

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) held its fifty-fifth annual conference at the Doubletree Hotel Jantzen Beach, Portland, Oregon, May 18–21, 2000. The AAPOR conference overlapped with the World Association for Public Opinion Research conference, May 17–19, with many joint AAPOR/WAPOR sessions.

A record number of AAPOR registrants, 729, from throughout the world gathered in the shadow of Mt. Hood. This year's attendance was up substantially from last year's record 609 registrants in St. Petersburg Beach, FL. The 1998 St. Louis conference drew 561, while the 1997 Norfolk conference had 547. This year's WAPOR Conference attracted 129 registrants, most of whom (93) also attended the AAPOR Conference.

Attendees were almost evenly split between the academic (42 percent) and commercial sectors (35 percent), with the remainder from the government and nonprofit sectors. Attendance was so large that we had to utilize three nearby hotels to handle the overflow from the Doubletree Jantzen Beach. With almost 100 attendees registering on site at the hotel as opposed to preregistering, the AAPOR registration team exhausted its supply of conference program booklets and had to photocopy additional booklets.

The conference had a record 68 sessions reviewing the impact and challenges of the e-revolution on research and society, methodological issues, questionnaire design, the 2000 Census, elections, global public opinion, and other issues. Nine of the sessions were jointly sponsored by WAPOR, with another nine jointly sponsored by the International Field Directors/Technologies Association (IFD&TC). Sessions included:

- 59 paper sessions, with 212 paper presentations and 54 discussants;
- five roundtables;
- three poster sessions, with 40 poster presentations;
- an evening plenary session;
- three short courses for continuing professional education purposes, two of which were held on the opening day and the other on the final morning of the conference.

Over 650 people contributed to the 2000 AAPOR conference program, including invited speakers, presenters, coauthors, session chairs/moderators, and discussants. Mark Schulman, conference chair, and Peter Miller, associate

conference chair, each organized a team to review the more than 300 submitted abstracts. The WAPOR Conference Committee, chaired by Patricia Moy, reviewed all papers for the WAPOR conference and for the joint AAPOR/WAPOR sessions.

Following the successful implementation of web submissions last year, virtually all submissions and communications were conducted on the Internet this year. The "Call for Papers" was both mailed to members and posted on the AAPOR web site, www.aapor.org. Most abstracts were submitted to a special on-line form on the AAPOR web site. The submission form was created by Mei Lu of the University of Michigan. Other databases and notification forms were generated by Nealia Khan of Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. Nealia also tracked final abstract submissions and notified chairs and discussants of authors' contact information. Katherine Bisbee, Corinna Hunt, and Ann Woo, all with Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc., edited and formatted the abstracts for publication in the conference program. AAPOR Secretariat Marlene Bednarz and Carol Milstein processed all of the registrations and coordinated with the conference committee on a large number of issues, including the formatting and printing of the program book. They worked nonstop for almost four days, handling both AAPOR and WAPOR registrations.

The record attendance required a tremendous effort by the Conference Operations Committee to arrange accommodations for attendees and to coordinate all on-site activities. Conference Operations chair Paul Beatty and associate chair Shap Wolf worked ceaselessly to find additional hotel rooms once the conference hotel was full. They also worked closely with the Doubletree Hotel to secure meeting and function rooms for the record number of sessions and activities this year. Carl Ramirez was responsible for the audio-visual equipment, coordinating between the presenters and the AV contractor. This year AAPOR made a limited number of data projectors and Internet connections available to presenters.

The theme of this year's conference was, "Facing the Challenges of the New Millennium." These challenges include the impact of technology and the Internet on society, on politics, and on survey research. The program featured eight panels devoted to technology issues, including "The Impact of Internet Usage," "Improving Internet Response Rates," "Examination of Web TV for Internet Data Collection," "The Internet's Impact on Society," and "Internet Survey Format and Design Issues." Representatives from virtually every major Internet research company participated in these sessions. Several panel discussants questioned if Internet penetration was sufficient at this point to conduct "cross-section samples" of the public.

The Internet was also the topic of the Friday evening plenary session, "Linking Public and Leaders: The e-Revolution's Impact on Governing." Adam Clayton Powell III, vice president of technology and programs at the Freedom Forum, delivered a provocative keynote address. He described the pervasive impact of the Internet worldwide, which is used mainly for com-

munications as opposed to information gathering. For example, in Lima, Peru, Powell noted that block after block, rich neighborhood and less affluent, there were signs for “Internet Cabinas” everywhere. Some *cabinas* were “unofficial”—families renting their PCs and net connections by the hour, in their homes. The reason is cost: the price of using a *cabina* for an hour of e-mail is about the same as the price of a stamp for a postcard to the United States. Powell also noted that the “digital divide” between rich and poor is narrowing in the United States. Discussants included Norman Nie and James Beniger; Peter Miller moderated the session.

A sampling of the other sessions included “Strategies for Reducing Non-Response,” “Improving Respondent Comprehension of Questions,” “New Frontiers in Cognitive Testing,” “Problems and Progress in Cross-National Studies,” “Improving Questionnaire Design,” “Methods for Measuring Sensitive Issues,” and “Generational Issues.” Census Director Kenneth Prewitt participated in a session on “Fast Reactive Monitoring of the Census 2000 Mass Mobilization Campaign.” Robert Groves organized a roundtable on “The Present and Future of Research on Survey Non-Responses: Reflections on Portland ’99 and Beyond.” Cliff Zukin chaired a roundtable with many of the nation’s top media pollsters examining the 2000 election.

