AAPOR News: December 2011

Welcome to your December issue of AAPOR News offering timely and important association updates along with interesting news from the public opinion and survey research community.

This issue includes an end-of-year update from President Scott Keeter, results from the AAPOR membership survey, information on the 2012 Annual Conference plenary session and more.

Letter from the President

As you may have already heard, AAPOR’s Executive Council just approved the appointment of Patricia Moy and Tom W. Smith as the new editors of Public Opinion Quarterly, effective January 2013. POQ is probably the most visible part of AAPOR to the outside world.

Since its founding in 1937, POQ has established itself as a premier social science journal, occupying a unique niche in the world of scholarly publishing.

It straddles several academic disciplines and earns high impact ratings. Its most frequently cited papers include an equal number focused on public opinion and on survey methodology. It has a well-deserved reputation for timeliness, readability and—to the occasional dismay of those of us who have had papers rejected—very high standards.

How’d all that happen?

Ultimately, of course, the authors have to create the content. But good papers fresh off the authors’ fingertips aren’t sufficient. The character and quality of a journal are also shaped by a combination of the journal’s traditions, character and reputation, but most of all by the vision and work of its editors. Editors curate the collection of research that appears in the journal. They recruit outstanding referees and then make sure their reviews are timely. They shape individual articles by guiding authors during the revision process. They cook up ideas for special issues – a feature of POQ that has proven to be very popular and influential. These and other reasons are why the selection of new POQ editors is such a critical decision for AAPOR.

POQ has been fortunate to have a succession of outstanding editors. I was vividly reminded of this legacy when I got a sneak peek at the table of contents of the upcoming 75th anniversary issue. Can’t say more right now—I’m sworn to secrecy—but you will really love the issue.

Of course, that legacy includes the current editors, Nancy Mathiowetz and Jamie Druckman, who will be stepping down at the end of next year. Nancy and Jamie brought a great combination of expertise to the job—impressive records in methodological and public opinion research—along with tremendous energy, effective organization, outstanding judgment and a deft touch with decision letters (a very important skill since about 90% of manuscripts get rejected). We are fortunate that
they still have a year to go on their sentences, and we’ll continue to benefit from the fruits of their labors for some time afterwards as manuscripts they accept make it through the pipeline and into print.

Patricia and Tom are familiar faces to the AAPOR community. Both have served AAPOR as conference chairs. Patricia is the Christy Cressey Professor of Communication at the University of Washington. She’s been an AAPOR member since 1996 and has been elected to the Executive Council three times. She’s currently associate editor of POQ and Councilor-at-Large for the association.

Tom, a winner of the AAPOR Award in 2002, has been the director of the General Social Survey for more than 30 years. He also is director of the Center for the Study of Politics and Society and a senior fellow at NORC at the University of Chicago. He has been elected to the Executive Council four times and is the current president of WAPOR.

In their proposal to become the new editors, Patricia and Tom promised to maintain the interdisciplinary character of POQ and the intellectual diversity of its authors. They wrote: “While some wish to see the journal focus more on either substance or method, the reality is that the two schools work in tandem—each drawing from and informing the other—to further the field.”

The new editorial team will begin work in mid-2012, overlapping with the outgoing editors for six months. New submissions after mid-year will be directed to the new team, while Mathiowetz and Druckman will continue working with authors and manuscripts already in the pipeline. The new editors take the helm in January 2013.

Please join me in offering a warm welcome to Patricia and Tom…and in shouting a big thank you to Nancy and Jamie as they enter the home stretch of their term.

Scott Keeter
AAPOR President 2011-2012
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AAPOR Releases Results of 2011 Membership Survey

By Joe Murphy, Membership & Chapter Relations Chair

AAPOR members are satisfied with the organization and see AAPOR as personally important. Even former members view AAPOR positively, suggesting that dissatisfaction with AAPOR is not a major factor in people’s decisions to discontinue their membership, according to the 2011 AAPOR Membership Survey now available to members on the AAPOR website.

