AAPOR News: September 2011

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

This issue includes 2012 Annual Conference Call for Participation information, a financial report from President Scott Keeter, an update on the Transparency Initiative, exciting news about an AAPOR-sponsored video contest and more.

Letter from the President

"Follow the money." That’s what Deep Throat told Bob Woodward when he was trying to figure out the significance of the Watergate burglary. We know how that ended. Hopefully that’s not the future of my presidency, but having just been immersed in the AAPOR budget at our September Executive Council meeting in Deerfield, Illinois, the money is very much on my mind.

So I’d like to give you a quick tour of where AAPOR stands financially – and where our money comes from and how we spend your dues, conference fees and other revenues.

The most important observation about the budget is that AAPOR is in good financial shape. That’s pretty comforting in this economic climate. When the current economic downturn started in late 2008, AAPOR’s Councils planned for the worst, cutting expenditures and making very conservative assumptions about membership levels and conference attendance.

Fortunately, we have been pleased that membership has continued to grow and that conference attendance has been strong, despite the economy. The budget surpluses we’ve achieved in each year since then have contributed to our reserves and help provide a cushion against future financial challenges. Sustained attention to AAPOR’s financial records and reporting by our professional staff at the Sherwood Group has helped Council to better understand our financial situation and manage our money.

One good consequence of that is that there will be no increase in membership dues in 2012 and no increase in conference registration fees for members that attend our 2012 Annual Conference in Orlando. I’m proud to say that we’ve been able to hold the line on membership fees for six years and on conference registration for three. In these tough times, every bit helps. Staff has also negotiated a highly competitive room rate for the conference hotel in Orlando, and as a result, rooms for our 2012 meeting will be less expensive than in Arizona.

Here’s the big picture. AAPOR raises and spends a little more than a million dollars a year. We expect to have revenues of just under $1.15 million for 2011 and expenditures of just over $1 million.
AAPOR currently has a bit less than $1 million in its reserves. Nonprofit management professionals advise us that a healthy association will have at least six months of its budgeted operating funds in reserves, and in the current climate it may be prudent to have more than that – perhaps as much as nine months. We are meeting that more stringent standard right now, and we’d like to keep it that way.

On the revenue side, dues from members account for about one quarter of our total income. We also get a significant amount of income from Public Opinion Quarterly. And other activities, including the Blue Book and our webinars, are helping the bottom line as well. If these were our only revenue sources, and we didn’t put on an annual conference, we’d have had close to a balanced budget the last few years.

But of course AAPOR wouldn’t be AAPOR without the conference, and it’s the 800 pound gorilla both for revenues and expenditures. Conference revenues in 2011 were about $650,000 and a dazzling $690,000 in 2010, when we had our highest attendance ever. Conference income comes not only from registration. Nearly a third of that revenue comes from sponsorships, exhibits and short courses.

The conference is also very expensive to put on, with a projected cost of $529,000 this year. Still, comparing conference revenue to expenses leaves a healthy surplus of nearly $124,000, which supports other AAPOR activities and contributes to our reserve fund.

Other than the conference, how do we spend our money? The second biggest expense is our administration – what we pay to our AAPOR management company, The Sherwood Group, to provide the whole gamut of staffing and headquarters services that make AAPOR run. Your AAPOR staff does everything from answering the phones, to processing memberships and payments, to arranging and participating in the council’s monthly meetings and many of the committee meetings, to planning and overseeing all of the logistics of the conference including negotiating with hotels and handling registration.

They also host our website and managed its recent redesign. They help with the design and implementation of our publications and media outreach. They offer strategic guidance on education services, including planning, marketing, implementation and evaluation of webinars, and the development of new services for members and the broader public opinion and survey research community. They provide the institutional memory and continuity that is essential for an otherwise all-volunteer organization. Moreover, our staff has exposed AAPOR leaders to the best practices, and emerging trends in association management and association leadership. Hopefully this will help present and future Councils to work more effectively and efficiently on behalf of AAPOR members.

Public Opinion Quarterly generates a great deal of revenue, but much of that is offset by the expenses of the editorial office and the costs of subscriptions for members. There also are costs associated with the production of AAPOR’s Survey Practice e-journal, the webinar series begun this year and other educational activities.

Finally, the daily business of the Council and all of the volunteer committees involve some expenses – travel, lots of conference calls, legal fees and the like.

I came away from our budget meetings with a great deal of optimism about AAPOR’s future. We’d love to continue to grow because it would help our bottom line, allow us to develop meaningful new programs, and perhaps increase AAPOR’s influence in the survey research world. But we don’t have to grow a lot to remain financially viable. That’s a comfort.

