

Evaluation of the IRI's ENSO Forecasts Issued  
prior to and during the Onset of the 2002 El Niño

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In early 2002, the IRI began disseminating ENSO information, including forecasts, on their web site. As the El Niño was in the process of developing in northern spring 2002, the IRI's issued probabilities of an El Niño fluctuated somewhat. In this presentation, we look at the month-by-month sequence of IRI's forecasts and compare them to the forecasts issued by other institutions such as NOAA's Climate Prediction Center and Australia's Bureau of Meteorology. We also examine the monthly fluctuations of the SST predictions of a sizeable set of dynamical and statistical models, and discuss how these contributed to the IRI's issued forecasts. The competing influences on the issued forecasts of (1) objective, quantitative predictive information from models, (2) personal experience and intuition, and (3) the SST conditions at the time of the forecast, are considered. Finally, we discuss the outlook for the IRI's future ENSO forecast system, involving increased reliance on a skill-weighted ensemble of SST predictions from a number of models.