The survey also found that most members would recommend AAPOR to friends and colleagues. But there are certain areas where these data suggests that AAPOR can do a better job, including educating journalists, educating the public, supporting students, influencing legislation and encouraging disclosure.

The AAPOR Executive Council has begun discussing the survey findings in planning sessions, focusing on several paths of action suggested in the report:

- Keep membership rates reasonable, especially for students; continue investigating other ways to support and provide opportunities for students.
- Expand opportunities for young members and those who are in their first year of AAPOR membership (who are somewhat less likely to say they will renew); find ways to engage these people actively in AAPOR through volunteer opportunities and other activities.
- Maintain a focus on standards and transparency, which is of highest importance to members.
- Continue and improve efforts to reach out to and educate the public and journalists about public opinion and survey research.
Focus efforts on areas where perceived efficacy lags behind importance: educating journalists; educating the public; supporting students; influencing legislation; and encouraging disclosure.

Work to increase members’ awareness of certain AAPOR benefits for which a substantial proportion of members could not assess effectiveness, including the Blue Book, Career Center and online social networks, as well as benefits to the field such as producing white papers, educating the public and journalists, influencing legislation and supporting students.

In recent years, AAPOR member surveys have been conducted on an irregular basis with the most recent conducted in 2007 and 1996. The 2010 AAPOR Strategic Plan identified the need for information about member attitudes and characteristics and called for conducting recurring member and nonmember surveys in the future. The surveys are meant to measure perceptions of AAPOR, identify the value of existing membership benefits and AAPOR’s effectiveness in delivering benefits, and gauge desire for additional benefits.

In response to this plan, the AAPOR Membership and Chapter Relations Committee, led by 2010 Chair Kelly Foster and Associate Chair Joe Murphy, set forth to operationalize the membership surveys and began planning in earnest in the fall of 2010. Among the purposes stated in the strategic plan, the Membership Committee concluded that the most pressing need for surveys was to gauge the value of member benefits and identify additional high-value benefits. These data would allow us to make informed decisions about the portfolio of benefits offered to members and gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of members and nonmembers.

Surveys were sent to all AAPOR members, recently lapsed members, and nonmembers who attended the 2011 AAPOR conference. Sixty-one percent of members, 31 percent of former members, and 55 percent of nonmember attendees completed the survey.

AAPOR is pleased to share with members the final report on the findings of the 2011 surveys, available on the AAPOR website. Here, you can find the major takeaways from the surveys, copies of the questionnaires and related materials, and we soon plan to post a de-identified copy of the survey data for member use.

On behalf of the Executive Council, thank you once again to all those who participated in the survey and provided input for the future direction of AAPOR!

2012 Annual Conference Plenary Session to Focus on Non-Probability Sampling

By Dan Merkle, Conference Chair

A distinguished panel of experts will explore the value of non-probability sampling to our profession, and to science more generally, at the 2012 AAPOR conference plenary session. The plenary, titled “Examining the Value of Non-Probability Sampling in Social Research,” will explore the circumstances under which non-probability sampling can and cannot be used effectively and with confidence.

Two panelists will present the case for the value of non-probability sampling, outlining the strengths of the approach, when it can be used effectively and with confidence, and when it cannot. The panelists, who have been at the forefront of research in this area, will be Doug Rivers, professor of political science at Stanford University and chief innovations officer at YouGov, and George Terhanian, Toluna’s North America president and group chief strategy officer.

