## A chapter from

## **A Meeting Place**

## The History of The American Association for Public Opinion Research

Edited by
Paul B. Sheatsley
and
Warren J. Mitofsky

Copyright © 1992 American Association for Public Opinion Research All Rights Reserved

ISBN: 0-89089-479-5

For PDFs of other chapters and the entire book see

http://aapor.org/history

## AAPOR and the Printed Word W. Phillips Davison

The original constitution of the Association, adopted September 4, 1947, provides that AAPOR shall "facilitate the dissemination of opinion research methods, techniques and findings through annual conferences and an official journal and other publications." The constitution specified further that one of AAPOR's five standing committees should be a committee on publications. This was to consist of five members appointed by the Executive Council; its duties would be to advise and assist the editor, who was to be elected by the Executive Council for a three-year term. The editor was to be responsible, with the advice of the Committee on Publications, for preparing and issuing the official journal of the Association and its other publications.

In fact, the Association did not acquire a journal of its own until 1985, when it received title to the Public Opinion Quarterly from Columbia University. Nor, until many years had passed, did it directly publish and disseminate opinion research methods and findings, except in its annual conference proceedings. It did, however, publish a substantial number of items during its first thirty-eight years. Most of these fell into two categories: those concerned with the development of the opinion research profession and the conduct of the Association itself, and those that were in the nature of tools, such as indexes, that facilitated research in the field of public opinion. The Committee on Publications and the editor were responsible for some of AAPOR's publishing activities, but many were undertaken by other committees or individuals, or were joint projects. It was the financial stringency AAPOR confronted in its early years that made it necessary to modify the publishing activities envisaged in the constitution. At the 1948 meeting of the Association, the treasurer reported that a choice might have to be made between paying for a subscription to an official journal for each member and having the conference proceedings printed.

At the suggestion of the chairman of the Committee on Publications, Cornelius DuBois, a compromise was adopted that allowed for both a publication and for printed proceedings. The *Public Opinion Quar-*

terly had been started in 1937 by Harwood Childs of the Princeton Politics Department, and from its first issue had taken an interest in public opinion research. This journal was designated as the official organ of the Association, and *POQ* agreed to publish the AAPOR conference proceedings as a supplement to its 1949-50 Winter issue for a fee of \$500. Members of the Association were to receive subscriptions to *POQ* at a special rate of \$3.75 per annum (instead of the usual rate of \$5.00), and Phillips Davison, editor of *POQ*, was elected by the Executive Council to serve as the Association's editor also.

In the meantime, the proceedings of the 1947 founding conference at Williamstown had been printed and distributed by the National Opinion Research Center as a separate volume. Although not an official AAPOR publication, this 187-page book provides an invaluable account of AAPOR's origins and intentions. It was edited by Henry David, then at Queens College, and was entitled Second International Conference on Public Opinion Research, the very first such conference having been at Central City, Colorado, in the summer of 1946. The Central City conference proceedings were compiled and distributed by NORC in the form of a mimeographed report.

At the 1949 business meeting of AAPOR, in Ithaca, New York, it was decided to continue arrangements for publication of the conference proceedings made at the 1948 meeting: namely, they would be published as a supplement to the *POQ*. Other publications at this time included only the annual conference program.

At the 1951 business meeting, during the conference in Princeton, Chairman William Lydgate of the Publications Committee reported that a new method to prepare the proceedings for publication in *POQ* had been adopted. An analyst had been appointed for each session to do a "book review" of it, rather than a summary presentation of each paper. This new method appears to have been a response to an Executive Council request that the annual proceedings should provide a better record of what had gone on, but at a lower cost. The response of Lydgate's committee illustrates an important characteristic of AAPOR officials: their cheerful willingness to attempt the impossible. Nevertheless, no proceedings at all were published for the 1952 conference at Vassar. Some "book reviews" came in late and some sessions were not covered at all. A partial record of the 1952 proceedings was, however, compiled by Robert Bower of the Bureau of Social Science Research and distributed in mimeographed form.

More problems for the Publications Committee lay ahead. At the 1954 annual business meeting, Chairman Louis Harris reported that

the *POQ* was experiencing financial difficulties, because the Princeton University Press had stopped underwriting its publication costs. Furthermore, AAPOR was not providing any support to the journal, since the special subscription rate given AAPOR members was lower than the costs of production. Harris therefore proposed that an ad hoc committee be organized to solicit funds from AAPOR members and others to ensure continuation of the journal. The meeting agreed that AAPOR had a definite interest in the continuance of the *POQ*, and the recommendation that an ad hoc fund-raising committee be formed was referred to the Executive Council.