And so many great things are on the horizon. The 2012 conference with its provocative and forward-looking theme promises to attract not only the regular conference attendees but perhaps a new group of researchers in the world of social media and technology from whom we can learn – and for whom we can be a valuable resource. The webinar series is off to a good start, and we all see great
potential in it for providing educational opportunities for members and additional revenue for the association. The proposed new AAPOR journal, *Survey Statistics and Methodology*, will add a new dimension to our leadership in the survey methods field. And soon we hope to welcome the revitalized New England chapter of AAPOR into the family.

Let me add one footnote to what has perhaps become an overly long letter. I just returned from the annual WAPOR conference in Amsterdam. One primary reason for the visit was to take part in a panel about AAPOR’s Transparency Initiative (TI), along with Former President Peter Miller and current Vice President Paul Lavrakas. The session was well received, but more important, we heard many good ideas that might improve the TI as we move toward its rollout in a few months.

I also attended the WAPOR business meeting and heard that WAPOR, like AAPOR, is in good financial shape. WAPOR Executive Council members were delighted with the conference, which attracted the largest attendance in its history. This is more evidence that our profession is healthy. Moreover, it indicates that associations like AAPOR and WAPOR that are built on the high professional standards of its members have a lot to be optimistic about, despite the tough economic climate and the methodological and financial challenges facing the survey profession.

If you’ve made it all the way to the end of this long update, thanks for reading. And please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have questions or suggestions for how AAPOR can better serve its members and the profession. Best wishes for a healthy and productive fall.

Scott Keeter
AAPOR President 2011-2012
sket@pewresearch.org

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67th Annual AAPOR Conference Call for Participation: Submit Your Proposals by November 4

By Dan Merkle, 2012 Conference Chair

Proposals are now being accepted for papers, methodological briefs, posters, panel sessions and demonstrations to be presented at AAPOR’s 67th Annual Conference at the JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes in Orlando, Fla., on May 17-20, 2012.

Proposals should address important research questions, increase AAPOR member knowledge and promote our profession. Any topic in public opinion, survey research or marketing science is appropriate. The submission deadline is November 4, 2011.

We are particularly interested in proposals related to our conference theme: “Evaluating New Frontiers in Public Opinion and Social Research.” The continued proliferation of new communication media and technologies presents increased opportunities as well as challenges for public opinion, marketing science and survey researchers. Our conference theme focuses on evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of new methodologies and modes of data collection and exploring the implications for our profession.

This includes new methods of measuring opinion and behavior such as the analysis of social media content (e.g., Facebook), blogs, microblogs (e.g., Twitter) and internet searches. We encourage paper submissions that explore the value of these emerging methodologies to public opinion, marketing science and other social researchers, including the reliability and validity of these approaches.

Also related to the conference theme is the use of newer technologies in research such as smart phones, tablets (e.g., iPad), texting, webcams (e.g., Skype), avatars (e.g., Second Life) and other advances in internet surveys. Submissions are encouraged that explore the integration of these newer modes of data collection with existing approaches and evaluate the implications for data quality.
In this rapidly changing communication environment, the 2012 conference theme will provide a forum to discuss the implications of these myriad changes for the public opinion, marketing science and survey research professions.

The conference program will also accept research on other topics of interest to our profession including substantive studies of public opinion on social, economic, and political issues, cross-national and comparative research, political polling and electoral decision-making, the impact of the media on public opinion, and methodological research on cell phones, address-based sampling, nonresponse, noncoverage, sampling, weighting, questionnaire design, Web surveys, mixed-mode data collection and other methodological issues.

Submit your proposal today!

Join us in October for:

Social Networking: Changing the Way We Communicate and Form Opinions

A webinar presented by Bob Fawson & Jackie Lorch
Wednesday, October 12, 2011
1 p.m. EDT

AAPOR webinars combines the educational experience of a live conference session with the convenience of learning at your desk.

This webinar includes a Q & A session with the instructors.

Register Today!

Save the date for the final AAPOR webinar of 2011:

November 30
Evolving Survey Research: New Technologies & the Next Steps Forward
with Michael Link, PhD

Successful Launch of Webinars Meets Strategic Goals and Exceeds Initial Expectations

By Chuck Shuttles, Education Committee Co-Chair

One of AAPOR’s top strategic goals has been to expand educational opportunities beyond just short courses at the annual conference. There have been two webinars in 2011, Address-Based Sampling (ABS) in June and Cell Phone Surveys in August, which have helped meet the strategic goals and have already exceeded the initial attendance and revenue projections for the year! And, there are still two webinars remaining in 2011. How it all came about...