The plenary will also include two discussants who will evaluate the panelists’ arguments. The discussants will be Robert Groves, director of the U.S. Census
Bureau, and Elizabeth Stasny, professor of statistics at Ohio State University. The session will be moderated by Nancy Mathiowetz, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The debate within AAPOR about non-probability sampling dates to the inaugural conference in Central City, Colorado, in 1946 and continued in the pages of *Public Opinion Quarterly* in the years that followed. In recent years the use of non-probability sampling has increased with the proliferation of Internet surveys and with emerging methods of measuring opinion and behavior that include the analysis of social media content, blogs, microblogs and Internet searches. The theme of the 2012 conference, “Evaluating New Frontiers in Public Opinion and Social Research,” is designed to explore the strengths and weaknesses of these types of new methodologies and discuss the implications for our profession. This plenary, with its focus on non-probability sampling, will provide a starting point for these discussions.

AAPOR’s 67th annual conference will be May 17-20, 2012, at the JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes in Orlando, Florida. The plenary session will be held on the first evening of the conference, May 17.

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**Mark Your Calendars!**

**Upcoming AAPOR Annual Conferences**

**May 17-20, 2012**  
JW Marriott Grande Lakes, Orlando, FL

**May 16-19, 2013**  
Seaport Boston Hotel & Seaport World Trade Center, Boston, MA

**May 15-18, 2014**  
Anaheim Marriott, Anaheim, CA

**May 14-17, 2015**  
Westin Diplomat in Ft. Lauderdale, FL

**May 12-15, 2016**  
Hilton Austin, Austin, TX

**May 18-21, 2017**  
Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, LA

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**It's Time to Renew Your AAPOR Membership!**

We don’t want to start the new Year without you! Renew today and continue receiving all of the benefits of your AAPOR membership, including:

- Members-only reduced rates for the AAPOR Annual Conference, one of the most highly regarded conferences in public opinion and survey research.

- Subscription and online access to AAPOR’s journal, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, one of the most frequently cited journals of its kind.

- Members-only discounted rates for AAPOR webinars on the hottest topics in survey methods and research.

- Six issues of AAPOR News, the e-newsletter that keeps you in touch with colleagues and activities important to AAPOR members.
AAPORnet, the members-only listserv that gives you immediate access to insight from a wide range of experts.

Online access to the searchable AAPOR Membership Directory, Career Center and Events Calendar.

Continuing your membership in AAPOR offers you the opportunity to deepen your commitment to a community that cares about quality and ethics in the vital work of survey and opinion research. As an AAPOR member, you can keep abreast of advocacy issues, interact with leaders in the field, volunteer for committees, task forces and special projects and advance your career by attending or presenting at the annual conference.

RENEW NOW

Contact Donna Tieberg with any questions.

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New Professional Development Initiatives for 2012

By Anna Wiencrot, Professional Development Subcommittee Chair

The AAPOR Education Committee is excited to announce the creation of the Professional Development Subcommittee. This subcommittee seeks to help meet the AAPOR strategic goal of expanding educational opportunities beyond short courses at the annual conference to opportunities throughout the year. Responding to the interests of AAPOR members, this subcommittee is focusing on professional development for members of all levels of experience.

In 2012, the subcommittee will be working on the following initiatives:

Professional Mentoring Program Pilot Test. The Professional Development Subcommittee has teamed with the Membership Committee and Docent Program to pilot test a mentoring program. Mentoring offers not only professional growth opportunities to mentors and mentees, but will also benefit AAPOR overall by:

- Helping new AAPOR members get settled into the organization;
- Creating a knowledge-sharing environment;
- Developing survey research talent; and,
- Improving membership retention.

The pilot program, beginning in early 2012, will kick off with an orientation for all mentors and mentees. Following six months of mentorship, the program will be evaluated to measure the effectiveness of the pilot and determine next steps for future mentorship opportunities.

Watch for more information about this pilot program in the coming weeks. If you have any questions about this exciting pilot program in the meantime, please feel free to contact Jennie Lai, Jennie.Lai@nielsen.com.

