

Stephan Kolassa

I am Vice President Corporate Research at SAF AG (<http://www.saf-ag.com>) in Switzerland, which was recently acquired by SAP AG. SAF AG – which stands for “Simulation, Analysis and Forecasting” – develops software for automatic forecasting and replenishment, mainly in retail: our clients are supermarket and drugstore chains who forecast daily sales of tens of thousands of articles for hundreds or thousands of stores. Forecasts are then used as the main ingredient (along with logistical and business parameters and constraints) to create order proposals for each store. All this needs to be automated as much as possible, as there is simply no way that many of these forecasts or order proposals could ever be reviewed on time by a competent forecaster.

These aspects of “forecasting in the field” motivate my main scientific interests: on the one hand, I introduce new advances from academic supply chain forecasting into the software that makes sure your favorite brand of detergent is available in your drugstore – and conversely, I try to help academic forecasters to better understand the challenges the applied forecaster labors under. While forecasting is my main interest, I also work in adjacent areas of the “forecast value chain”: how to automatically preprocess, clean and prepare the data our forecasts will be based on, how to optimize the supply chain based on forecasts and how to improve the numerical stability of our algorithms. As I am also involved in consulting with clients, I am also interested in the change management involved in the forecasting process as well as in how best to educate non-specialists about basic forecasting.

I have been fortunate to be able to work with theoretical and practical forecasters interested in similar topics in my contributions to and work as an Associate Editor for *Foresight*. As the venue where theoretical and practical forecasting meet, *Foresight* offers (and lives up to) great potential for facilitating the dialogue between the two worlds of forecasting. I am also involved in the Program Committee for ISF 2012 in Boston.

If elected Director of the IIF, I will continue to support the interaction between theory and practice in forecasting, most importantly through the existing platform provided by *Foresight*. In addition, I believe that increased interdisciplinary cooperation between forecasting, optimization, supply chain and other experts would be beneficial to all sides, and I intend to emphasize this.