Careful planning. The Education Committee created a subcommittee to develop online education opportunities. In researching how other organizations have utilized...
the Internet for distance learning (some successfully, others not so), the
subcommittee elected to pursue a program of four webinars for this year. Webinars
allow us the ability to have low course development costs, easy to use delivery tools
(i.e., Microsoft LiveMeeting™), audience participation/engagement (e.g., submission
of questions to the instructor, in class polling questions, etc.), and the ability to
“record” the webinar for playback for those learners who could not attend the
original course date and time.

**A Successful Start.** David Dutwin (SSRS) taught the inaugural webinar on ABS in
June and was followed by Scott Keeter (Pew Research Center) on Cell Phone Surveys
in August. The combined attendance and revenue from the two webinars exceeded
the budgeted expectations by nearly 30% for the entire year. While these have been
very successful, the Online Subcommittee and AAPOR staff are examining feedback
from post-course evaluations to continuously improve subsequent webinars and the
value to members.

**More Great Webinars to Come.** The remaining two webinars continue with the
theme of delivering high interest topics. On October 12, Bob Fawson and Jackie
Lorch (SSI) will help us understand how social networking trends are reshaping our
world and influencing opinions. On November 30, Michael Link (The Nielsen
Company) will provide an innovative look at technologies and how they are (and
may) be used to evolve survey research to the next level. We look forward to your
attendance and feedback on how we are doing. To learn more and to register, please
visit the AAPOR website.

If you have ideas or requests for future courses and/or instructors, please contact
Education Committee co-chairs Melissa Herrmann and Chuck Shuttles. We would like
to express our thanks for the support and hard work from Executive Council, David
Dutwin, Scott Keeter, Mark Hardy, Bob Fawson, Jackie Lorch, the Online Education
Subcommittee and AAPOR staff.

**Leadership Opportunity - Serve on AAPOR’s Executive Council**

**By Scott Keeter, AAPOR President**

Do you know someone whose expertise and values should be represented on the
AAPOR Council? Would you personally like to play a leadership role in AAPOR?

Each year we ask the AAPOR community to nominate qualified candidates for service
on AAPOR’s Executive Council. Council members represent the general membership
and provide leadership and oversight for AAPOR’s policies, finances and activities.

Serving on the Council is a major contribution to the profession. It is a chance to
make a real difference not only in how AAPOR operates, but also in the way our field
progresses. It is simply one of the most important and rewarding things you can do
in your career.

We hope you will give serious consideration to this opportunity. The AAPOR Executive
Council should continue to represent the talents and diverse perspectives of our
organization. If you’re interested, or know a qualified AAPOR member who should be
considered, please keep an eye on your inbox next month for the formal call for
nominations for the 2012-2013 AAPOR Executive Council. You are also welcome to
contact Frank Newport, AAPOR Past President and Chair, Nomination Committee
at: Frank_Newport@gallup.com.

**AAPOR Leaders Introduce the Transparency Initiative at the
WAPOR Annual Conference**

**By Marjorie Connelly, Associate Communications Chair**
Researchers from all parts of the globe were introduced to AAPOR’s Transparency Initiative at the WAPOR Annual Conference in Amsterdam last week.

Promoted as a “Special Session” on the WAPOR program, Scott Keeter, Paul Lavrakas and Peter Miller gave an extensive and informative presentation. Peter detailed the origins and motivations behind the Transparency Initiative. Scott followed with a discussion of the practical elements of the project and the progress made in the past year. The current state of development and plans for the future were provided by Paul in the concluding segment.

A lively discussion followed the presentation, with Paul eliciting opinions from the audience. The AAPOR members were particularly interested in the views of attendees from nations other than the United States.

Claire Durand from the University of Montreal and Alejandro Moreno of the Instituto Tecnologico Autonomo de Mexico commented on polling regulations in their countries – cautionary information that can help shape the development of the AAPOR approach.

Mark Gill, from the British polling firm MORI, discussed a British organization that appears to have similar goals in the United Kingdom to what AAPOR plans to accomplish in the United States. The British Polling Council works to insure that relevant methodological information about public polls in Britain is disclosed to consumers.

Later, members of the Transparency Initiative steering committee at the WAPOR conference met with Sir Robert Worcester, founder of MORI and Mark Gill to learn more about the British model.