Webinar on New York Times Data Presentation and Graphics. In partnership with the Online Education Subcommittee, a webinar presentation by The New York Times Graphics Department will be offered in late-winter/early-spring 2012. This presentation will focus on the nuts and bolts of how The Times uses information graphics in print and on the web to present data, tell stories and make information understandable for more than a million readers. Stay tuned for the date and more details on what should be an incredibly interesting and informative webinar.

Professional Development Session at the 2012 AAPOR Conference: Considering Changing Sectors in the Research Industry? Advice From Those
**Who Have Done It!** As AAPOR members explore new frontiers in research, many are—or would like to—explore new frontiers in their own careers. One of the great strengths of AAPOR is that it represents researchers from a wide variety of sectors, including Government, Academic, Commercial, Not-for-Profit and those who are self-employed. There is exceptional talent and experience to draw upon to guide fellow AAPORites who are considering new journeys.

This session will bring together a group of AAPOR members who have navigated across these sectors. They will provide guidance on the territory—the peaks, valleys, and sandpits of changing fields within research. The session may be of interest both to junior researchers starting their career and wondering what it is like in other sectors and for veteran researchers who might be considering a career change. Expect a lively discussion reflecting the diversity of our membership and experience traversing the landscape.

The session will be moderated by Dr. Michael Link, who has himself switched sectors a time or two. More information will be coming as the conference approaches. If you have any questions about this session, please contact Jordon Peugh at jpeugh@knowledgenetworks.com.

If you have ideas or requests for future professional development opportunities, contact Professional Development Subcommittee Chair Anna Wiencrot or Education Committee co-chairs Melissa Herrmann and Chuck Shuttles.

We would like to express our thanks for the support and hard work from the Executive Council, the Education and Membership Committees, the Professional Development Subcommittee and AAPOR staff.

**AAPOR Awards - Nomination Deadline: January 13, 2012**

Each year we ask the AAPOR community to nominate candidates for four awards that recognize distinguished achievement in our profession. I want to encourage you to assist us in identifying candidates for the following:

- **The 2012 AAPOR Award**, our organization’s highest honor, recognizes distinguished achievement in conducting or advancing public opinion research.
- **The 2012 Warren J. Mitofsky Innovators Award**, first given in 2000, was created to recognize innovations with recent impact on our field of public opinion research.
- **The AAPOR Policy Impact Award** recognizes outstanding research that has had a clear impact on improving policy decisions, practice and discourse, either in the public or private sectors.
- **The AAPOR Book Award** seeks to recognize influential books that have stimulated theoretical and scientific research in public opinion and/or influenced our understanding or application of survey research methodology. This includes any book in the field that is at least three years old, including any published before or during the period covered by the list of the “Fifty Books that Have Significantly Shaped Public Opinion Research, 1946-1955.”

Please review the nomination information on the AAPOR website for complete details on each of the awards. **All nominations must be received no later than Friday, January 13, 2012.**

**Show Your Support! Consider an End-of-Year Gift to AAPOR**

Consider making a gift to AAPOR. Your donation helps to send students to the conference, preserve AAPOR's legacy and advance programs, awards and activities in the field. Keep an eye out for our end of year appeal and join other AAPOR members in making a financial gift to help us reach new goals and continue our
current activities.

- Support talented young people who may find a good home in AAPOR, helping to grow our membership. As we have done through the Sudman Student Paper Award and the Roper Awards to new workers in our field, we want to extend our funding outreach to graduate students, making it possible for more students to engage in our annual conference.

- Expand AAPOR’s presence as a leader in polling and opinion research, especially in the environment of fast-paced information needs of society.

- Preserve our legacy by expanding the heritage interview series, updating *A Meeting Place*, and archiving our most important documents and experiences.

Your help is essential to continuing AAPOR’s crucial impact and relevance in public opinion and survey research. Contributions beyond the cost of membership keep our conference, outreach and educational activities current and accessible.

Please make a financial commitment to help us reach these new goals and support existing programs, either with your annual membership renewal or by visiting our Gifts to AAPOR page on our website.

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