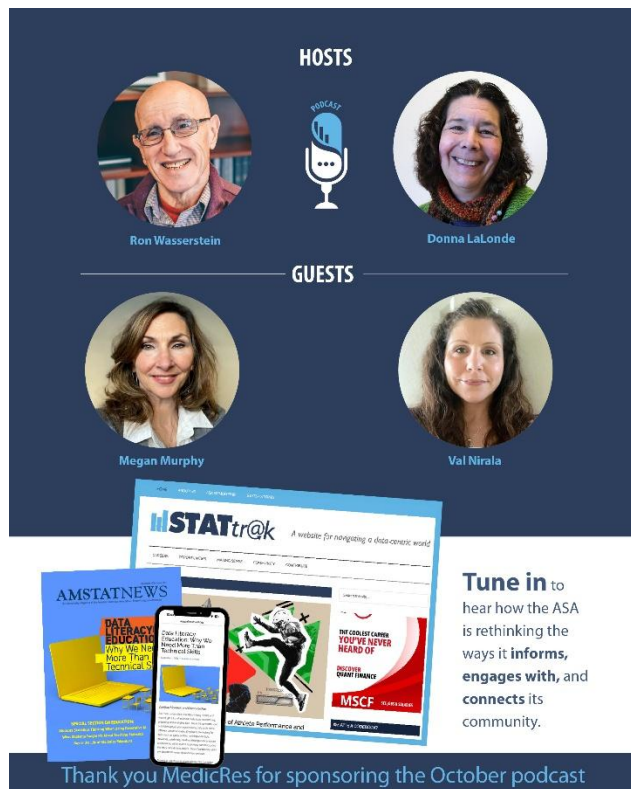


Practical Significance | Episode 70: Getting the Word Out (and Getting You In)



Donna LaLonde: Well welcome everyone to the October session of *Practical Significance*. I admit that Ron and I enjoy all the guests that we have on *Practical Significance*, but this episode is super special because we get to talk with two of our colleagues here at the ASA. And so today we're going to talk about all thing's community communications with our communications experts, Megan and Val. Tell me about your day job at the ASA. And Megan, we'll start with you.

Megan Murphy: Well, a typical week for me includes reading *Amstat News* articles, writing a profile about a statistician, or coming up with questions to send a member, or laying out an issue of *Amstat*

News. I also answer questions on our social media sites, create social media posts. I design promotional material for an upcoming conference such as a conference guide, ad or brochure. I might also be designing a conference logo or a promo for the website.

Every week is a little different.

I also work with a great team, Meg Ruyle and Olivia Brown. Depending on the month, they also lay out *Amstat News* and design much of our marketing collateral as well. We all work together to keep the members informed and about everything going on at the ASA, and Val edits and reviews it all.

Donna LaLonde: So, I guess I should tell everyone that somehow Megan and Val have figured out how to have more than 24 hours in a day and we're very appreciative of that as well.

So, Val, tell us about your day job. What's a week like?

Val Nirala: Well, for me, note, week looks exactly alike, but most days begin with shorter editing assignments before I move into my longer projects. And I might work on anything from emails, web pages and social media posts to meeting signage and Articles for STATtr@k and *Amstat News*. I try to work ahead whenever I can so I can make room for

special projects, whether that's writing, editing, video designing something, or developing new ways to engage members.

Donna LaLonde: That's great. And Val, let's stay with you and talk about what's the most rewarding part of helping members tell their stories.

Val Nirala: The most rewarding moment is when I've helped a statistician tell their story in a way other people can understand and relate to.

I realized that as an editor, I really work on behalf of the audience, but I want readers to come away understanding why the work matters, how it touches people's lives, and then something about the person behind it. I also want the statistician to feel understood and accurately represented.

When the writer feels like, yes, that's what I meant, and then the audience can see why it matters, I feel like I've done my job.

Donna LaLonde: Yeah, that's fantastic. And so, I guess I'll just put in a little plug for all the great videos that you created helping people tell their stories at JSM. If folks should check those out on YouTube. Megan, you've been at this for a while as well.

What's the most rewarding part for you of helping members tell their stories?

Megan Murphy: I love learning about our members, their work and how they got started, who or what influenced them, their philosophies, and their pastimes. You can tell that by the questions I ask when I do a Q & A in *Amstat News*. There is always a story behind the story, and after talking to them, they become more than just a name and a photo and a title. That's probably the most rewarding part.

Ron Wasserstein: That sounds great, Megan. Let's bring our listeners in now. So, what kinds of writing opportunities exist that our members might be interested in contributing to?

