

Promoting OR, the experience of the French OR-DA society

Following the initiative of EURO, we – the French OR society (ROADEF) – have decided to promote Operations Research (OR) through several actions. We target not only OR researchers but also our national institutions (CNRS, universities), some enterprises and the French population.

- A first action was to build a twelve-page brochure (in French) (www.roadef.org/Roadef.pdf) presenting elements about what OR is, what OR is doing and could do for you and why is it important to join the French OR society. This brochure has been sent to all members of ROADEF and to some enterprises. It is also available to any OR researcher and practitioner interested in OR.

- A second action has been devoted to disseminate OR information in the following national magazines:

- “L’usine nouvelle” (March 2006)

- “Science et Vie” (April 2006)

- “Le monde informatique” (April 2006)

- etc.

We continue investigating other famous newspapers and magazines for the possibility of publishing articles with the goal of increasing public and professional awareness of OR.

Since 1999, ROADEF has organized every two years a competition, the ROADEF Challenge, dedicated to industrial applications. It consists of finding the best possible method (using new OR algorithms or existing tools) for solving a real problem proposed by an industrial partner. This allows the industrial partner to witness recent developments in the field of Operations Research and Decision Aid and to establish a fruitful partnership with our society.

The Challenge is open to everyone in particular to young researchers. It aims at offering them an opportunity to explore the requirements and difficulties encountered in industrial applications along with the possibility of winning a prize provided by the partner. Recently, a senior category has been added allowing qualified researchers to show their knowledge and demonstrate their know-how on practical problems.

The results of the last Challenge 2005 with Renault have been reported in OR/MS Today (April 2006) (<http://www.lionhrtpub.com/orms/orms-4-06/frrenault.html>) by Alain Nguyen, the head of the OR team at Renault's IT Department. In addition, a special Issue of the European Journal of Operational Research on the subject of this challenge (car sequencing problem) has been organized by Christian Artigues, Van-Dat Cung and Alain Nguyen.

- In honor of Professor Robert FAURE, an influential pioneer in OR in France, ROADEF awards a prize every three years to the best three young OR researchers (35 years max). This prize aims at encouraging a valuable contribution in the field of OR-DA. Special attention is given to work which combines the development of theoretical material with its application in real life problems.

The last award (2006) was reported by an on-line magazine ITR Manager.com (see <http://www.itrmanager.com/article.php?oid=49309>).

- An action with particular significance, consisting of identifying the operations research network in France, was initiated by some members of the society in order to promote and enhance all scientific activities related to the field of operations research. This action was motivated by the promotion of OR and its recognition by CNRS, the French National Centre

for Scientific Research. CNRS is a publicly funded research organization, under the authority of the French Ministry of Research and is the largest of several French research organizations with the legal status of Public Institution of Scientific and Technological Value. The achievement was the creation of the “GDR RO” (research group called “Operational Research”) at the CNRS which provides funds to support scientific projects in OR.

- Finally, the 15th national Festival of Science edition recently took place from 9 to 15 October 2006. This event regularly allows thousands of people—from children to elderly, scientists and non scientists, journalists, politicians—to take part in the myriad of events organised during that period all over France. The French OR-DA society provided, for young people, some fun and playful games for PC (Sudoku, Nim games, see www.li.univ-tours.fr/jeuxdenim/ or www.li.univ-tours.fr/Jeuxdefourmis/) to the organizers to help the presentation of the OR-AD field.

The French OR Society has other ideas for branding OR, and some other tracks are being explored.