@mba.wfu.edu