Calling all Stars! AAPOR Announces First Annual Video Contest

By Rich Morin, Communications Chair

When it comes to polling, are you smarter than Scott Keeter? Are you funnier than Stephen Colbert? Even if you don’t quite measure up to those lofty standards but have access to a video camera, you can make AAPOR history.

Announcing the first annual AAPOR Video Contest.

The goal of the contest is to encourage members to produce short, clever videos on some aspect of survey research. Films should inform, enlighten and entertain. They also should appeal to a broader audience than just AAPOR members. The videos will be judged both on the information they are able to convey about survey research and on their entertainment value, according to video contest subcommittee co-chairs Claudia Deane and Marjorie Connelly who developed the competition with Communications Chair Rich Morin.

Yes, there will be prizes. The creators of the first place winner will receive $500, the second place video wins $300 and the third-best film takes home $100. If they are good enough, the top videos will be shown at the annual conference next May in Orlando. If they are really good, they will be posted for viewing on the AAPOR website.

There are rules:

- Videos should be in a digital format.
- Watchable videos tend to be 2-4 minutes in length. No videos longer than five minutes please.
- Videos must be original to the AAPOR video contest.
Competition is open to all AAPOR members. Team entries are allowed. At least one team member must be a member of AAPOR. Video should have ‘credits’ showing responsible parties.

Entrants must complete a registration form.

Entrants will be judged by AAPOR’s Communications Chair and members of the Communications Committee’s video subcommittee, which has not yet been formed. Judges will not be allowed to submit a video to the contest.

The deadline for entry is April Fool’s Day, 2012. More details to follow in future AAPOR newsletters and on the AAPOR website.

New Heritage Interview Series Recordings Available on the AAPOR Website

By Mike Mokrzycki, Heritage Committee Chair

What happens when two survey researchers at an AAPOR conference, after discussions deep into the night on the pressing methodological issues of the day, get on an elevator with a chimpanzee?

No, this is not a joke -- though the answer is, not surprisingly, hysterical.

You now can find the answer on AAPOR's website, thanks to just one of numerous efforts by the association to preserve and present our long, proud and often colorful legacy -- even as we continue making that history.

First, on a more serious note, the Heritage Interview Series expanded by three to 22 with interviews conducted this summer with George Gallup Jr., Andrew Kohut and Diane Colasanto. Watch them and other AAPOR luminaries discuss their careers, AAPOR and major issues in survey research -- an index of all the Heritage interviews is available on the AAPOR website. Thanks to Frank Newport for conducting the Gallup interview and Claudia Deane for the interviews with Kohut and Colasanto.

AAPOR's Heritage Committee has an aggressive plan for expanding the interview series, and is grateful for funding from the Heritage Interview Endowment that helps make this possible. Among other things, we want to make clear that Heritage Interviews are for people at varying stages of their careers, not just toward the end.

The Heritage Committee also has digitized and posted to the AAPOR website an audio recording of a highly entertaining and enlightening history roundtable at the 1985 AAPOR conference, "Back in the Olden Days." Chaired by Bud Roper (who played excerpts of interviews taped in the 1970s with George Gallup Sr. and Archibald Crossley), this session featured early AAPOR leaders Herb Hyman, Hal Mendelsohn, Don Cahalan, Dick Baxter and Paul Sheatsley; questions posed by "the kids" on the panel -- Evans Witt, Sheldon Gawiser, Nancy Belden and Luane Kohnke-Aguirre; and comments from audience members Jack Elinson, Joe Belden, Helen Crossley and others. Hear wonderfully told stories about Paul Lazarsfeld, Elmo Roper and other public opinion research pioneers, and of exploits at early AAPOR conferences -- including one that shared a hotel with a meeting of chimpanzee owners and their chimps. The recording is available on the AAPOR History Web page.

Stay tuned for other exciting initiatives to come from the Heritage Committee.

AAPOR also has an Archives Committee that is working with the University of Chicago to reorganize the AAPOR archives, curated by the Special Collections
Department there. The archives were established in the 1990s and include documents going back to Harry Field's initial invitation to the very first public opinion research conference, at Central City, Colorado in 1946. You may have seen an exhibit at the 2010 conference in Chicago of highlights from the archives.

In 2012, the AAPOR archives will be reprocessed to make it easier for researchers to retrieve the materials they need. Also, an index will be available online, so copies of documents may be ordered remotely.

Before this work begins, we want to collect materials of historical interest to be added to the collection. A call to members will go out soon but feel free to email archives@aapor.org now if you have materials you would like to donate to the AAPOR archives.

