Preface

Every history has a history: this one is no exception. The idea for this book had its origin in a modest committee assignment. When Donna Card Charron chaired the Public Relations committee in 1979-80, she began to sort through AAPOR’s files to prepare an updated “What Is AAPOR” brochure. She came across a memoir on AAPOR’s earlier conferences, written by Paul Sheatsley in 1975, and she recognized the value that a fuller, more systematic recording of AAPOR’s past would have for the organization and its members. (An expanded version of Paul’s memoir serves as the introduction to this book.)

This led her to propose that an ad hoc committee be appointed to plan for an AAPOR history. President Jack Elinson and the Council approved the idea and a committee was appointed, chaired by Donna Charron (who continued in this role until the job was done), with Jean Converse, Jack Elinson, Albert E. Gollin, Paul B. Sheatsley, and David L. Sills as members. It held its first meeting on September 19, 1980, at the Social Science Research Council’s offices. The evident need to create an archive to fill in gaps in the records available at AAPOR’s secretariat in Princeton led the committee to broaden it mandate. The exploration of options lasted nearly two years before an agreement was made with the University of Chicago to establish and maintain an AAPOR Archive.

An executive board was formed in the interim, consisting of Paul Sheatsley, Richard Baxter, Jack Elinson, and Sidney Hollander, all former presidents and long-time AAPOR members, to develop an outline of chapters for the history. By 1983, as editor-in-chief and with the board’s approval, Paul had invited fourteen people to serve as authors and the job of preparing AAPOR’s history was finally under way.

Progress was hindered by the inaccessibility of documents and records until the summer of 1984, when Herb Abelson, Dick Baxter and Sid Hollander spent several days in Princeton, coding and photocopying a large assortment of materials for each of the chapter authors. After that, progress could be measured by the slowly growing pile of chapter drafts available for inspection at successive annual meetings of AAPOR. Several of those initially invited to write chapters had to be replaced, with further loss of momentum. But in 1986 and again in
1988, the Council voted approval of funds to meet the costs of manuscript preparation.

When Paul fell ill, a number of AAPOR members helped take up the slack and kept the project moving: Donna Charron, David Sills and Al Gollin. After his death, Philip Meyer and Stanley Presser lent a hand. Leo Bogart deserves thanks for a complete review of the manuscript with suggestions for the authors.

The final, weighty responsibility for pulling the project together, completing the editing, and getting the history published was assumed by Warren Mitofsky. Where possible, he tried to follow Paul’s direction. There was bound to be slippage in the final text between Paul’s intent and Warren’s delivery. For that too, Mitofsky, with the authors’ forbearance, assumes the responsibility.

It was decided not to update chapters to include events that happened after an author completed his or her chapter. Most chapters were completed at various times in the late 1980s as Paul’s health declined. Requesting updates from the authors could further postpone publication of this history, a project which has already spanned almost a quarter of the existence of AAPOR.

Suzanne Erfurth of NORC worked closely with Paul and then with Warren and the chapter authors to improve their clarity and writing style and to shape consistent format for the book. Her contributions, which went beyond technical editing, deserve special acknowledgement. Thanks also are due Laurie Hendrickson, Laurie Druse, Cassandra Britton, Patrick Bova and Jeffrey Hackett of NORC.

The final manuscript was prepared by Marci Waldman of Voter Research and Surveys. She relentlessly pursued authors for their chapters and collectors for photographs of our past for inclusion in the book. Thanks also are due Daniel Pitkin for his diligent proof reading and indexing of the manuscript.

Only those who took part in the protracted project can fully appreciate the keen intelligence and fierce devotion that Paul brought to the editorship of this history. Periods of illness slowed him down, but he kept on with the tasks of writing, editing, encouraging laggards, and challenging authors to improve successive drafts right up to his final hospitalization late in 1988. Paul embodied the ineffable spirit of AAPOR. It is fitting that this work is dedicated to his memory.

March, 1991