AAPOR News: November 2011

Welcome to your November 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 a letter from President Scott Keeter, an update on the Transparency Initiative, a roundup from the Mitofsky Dinner in New York City and more.

Letter from the President

One of the association’s activities most valued by our members is the collection of task forces that address problems and issues affecting the practice of survey and opinion research. These task forces marshal AAPOR’s greatest strengths: the vast knowledge, experience and creativity of our membership.

The two most recently-completed task forces produced reports that have been widely cited and used by practitioners and consumers of survey research: the 2010 reports of the Cell Phone Task Force and the Opt-In Online Panel Task Force.

We currently have six task forces at work. Five are engaged in work that affects both the membership and the broader community of practitioners and consumers of survey and opinion research.

- The Task Force on Public Opinion and Leadership, chaired by Frank Newport and Robert Y. Shapiro, is examining ways that survey research can be better used to give people a voice in policy decisions, and ways to help policy makers make more and better use of surveys and survey findings. The task force hopes to provide a preliminary report to the Executive Council in March 2012 and a final report soon thereafter.

- The Survey-Based Legal Evidence Task Force, chaired by Paul J. Lavrakas, is charged with addressing the informational needs of several constituencies, including the courts, the legal profession and survey researchers themselves. It will explore the strengths and weaknesses of opinion and survey research as it bears on the law and legal proceedings, and may also advise council on legal issues that may require or benefit from actions by council. The task force will also be considering whether to recommend that council transform it from a task force into an ongoing ad hoc committee.

- The Non-Probability Task Force is chaired by Mike Brick and Reg Baker. In many respects it is the logical next step after the Opt-In Online Panel Task Force. The mission of the task force is to examine the conditions under which survey designs that do not use probability samples have scientific merit. This is – to put it mildly – a controversial subject for our membership. Given the changes afoot in the profession, the task force has been asked to take a very broad look at the issue. The committee is still in the process of forming, but will include members who represent a wide range of perspectives, including
some top practitioners who use non-probability methods. This task force hopes to produce a report in the fall of 2012 for council’s review.

- The **AAPOR Journals Review Task Force** is chaired by Peter Miller. It recommended, and council approved, a proposal to create a new jointly-sponsored journal with the American Statistical Association, called *Survey Statistics and Methodology*. The task force is currently conducting a search for the editorial team. Once the team is in place, it will develop a proposal for the journal that can be taken to prospective publishers.

- The **Task Force to Review Survey Practice**, chaired by Frank Newport, is currently reviewing the online journal’s operation and mission. Founding Editor John Kennedy has announced his intention to step down in May 2012, and so the task force is now conducting a search for a new editor (see the call for nominations below).

One other task force is working on a topic that is inwardly-focused:

- The **Governance Review Task Force**, chaired by Patricia Moy and Mark Schulman, was born out of a recommendation of the AAPOR Strategic Plan. Its mission is making recommendations to improve the operation of AAPOR’s Executive Council and its committees. It has met regularly for the past year and is looking at the size and structure of council, how to strengthen both the standing committees and the ad hoc committees, how to develop and nurture volunteers and leaders from the membership, and other related governance issues. This task force’s report is expected in early 2012.

Proposals for new task forces can come from the membership as well as from the Executive Council or one of the standing committees. Accordingly, I encourage all members to think about the kinds of problems and issues that AAPOR might address using a task force. And if you have ideas about some of the topics already under study by an existing task force, I invite you to share your views with the chairs. A list of current task forces and chairs (along with all of the standing and ad hoc committees) can always be found on the AAPOR website. In the coming weeks, we hope to expand this material to include additional information, including committee membership, mission statements and other documents.

Scott Keeter  
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Former AAPOR President Honored at Annual Mitofsky Dinner in New York City

By Rich Morin, 2012 Communications Chair

Kathleen Frankovic, a former AAPOR president and retired director of surveys for CBS News, received the fifth Warren J. Mitofsky Award for Excellence in Public Opinion Research at a gala dinner Nov. 10 in New York City.

More than 100 survey practitioners, academics and former CBS News colleagues gathered at the Bryant Park Grill in Manhattan’s Fashion District to honor Frankovic, who led AAPOR in 1992-1993.

“I am thrilled to receive an award bearing the name of Warren Mitofsky,” said Frankovic, who was hired by Mitofsky in 1977 when he headed the CBS election and survey unit. Frankovic retired from CBS in 2009 and remains a polling consultant for the network.

The Mitofsky award is presented annually by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut. Frankovic is the first media pollster to receive the award. She is also the first winner who was not a university-based scholar and the first woman to receive the prize.

At the time of his death in 2006, Mitofsky was the chair of the Roper Center board of directors and the board created the Mitofsky Award in his memory. The center is the leading archive of survey data in the United States.

Political scientist James Stimson of the University of North Carolina, a Roper Center board member and chair of the awards committee, presented the award to Frankovic.

Stimson characterized Frankovic as one of the “keepers of the flame whose job, at the end of the day, is to make sure that quality is paramount. So I salute Kathy for having done it very, very well for a long period of time and who like many others in this room tonight put their personal integrity into the production of numbers that people like me can believe.”

The Mitofsky Award committee had little difficulty deciding to honor Frankovic, Stimson said. “The hard part, what I totally failed to anticipate, was talking her into accepting the award.” Frankovic, who had protested that the award had always gone to a research scholar and not a practitioner, was finally persuaded to accept the prize.

Stimson also described Frankovic, who has a doctorate in political science, “as a kind of an ambassador to academic political science.”