30 Years and Counting!

AAPOR invites all members to join us in honoring the 71 dedicated professionals who have been association members for 30-39 years:

- Duane F. Alwin
- Janice M. Ballou
- Rena Bartos
- Lee B. Becker
- Sandra H. Berry
- George Bishop
- Lawrence D. Bobo
- Linda B. Bourque
- C. Anthony Broh
- Barbara Everitt Bryant
- Peter Case
- Diane Colasanto
- Richard L. Day
- Donald R. DeLuca
- Theresa DeMaio
- Mark DiCamillo
- Stephen J. Dienstfrey
- Don A. Dillman
- David L. Dittman
- Diana Druker
- Sharon Dunwoody
- Murray Edelman
- Alex Edelstein
- Carolyn A. Eldred
- F. Chris Garcia
- Cecile Gaziano
- Toby Goldberg
- Dennis R. Goldenson
- Doris A. Graber
- Robert M. Groves
- Paul Gurwitz
- E. Deborah Jay
- Nicandro Juarez
- Michael Kagay
- David A. Karns
- John Kiley
- Richard A. Kulka
- Susan C. Losh
- Lawrence S. McKenzie
- J. Ronald Milavsky
- Jon D. Miller
- Andrew Morrison
- Kimberly Neuendorf
- Alfred B. Ochsner
- Robert E. O’Connor
- Robert Oldendick
- Michael J. O’Neil
- Diane M. O’Rourke
- Charles Palit
- Roy Pfautch
- Susan H. Pinkus
- John S. Reed
- Theresa F. Rogers
- Bernard Roscho
- Martin D. Saperstein
- Mark A. Schulman
- John M. Shanks
- Robert O. Simmons
- Stephen J. Simpson
- Eleanor Singer
- Patricia D. Smith
- Mary A. Spaeth
- Charlotte G. Steeh
- Robert E. Steen
- Judith Tanur
- Michael W. Traugott
- Clyde Tucker
- Jan Werner
- G. Evans Witt
- Hank Zucker
- Cliff Zukin

Any omissions or inaccuracies in this list were unintentional. To be included please contact Lindsay Arends.

AAPORnet Remains Attachment-Free After Consulting Membership

By Colleen Porter, AAPORnet Transition Subcommittee Chair

Usually, no change is no news. But when it comes to attachments on AAPORnet messages, it is worth noting that the "no attachments" policy was retained only after careful consideration and solicitation of input from list participants.

The subcommittee on the future of AAPORnet formulated a query that was posted to the listserv on the afternoon of Monday, July 11, 2011. Over the following week, more than three dozen members responded, either via private email or posting to the entire list. The subcommittee looked at all the comments and came to a unanimous decision to recommend the following:

1. Continue the policy that attachments not be allowed on AAPORnet.
2. Explore the feasibility of an AAPOR-sponsored library site for members to upload documents that they want to share.
3. Add an explanation to the AAPORnet Guidelines explaining the policy and informing members of other options for document sharing.

While the committee heard from some who wanted attachments, those sentiments were framed as a convenience; nobody was going to unsubscribe if they couldn't have attachments, whereas some people likely would unsubscribe if attachments were implemented. In some cases, the decision is out of individual members' hands, due to institutional email policies regarding attachments.

While the increased risk of malware was a strong motivation, similar levels of concern were also expressed regarding the computer space that attachments take. Additional issues are raised by the widespread adoption of smart phones among our membership, and observations that attachments can slow down email on those devices.

Several comments suggested creation of a document-sharing library on the AAPOR website for members. While AAPOR attempted to implement this in April 2008, it was not popular. However, is worth trying again for several reasons. Members are logging into the website much more often, so issues of missing passwords, etc. are less of an issue. We have a document that will provide information about this option on an ongoing basis. Also, the technology is much simpler and easier to use than it was in the past.

While other listservs do find attachments useful, most such lists are moderated. AAPOR has a strong commitment to keeping the listserv unmoderated for maximum timeliness.

The subcommittee on the future of AAPORnet was chaired by Colleen Porter, with Leo Simonetta, Jim Caplan and Joe Murphy.

Members who are not subscribed to the AAPORnet mail feed can still read messages, post responses and access the archives by logging into the AAPOR website and selecting 'Member Connect' from the top menu, then 'AAPORnet Listserv' from the left bar.

If you would prefer not to receive emails from us, go here.
Please send any comments about this email to info@aapor.org