A year later, at the 1955 business meeting, Publications Chairman Archibald Crossley reported that the Executive Council was working with a Princeton University faculty committee to assist *POQ* in clearing up a manuscript backlog and straightening out its subscription list, which had become disorganized because of the lack of clerical help. Those present at the meeting voted that the amount AAPOR paid for an individual subscription be increased from \$3.75 to \$4.50. Meanwhile, the fund-raising committee proposed in 1954 had been created under the chairmanship of Paul Lazarsfeld. Known as "the committee for the *POQ*," this body had no official connection with AAPOR. Nevertheless, almost all members of the committee were AAPOR members, one exception being Marion Harper, then of the McCann Erickson Advertising Agency, who agreed to serve as co-chair.

The committee persuaded some twenty-five organizations interested in public opinion research to become "sustaining subscribers" to the *POQ* at a rate, initially, of \$100 a year. The journal's financial problems were by no means over, but from that time on there was no doubt about its regular appearance. Some of the sustaining subscribers enrolled by the committee for the *POQ* continued their support until the Quarterly reached the break-even point twenty years later. In 1968, when the *POQ* editorial office was moved from Princeton to Columbia, largely because Princeton no longer had a senior faculty member working in the field, AAPOR contributed \$2,000 toward the costs of this relocation.

The annual conference proceedings continued to be one of AAPOR's most important publications through 1975. Various AAPOR editors adopted various approaches toward adapting the proceedings for publication, but a standard format developed during the 1950s and remained in fairly constant use. Authors of individual papers were asked to prepare abstracts; in the case of round-tables or symposia the chair-

men prepared summaries. The AAPOR editor then put all the material together in a form suitable for publication in the *POQ*.

This practice continued until 1976, at which point the AAPOR editor for that year, Matt Hauck, announced tersely: "Budgetary constraints prohibit the publication of the abstracts in the POQ." At the same time, however, the abstracts were collected in duplicated form and were made available for purchase at the annual conference. The conference program and a report on the annual business meeting continued to appear in the POQ.

As the published conference proceedings were being phased out, an AAPOR newsletter was being phased in. From the beginning of the organization, various presidents and secretary-treasurers had, from time to time, sent communications to the membership with news about AAPOR itself and information about professional matters. Helen Crossley, who held the secretary-treasurer post during the 1973-75 period, was particularly active in this regard, and issued two newsletters during her term of office.

A more formal newsletter of twelve pages appeared in March, 1974. In a page one editorial, signed by Harold Kassarjian, Editor, and Patricia Riley, Associate Editor, it was announced:

Because of the urging and high pressure tactics of our Publications Chairman, Franco Nicosia, the AAPOR Newsletter is to be published on a more regular basis. The task was no easy one, but with the delicate use of mildly veiled threats... Nicosia managed to convince your new editor that a newsletter was essential to his health...

The editorial went on to appeal for news and information from AA-POR members. This appeal was apparently successful, because a sixteen-page newsletter, identified as Volume 2, No. 1, appeared in November 1974. Included in the publication was Association news, including news from regional chapters of AAPOR, letters to the editor, job openings, notices of publications of interest to members, and a "president's column."

The newsletter, now titled AAPOR News, has continued under a succession of hard-working editors, sometimes with many pages and sometimes with fewer, on a customary schedule of three times a year. It has come to be relied upon by AAPOR members as a highly readable assemblage of useful information. Following Kassarjian and Riley, the publication's editors have included Alan Andreasen, Mary Spaeth, Michael Rappeport, Roger Green, Peggy Gaboury, Donald Albert, Barbara Lee, Philip Meyer, Donald DeLuca, Barry Sussman, and James Beniger.

Another publishing venture started about the same time as the newsletter. Together with ten other professional organizations, AAPOR sponsored a new *Journal of Consumer Research*. This was a quarterly publication whose first two issues appeared in 1974. The policy board and editorial board of the new publication both included representatives from AAPOR. The Journal has made a distinguished place for itself, and continues to appear.

