

JEDI CORNER

Finding Ada: Identifying, Engaging, and Empowering Women in Statistics and Data Science



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The Justice, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Outreach Group Corner is a regular component of Amstat News in which statisticians write about and educate our community about JEDI-related matters. If you have an idea or article for the column, email the JEDI Corner manager at jedicorner@datascijedi.org.

Ada Lovelace Day falls on October 12 every year. According to the website Finding Ada (<https://findingada.com>) it “is an international celebration of the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM).” In terms of its purpose and outreach on and beyond Ada Lovelace Day, “it aims to increase the profile of women in STEM and, in doing so, create new role models who will encourage more girls into STEM careers and support women already working in STEM.”

One may wonder who Ada Lovelace (1815–1852) was. According to the Computer History Museum, she translated, remarked upon, and published notes that described a “stepwise sequence of operations for solving certain mathematical problems.” Thus, Ada was fondly called “the first programmer,” or rather one of the first technological innovators as a female pioneer in computation and technology.

In an article about a leadership panel in which I participated (<https://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2021/04/01/icsa>), the panelists were asked why it is important to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion, including women. Following is a summary of their answers:

People’s backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, skillsets, mindsets, and views are diverse. When we embrace these, we can essentially broaden ourselves in all of these aspects. Without diversity, equity, and inclusion, we won’t know what we don’t



Watercolour portrait of Ada King, Countess of Lovelace, circa 1840, possibly by Alfred Edward Chalon

know. To embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion, we should engage all members of our community in a conversation about our shared vision of excellence and examine how much of this vision has not been realized in some underrepresented parts of

our community. Through such a conversation, we can recognize the need for more proactive efforts in the direction of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Below are three suggested ways we can “find Ada” (i.e., identify and nurture female and/or other talented statisticians and data scientists from minority backgrounds) among us:

1. Member introducing a diverse member. We all know a bright and talented young person who would love to know more about quantitative disciplines. Why not suggest a name and connect with that individual as an introductory “buddy”? The senior member can function as a mentor for at least six months to a year, meeting virtually for at least an hour once a month.
2. Technical and soft-skill roadshows. Students and graduate students may be intimidated by either one-on-one conversations or panel interviews. Thus, having “mock” roadshows with senior and junior members across several universities and departments with diverse student bodies may help the latter develop ways to handle potentially stressful social interactions, such as professional negotiations, away from data analysis and software coding.
3. Diverse role models to rid imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is perceived fraudulence involving feelings of self-doubt and personal incompetence that persist despite your education, experience, and accomplishments. On the international stage, well-qualified diverse role models need to be celebrated so a future generation will believe they too can lead organizations and make critical contributions to their chosen fields.

The above suggestions are meant to start a conversation about how we can take action in supporting young talent; additional ideas are certainly welcome. Let’s “find Ada!”

Editor’s Note: Zou is an employee of Viatrix. The views expressed here are her own. ■

STATS FROM THE ROAD

The Spirit of Giving Back

Amanda Malloy, ASA Director of Development

I had one of those photo memories pop up on my social media feed the other day that was taken at JSM 2019 in Denver. I was struck by how much has changed since that photo was taken (and I’m not just referring to my personal boycott of pants without an elastic waist band).

There was so much I took for granted then—like seeing people in 3D, going to well-stocked grocery stores, and shaking hands. I don’t think I realized how much I craved seeing people in person until I was walking around at the DC convention center during JSM 2022.

What hasn’t changed, however, is ASA members’ desire to get involved and make a difference for the statistics and data science communities. That spirit was on full display during JSM in Washington, DC.

You—members of the ASA community—volunteered to meet with congressional staffers on Capitol Hill to show support for the Data Science and Literacy Act of 2022. You served as mentors and panelists for the Diversity Workshop and Mentoring Program and donated food for the ASA GivesBack Impact DC food drive benefiting the Capital Area Food Bank. Not to mention, the countless hours you spent volunteering for chapters, sections, committees, and special interest groups!

Another time this spirit of giving back is on full display is during the annual ASA Giving Day. Last year, 156 donors gave close to \$52,000. These donations are critical to help fund programs that improve statistics education at all levels, advocate for the profession, cultivate the



Serene Jiang, Figaro Loresto, and Amanda Malloy spend time at the food bank collection bins, part of ASA GivesBack’s Impact DC program. Photo courtesy of Drew Malloy.

next generation of leaders, and showcase the innovations and contributions statisticians and data scientists have on science and society (specific examples of these programs can be found at ww2.amstat.org/giving).

This year, ASA Giving Day is on November 18, and we will celebrate how we are leading the way for innovation through statistics and data science. Since November 18 happens to be the first day of the fall board meeting, members of the board will kick off Giving Day from the ASA office in Alexandria, Virginia, via livestream on Facebook and Twitter. As always, there will be opportunities to win prizes and help your chapter win the annual ASA Chapter Challenge.

For more information about ASA Giving Day and to sign up for a reminder to donate, visit ww2.amstat.org/givingday.