Megan Murphy: Well, because *Amstat News* is by members and for members, there are a lot of writing opportunities. If you are doing something interesting in statistics, chances are your ASA colleagues want to hear about it. If you have a new teaching method, won a specific award, had an interesting career experience you wanted to share, write about it, and send it to me via email. We're interested in hearing from members in all areas of statistics and at all stages of their careers.

Ron Wasserstein: Thanks, Megan. Val, for someone who wants to take advantage of one of these opportunities but never done so before, where do you think is an easy place for them to start?

Val Nirala: I would definitely say the easiest place to start is the Contribute tab on STATtr@k. It explains what we're looking for and how to contact us. And you don't even need to have a finished article. You can simply come to us with an idea. If you're new to writing, we can give you a template that guides you through the process, or we can work with you one on one to shape and refine your piece. We also want the process to feel collaborative and approachable, even if you've never written for a publication before.

Donna LaLonde: Now, let's continue with the STATtr@k theme because you've recently, with lots of help from your colleagues, spent a great deal of time revamping STATtr@k. So, we have STATtr@k 2.0 now. Tell us a little bit about what changed and what members should know about the new STATtr@k in addition to the Contribute tab.

Val Nirala: Well, the most visible change is the navigation. We reorganize STATtr@k so members can quickly find opportunities, career guidance, and stories from other students and early career professionals. But the revamp also broadened what STATtr@k offers. We introduced “Making Sense,” an outreach section for anyone trying to navigate a data-centric world.

It shows how statisticians and data scientists use statistical thinking to inform decisions and drive discovery. That umbrella also includes “Telling Our Stories” and “On the Job,” which introduce readers to the people behind the profession and the fascinating work they do. We've also committed to publishing more in-depth features about issues shaping statistics today. A recent article explored statistical leadership, and our October feature examines how statisticians and data scientists can move forward in the AI era.

Finally, we made contributing much easier. Anyone with an idea can begin with the Contribute tab at the top of the site. Overall, the new STATtr@k is easier to navigate, it's broader in scope and more connected to the issues members care about.

Ron Wasserstein: Megan, I'm going to ask you a couple of questions. They're about *Amstat News* content, and I want to begin by asking you what's an *Amstat News* piece or issue that surprised you with how much it resonated with our members?

Megan Murphy: I was happy to see the Q&As with new members and how that resonated with our readers. I've received emails from other new members who want to participate. And again, if you would like to be featured in *Amstat News* and you are a new member, email me and I'll email you some questions to answer.

Ron Wasserstein: Thanks, Megan. Okay, so let's tease our listeners a little bit with something new or interesting that might be coming to *Amstat News* in October or beyond. You want to share something?

Megan Murphy: Well, next month in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. We'll be featuring several statisticians and data scientists with disabilities. It is part of a series highlighted by the Committee on Statistics and Disability, and you may recognize some of the people we're featuring, and I hope members will take the opportunity to read their stories and learn about their journeys.

Donna LaLonde: So, Megan, Val offered some tips on how to get started.

You've obviously interacted with folks, and you said you love to learn. So, you know that our members have a great deal of expertise but may not think of themselves as writers. What are your two or three tips for someone like that?

Megan Murphy: Well, the tips I have are the same tips that someone gave me when I was starting, and that is to start in the middle of your story. Write down what you want to say and what you know, and don't worry if every sentence isn't perfect. Step away from it, and when you come back, you can start shaping it. Once you send it to us, like Val said, we can help smooth it out. You bring the expertise and we can help you turn it into a story that readers will want to read.

Ron Wasserstein: Thanks, Megan. I know people will appreciate that. Val, turning back to you, video was mentioned earlier. Tell us about how you would like to incorporate video into how we share our stories. And perhaps if you want to share a video that you have done or that you imagine doing, that would make you say, "Yes, exactly what we're looking for!"

Val Nirala: There are actually two types of videos that I would love to incorporate. One is like a short Q & A with someone we've profiled or who has written for us. It wouldn't repeat the article per se. It would let readers see and hear the person behind the work and feel a stronger connection to them.

The other is an explainer video, either animated or presented by a person, and it would complement one of stat tracks, "Making Sense" articles, or help visualize a more technical concept. For example, I'd love to create a short animation to accompany an article about confidence intervals. That's an article I did recently for Making Sense, and it could visually show that science earns trust not by claiming certainty, but by measuring uncertainty. If someone watched it and came away understanding why uncertainty is a strength of good science rather than a weakness, then I would feel really good about that.

Ron Wasserstein: That would be a big thing to accomplish. So, let's put that out there as a challenge for our listeners. Okay, so I have a question for both of you. Val, I'll start with you. Every writer seems to have a favorite grammar rule. Maybe editors do too. What's your favorite grammar rule.