Meanwhile, the Association was issuing a number of publications that served its own organizational requirements. These included the annual conference program and the directory of members, as well as a leaflet (revised several times) entitled, "What Is AAPOR?" The lastnamed was used in answering queries and recruiting new members. Another widely-distributed statement briefly described careers in public opinion research. The AAPOR "Code of Professional Ethics and Practices" appeared in the POQ (Fall 1960), and copies of this (and subsequent revisions) were distributed to all members and to many others. A booklet entitled "Agencies and Organizations Represented in AAPOR Membership" was first published in 1975, in response to requests from job applicants and research users for the names of agencies involved in various types of research, and subsequently was revised and reissued on an annual basis. The Association's revised certificate of incorporation and by-laws were included in a handsome booklet that was distributed to members in 1982.

One of AAPOR's principal efforts at public education came in 1985, when 5,000 copies of an article from the Spring POQ, "Early Calls on Election Results and Exit Polls: Pros, Cons, and Constitutional Considerations" were reprinted and distributed as a contribution to the continuing debate about possible regulation of early election night forecasts. The article, based on a session at the 1984 AAPOR conference that had been organized and chaired by Ronald Milavsky, was mailed to state and federal officials, media executives, leading journalists, and others who were concerned with the debate.

Research tools sponsored by AAPOR have consisted primarily of two cumulative indexes to *POQ*. One of these, covering the journal's first twenty years, was edited by Norma Gilbertson, librarian of the School of Journalism of the University of Minnesota, and published by the Columbia University Press. Council authorized an expenditure of \$4,100 for printing this index, an amount that was somewhat more than repaid by the time the publication sold out. The second cumulative index, 266 pages in length, was edited by Philip Meyer and Mary Spaeth of the Publications and Information Committee. (The new

name for the committee was adopted in a revision of the original bylaws.) This index was published for AAPOR by the Elsevier Science Publishing Company in 1984, and covered the years 1937 through 1982. The editors noted in a foreword that its content was incorporated in a computer database to facilitate the preparation of future editions.

A widely used anthology, not an official AAPOR publication but one that would not have appeared without AAPOR's assistance, was published in 1975. Edited by Robert Carlson and entitled "Communications and Public Opinion," the 632-page volume assembled thirty-six notable articles from the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, starting with "Toward A Science of Public Opinion," by Floyd Allport, from Volume 1, No. 1. Editor Carlson wrote a general introduction as well as briefer introductions to the four sections, and Herbert Abelson, then AAPOR president, contributed a foreword.

AAPOR acquired title to the *POQ* from Columbia University in 1985, although the university continued to provide editorial services for the journal until June 1986. By this time, the *Quarterly* generated enough income from subscriptions to cover nearly all costs of publication. The transfer agreement was negotiated primarily by Eleanor Singer, who had already established a record for editorial longevity by remaining at the journal's helm for more than ten years, and by Albert Gollin, AAPOR's 1984-85 President. As of 1986, Howard Schuman, Director of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, was named *POQ* editor by the AAPOR Executive Council, and the University of Chicago Press was designated as the *Quarterly*'s new publisher.

Under the Association's management, the *POQ* is supervised by a seven-member Advisory Committee consisting of two AAPOR councillors-at-large, the journal's editor, and four AAPOR members who are appointed by the Executive Council to serve staggered four-year terms. The committee provides continuing oversight of administrative, financial, and editorial policy matters. It also nominates candidates for editor to the Executive Council. The editor serves not more than two four-year terms, and is assisted by an editorial board, whose members review manuscripts and advise on editorial content. Board members serve for not more than two terms of three years each.

Transfer of the POQ title to AAPOR brought a sigh of relief from the journal's friends, who by 1985 were many. After thirty-one years at Princeton and eighteen at Columbia, it appeared that no university could have assured it a permanent home. The transfer also made AA-

POR a major publisher of research on public opinion and communication, as envisaged in the by-laws adopted in 1947.

The principal reasons for AAPOR's relatively modest activity in the publication of scientific information during its first thirty-eight years probably had to do with financial weakness, at least during the initial two decades, and with the multiple professional affiliations of its members. The Publications Committee formulated a number of ambitious plans to produce monographs (for example, a guide to public opinion research for legislators and journalists), and book series on other specialized subjects, but none of these projects came to fruition. It proved impossible to find members with time to carry them out.

Nevertheless, AAPOR has certainly been effective in promoting the growth of knowledge about public opinion. Its major contributions have been facilitative in character: bringing together those interested in the subject for annual conferences, rescuing the POQ from almost certain financial disaster, keeping its members in touch with each other through AAPOR News, and assisting in the genesis of the Journal of Consumer Research and the Carlson anthology. Had AAPOR not existed, many books and articles would never have been written, nor would the refinement of opinion research tools have proceeded at such a rapid pace. AAPOR helped to build a hospitable environment.