Frankovic said her diplomatic skills were often tested in conversations with longtime CBS anchor Dan Rather, who frequently told her “how much he didn’t believe in polls.”

CBS News chairman Jeff Fager spoke at the dinner. He praised Frankovic and recalled some of the less serious survey questions she asked during her tenure at CBS, including questions about the belief in ghosts and the possibility that Elvis Presley was still alive.
In addition to heading AAPOR, Frankovic has served as president of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR). She was presented with the 2008 AAPOR Award for Exceptionally Distinguished Achievement, the association's highest honor. In 1999 she received the AAPOR New York Chapter's Outstanding Achievement Award.

What's Happening with the Transparency Initiative? A November 2011 Update

By Paul J. Lavrakas, President Elect

Progress on implementing the AAPOR Transparency Initiative (TI) is being made with the TI Steering Committee* planning a “pilot test” of the application, review and certification processes for early 2012.

This past summer the Steering Committee established four working subcommittees to dimension and plan the highly complex implementation of the TI:

- **Structure, Qualification and Compliance** – chaired by David Cantor, this subcommittee is planning the processes that will be used for (a) receiving applications for TI certification, (b) reviewing applications and granting certification, (c) appealing decisions to not grant certification, (d) monitoring ongoing compliance of certified organizations, and (e) vetting noncompliance complaints against certified organizations. It also is planning the establishment of a TI Coordinating Committee which will take over management of the TI once it is fully implemented, which is anticipated to occur in 2012.

- **Database Processes and Infrastructures** – co-chaired by Peter V. Miller and Leah Christian, this subcommittee is creating the application materials an organization will need to complete/submit as part of its desire to receive TI certification, as well as planning for the short- and long-term infrastructures that will need to be created and maintained to store information from certified organizations about their publicly disseminated polls/surveys.

- **Internal and External Communication and Education** – chaired by Rich Morin,
this subcommittee is planning how to publicize the staged implementation of the TI, the application process, and outcomes both within and outside of AAPOR. It also is creating training mechanisms for teaching applicants (a) how to apply for certification, (b) appeal failure to receive certification, (c) re-qualify for certification, and other aspects of the TI. Devising training for TI reviewers and TI monitors also is within the purview of this group.

- **Staffing and Costs** – chaired by Paul J. Lavrakas, this subcommittee is working to identify the short- and long-term costs to AAPOR to run the TI and the staff that will need to be hired to supplement the AAPOR volunteers who will do the ongoing work. The group also is trying to identify sources of additional revenue to support these expenses. Additionally, the group is working with AAPOR’s legal counsel to identify the scope of potential liabilities that AAPOR might face due to matters related to the TI.

With the help of members of the TI Advisory Committee – organizations that volunteered in 2010 to serve as a sounding board for ideas about the substance, structure, and implementation of the TI – which is coordinated by Courtney Kennedy, the Steering Committee and its subcommittees are now focusing heavily on dimensioning a pilot test of the TI application and review stages to be implemented in early 2012.

The pilot test will allow the Steering Committee to determine whether the procedures and infrastructures need to be refined before the full roll-out of the TI. The pilot test is anticipated to run for four to six months. The organizations that agree to participate in the pilot test will be expected to submit their application materials as though they actually were going to be granted certification and gain all the benefits associated with that designation. But their participation in the pilot test will not be visible outside the Steering Committee.

At the time the full TI is rolled out it is expected that the organizations that have been granted “provisional certification” during the pilot test, will have their status changed to full public certification.

*TI Steering Committee Members: David Cantor, Leah Christian, Marjorie Connelly, Liz Hamel, Melissa Hermann, Tim Johnson, Scott Keeter, Courtney Kennedy, Paul J. Lavrakas (chair), Peter Miller, Rich Morin, Joe Murphy, Chuck Shuttles and Susan Tibbitts.*

**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
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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Formally it's the Blue Book, but it has gone Green!

One of our most popular member benefits, AAPOR's Blue Book is an interactive, search-friendly and easily accessible guide to anyone looking for the very best in survey and public opinion research services.

Anyone interested in companies or consultants to help with election polling, market research and all varieties of qualitative or quantitative research can effortlessly search through the online directory by keyword or name or easily download a PDF of the entire list.

In the coming year, AAPOR plans to increase the value and functionality of the Blue Book by creating an interface for consumers to automatically submit a proposal to listed companies.

Advertise your services in the Blue Book. Ads can be purchased, upgraded and updated year-round and now include a direct link to your company's website. An enhanced listing can be branded with your company logo.

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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 with other AAPOR members in making a financial gift to help us to 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 existing programs, either with your annual membership renewal or by visiting our Gifts to AAPOR page on our website.

**Seeking New Survey Practice Editor - Apply Now**

AAPOR’s Survey Practice Committee is selecting an editor to succeed Founding Editor John Kennedy, who will be stepping down in May, 2012. John and his editorial team brought Survey Practice to life, and have made the online publication an important component of AAPOR’s mission to provide up-to-date and relevant research in our field.

There is still time to either self-nominate or to nominate a colleague for this key post. Nominations should be emailed to the attention of Frank Newport, Survey Practice Advisory Committee Chair, at frank_newport@gallup.com.

**Nomination Deadline: November 18, 2011**

If you would prefer not to receive emails from us, go [here](http://sherwood-aapor.informz.net/sherwood-aapor/archives/archive_1933485.html). Please send any comments about this email to [info@aapor.org](mailto:info@aapor.org)