Val Nirala: So, one favorite grammar rule; or perhaps it's a pet peeve is using the proper pronoun when referring to yourself.

Something I've noticed is people misuse myself. I often hear people say something like, "Bob and myself went to the park." But you would never say, "Myself went to the park." So, if you take Bob out of the sentence, the correct pronoun becomes obvious. I went to the park. So, it's Bob and I went to the park. Adding another person doesn't change the grammar.

Ron Wasserstein: That's a good rule. An easy way to remember it. Megan, what about you?

Megan Murphy: I do like the Oxford comma and anything else that helps make a sentence clear.

Donna LaLonde: I feel, Megan, that you, Val and I have bonded over the Oxford comma, and it delights me when I'm meeting with folks. And actually, most recently a writing team asked the question oxford comma and I was like, we are an Oxford comma shop. So that's great. I'm excited about that.

Megan, I'll stay with you. And you mentioned that you do spend a fair amount of time designing logos and marketing materials. What is your go-to design tool and what do you love about it?

Megan Murphy: I really like to use Adobe Illustrator for logos because it has a drawing and illustrating capability. But my go-to this past year, especially for promos and social media posts, has been Canva. Everything I need such as illustrations, colors, fonts and textures, it's all right there and it makes designing the ads and promos, especially for social media, really quick.

Donna LaLonde: And Val, I suspect that you're going to say ditto to the Canva because I know we're all really enjoying that as well. But what other design tools and why do you like them?

Val Nirala: I do really love Canva because it makes designing easy. But my favorite things to design are like long textbooks, reports, and magazines. So, I would say my favorite tool is InDesign and it just makes it easy to create a professional looking publication. And honestly, the way it works, it just makes sense to my brain. I find it very intuitive.

Donna LaLonde: That's great. This has been a wonderful conversation, and I know both of you have listened to *Practical Significance*, so it's going to come as no surprise that we have traditions. And one of the traditions is to ask our guests what they're reading, listening to, watching. I feel like with both of you I probably need to say making in that list as well because I know that you're both very creative in that craft space so Megan, what's on your list?

Megan Murphy: Well, my entire summer has been spent reading this sci fi fantasy series called *Dungeon Crawler Carl*. It is about an honorable man and his ex-girlfriend's cat, Princess Donut, who have to fight their way through AI powered dungeons full of goblins, monsters, shape shifters. It's funny, it's heartwarming, it's poignant, it's full of imagination. It's been a wonderful escape. Anybody that has played any role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons would probably really enjoy the series.

Donna LaLonde: That's great. Definitely adding that to the list. Val, what about you? Watching, reading, listening, making all, of the above.

Val Nirala: Right now, I'm reading *Adobe Premiere Pro Made Simple* because I'm determined to conquer that program and speed up my video editing. So, I started learning watercolor. So, I'm reading watercolor Textures for artists and then when I just want to relax, I'm reading *In the Great Quiet*, which is a historical novel. It's about a woman who claims land and tries to make a life for herself on the frontier.

Donna LaLonde: That's fantastic. And as listeners know, we have another tradition and that's Ron's Top 10. So, I'll turn it over to my colleague Ron for his Top Ten.

Ron Wasserstein: Thank you, Donna. Well, fall is here and volleyballs are flying all over the country. It's great to see the spike in interest in volleyball. Pun entirely intended.

Always ready to help. The *Practical Significance* Podcast has suggestions for you in this case. Here are the "Top Ten Names for Your Statistics Department Volleyball Team."

10: the starting Six Sigma

9: the Data Dumpers

8: the Optimization Aces

7: the Bell Curve Bumpers

6 the Dedicated Servers

5: the Regression Line Shooters

4: the Mutually Exclusive Setters

3: the Libero Degrees of Freedom

2: the Overfit Bayesians

And the #1 name for your Statistics Department volleyball team: the Randomized Complete Blockers.

Well, that's it for another episode of *Practical Significance*. We look forward to continuing the discussion next month.

MedicReS: Clinical Biostatistics should do more than teach statistical tests.

It should help us ask better questions, design more meaningful studies and understand what evidence can and cannot support.

I'm Professor Arzu Khannick, Scientific Director of MedicReS. We created the Clinical Biostatistics Teaching Kit powered by Epicos AI as an open access educational environment for university educators and students.

It brings together a five level clinical biostatistics book series, teaching resources, clinical pathways and 88 specialty based clinical cases, connecting the clinical question to study design, analysis, interpretation and scientific reporting.

Students can move from learning statistical reasoning to applying it through hands on Epicos AI practice. While educators can build structured lessons around real clinical contexts, our goal is simple. Bring clinical context into the classroom and make statistical reasoning the skill. Explore the open-access resources at Education epicos.ai.