Three short courses were offered, each drawing a capacity enrollment of about 100. Nancy Mathiowetz, AAPOR Conference Education Committee chair, organized the short courses. Two courses were offered Thursday afternoon. Jon Krosnick offered a sequel to last year’s highly successful questionnaire development course, “Designing Great Questionnaires, Part II.” J. Michael Brick offered “Introduction to Weighting for Surveys.” On Sunday morning, Don Dillman taught “Tailored Design of Mail and Internet Surveys.” Dillman’s course was based upon his latest findings, just published in *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Tom Piazza presented a workshop, “Using Color to Help Analyze and Present Data.”

The annual conference provides a forum to recognize outstanding lifetime achievement in our profession. The AAPOR Award for Lifetime Achievement was awarded Saturday night to Philip Meyer, Knight Professor of Journalism, University of North Carolina, for his pivotal role in bringing social research into the mainstream of journalism. Phil’s groundbreaking surveys in Detroit during the tense 1960s started the trend. His book, *Precision Journalism: A Reporter’s Introduction to Social Science Methods*, first published in 1973, remains the seminal training material for journalists.

The AAPOR student paper competition was won by Alexander Todorov of New York University for “The Accessibility and Applicability of Knowledge: Predicting Context Effects in National Surveys.” Honorable mention went to Jeffrey Stec, Ohio State University for “An Examination of Contact Attempts for an RDD Study: The Buckeye State Poll.” Dianne Rucinski chaired the student paper competition.

This year marked the inauguration of the AAPOR Innovators Award. The

award was created by the AAPOR council to recognize specific works or events brought about by an individual or a team of innovators and ground breakers. The award is for contributions that have had an impact within the past 5 years. The Innovators Award Committee was cochaired by Nancy Belden and Murray Edelman, who solicited nominations from AAPOR members. Three awards were presented this year at the Saturday night banquet:

- Andrew Kohut, for establishing The Pew Research Center for People and the Press and for his outstanding contribution to public perceptions of polling;
- Robert Groves, for his innovative leadership, including his leadership of the Maryland/University of Michigan Joint Program in Survey Methodology, that has increased the recognition of survey methodology as an academic discipline;
- J. Merrill Shanks, Tom Piazza, Charlie Thomas, Richard Rockwell, William Lefes, and Tom Smith, for the development of web-based products for free dissemination of public opinion data.

The organization also recognized the significant contributions of Phyllis Endreny, book exhibit organizer since 1985, Bob Lee, technology exhibit organizer since 1984, and Nancy Mathiowetz, conference education coordinator since 1996. Each received a plaque to honor his or her outstanding work.

AAPOR conferences have always emphasized not only formal presentations and sessions but also informal opportunities to chat and socialize with fellow attendees. This year's social events were coordinated by the Conference Operations Committee and by Susan Pinkus and Kat Lind, Conference Special Activities Committee co-chairs. We had two predinner receptions, sponsored by Survey Sampling, Inc. and Genesys Sampling Systems. Opening night, Thursday, had a postdinner "AAPOR Jazz Café" featuring a well-known Portland jazz trio. Saturday evening's "Saturday Night Fever" disco and costume party was packed. About 20 attendees dressed in 1970s garb for the costume contest, won by Nancy Bates. A small number participated in the annual Saturday evening "Applied Probability Seminar." As a sign of the changing profile of AAPOR conference attendees, no one showed up for the "Traditional Sing-Along." About 25 people participated in Saturday morning's "Fun Run and Walk." The "Fun Run" was won by Peter Coy and Adria Gallup-Black. The "Fun Walk" was won by Colm O'Muircheartaigh and Nora Cate Schaeffer. The awards banquet also heard from a surprise speaker, a close friend of the late German theorist Jurgen Habermas, who provided Dr. Habermas's insights into critical questions posed by AAPOR members.

This year's conference was on the "traditional" full American plan, with group meals for the entire conference. The conference hotel was on Hayden Island, about 10 miles from downtown Portland. AAPOR has varied the room/meal arrangements to suit the venue, with "downtown" venues, such as Montreal in 2001, having fewer group meals.

The exhibit area was greatly enlarged this year, with 12 paying exhibitors in addition to the traditional book exhibit. This was the first time that the conference charged for exhibit space. These revenues helped greatly to defray conference expenses, particularly for increased audio-visual support.

Attendees were saddened by the untimely passing of revered member Seymour Sudman just a few weeks before the conference. Seymour was a former AAPOR president and recipient of the AAPOR Award for Lifetime Achievement. Many friends and acquaintances of Seymour gathered on Saturday afternoon to reminisce. Diane O'Rourke and Tim Johnson organized the gathering. A videotaped interview with Seymour was played all day Saturday in the exhibit area.

The 2000 conference once again demonstrated what makes AAPOR such a special organization. As one first-time attendee, Colleen Porter, wrote on AAPORNET about her experience, "When you build a (barbecue) fire, it works best if all the coals are piled together, with enough air flow in between, but the embers touching each other to transmit the heat. . . . And that pretty much explains why we need to get together once a year, to learn from each other, and rekindle the excitement about what we do." That no doubt helps to explain why over half of AAPOR's national membership attended the conference—to learn and to rekindle in a cordial, supportive atmosphere.

Thanks once again to the many individuals and organizations whose efforts contributed to the success of this conference.

MARK A. SCHULMAN
Conference Chair