



EDITORIAL

SIZE ANALYSIS WEARS NO CLOTHES, or HAVE MOMENTS COME AND GONE?

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For a long time we have assumed that size frequency distributions contain a veritable treasure-trove of information. Mean (or median) size and measures of sorting have indeed become practical tools. Steadily over half a century papers have demonstrated that still finer nuances of distributions can be evaluated and so, of course, are of value. The present technological revolution in instrumentation and computers carries a threat that shortly we will be inundated by even more papers illustrating even more complex approaches which the authors will regard as Promising. Promises. Promises. . . . Hope springs eternal "The check is in the mail." A troubling thought inks its way to the fore. Why don't we routinely use this tool of great worth to help solve the sorts of problems that our field addresses? Have the research objectives that stimulated this approach slowly and unobtrusively evaporated leaving complex size analysis a cure that has lost its disease? If such objectives are still viable, why has no one over the span of more than 50 years stumbled on the right "combination" to achieve them? One certainly can't attribute the lack of success to the intellectual level of practitioners inasmuch as many of our most honored colleagues have taken a hack at the problem at one time or another. The reason lies elsewhere. The time has come to reevaluate the effort, try to diagnose the roots of this unsavory situation. Perhaps the time has also come to stop plaguing generations of students with complex techniques that are never seriously used. It appears to me that their time would be more profitably engaged in tatting.