

Survey Research Methods Section

American Statistical Association

Minutes of the Annual SRMS Section Meeting
August 1, 2007

1) Call to Order—Bill Kalsbeek

The meeting was called to order at 5:25. Bill Kalsbeek introduced the current officers: Mike Tourangeau, Past Chair; Breda Munoz, Treasurer; Marilyn Seastrom, Secretary; Leyla Mohadjer, Continuing Education Officer; Steve Heeringa, 2007 SRMS JSM Program Chair; David Marker, 2007 SRMS JSM Program Chair Elect; Publications Officer, Eric Rancourt; Council of Sections Representatives, Mike Larsen and Nora Cate Schaeffer; SRMS Newsletter Editors, Laura Flicker and Emily McFarlane; SRMS Web Master, Tony An; and SRMS Brochure Editor, Wendy Alvey. He also announced that the newly elected Officers include Rod Little, Chair Elect; Elaine Zanutto, 2008 SRMS JSM Program Chair Elect; and Jonaki Bose, Secretary. Bill Kalsbeek also recognized the recipients of the 8 Student Travel Awards.

2) Treasurer's Report – Breda Munoz

The SRMS treasury included \$69,836.70 in funds as of July 29, 2007. This does not include an anticipated expense for the SRMS share of the 8 Student Travel Awards, or an estimated payment from ICES 3.

Discussion: David Binder asked how much the Section spent this year. Brenda Cox asked whether SRMS is spending down its budget. Roger responded that our reserve is about 2 times our annual expenditures, which average approximately \$35,000 a year. There was a further question from a member on the possible use of some of the reserve funds for a survey methods scholarship.

3) Publications/Proceeding – Eric Rancourt/Tony An

Bill Kalsbeek reported for Eric Rancourt that starting this year, SRMS has been given approval from ASA to put current ASA proceedings up as soon as they are available. The matter of an apparent decision by ASA to curtail the practice of including AAPOR papers in the SRMS ASA Proceedings was also raised. Bill Kalsbeek reported that he did not receive the reported e-mail from ASA. Steve Cohen noted that Government Statistics also did not receive the reported e-mail.

4) Continuing Education – Leyla Mohadjer

Leyla Mohadjer reported that SRMS sponsored two short courses at the 2007 JSM: a Saturday course on Latent Class Analysis of Survey Error by Paul Biemer and a Sunday course on by Jay Breidt and Jean Opsomer on Modeling and Data Analysis for Complex Surveys. She also reported that 3 courses are under consideration for next year: a one day course by Partha Lahiri on Bayesian Statistics for Surveys, a one day course by Jin

Chao on Statistical Analysis of Missing data, and a half day course by Steve Thompson on Network Sampling.

5) 2007 JSM Program –Steve Heeringa and David Marker

Steve Heeringa, SRMS 2007 Program Chair thanked Dave Judkins, the 2006 SRMS Program Chair for his support. He also thanked the 37 Session Chairs for this year's meetings. Steve reported that SRMS had the largest Section program at the 2007 JSM with 8 Invited Sessions (5 allocated, 2 through ASA-wide competition, and 1 late-breaking), 6 Topic Contributed Sessions, and 23 Contributed Paper Sessions. He also noted that SRMS, Social Statistics, and Government Statistics sponsored student paper awards.

David Marker, the 2007 SRMS Program Chair Elect reported that both of our Breakfast Roundtables were fully subscribed; our 2 Luncheon Roundtables sold out. The registrants included by section members and non-members.

David Marker reported that he sent out a call for proposals for Invited Sessions for the 2008 JSM, noting that anyone interested in submitting a proposal should do so through the ASA Web site to submit the proposal. He also noted that there is encouragement for posters—both Contributed and Invited Poster Sessions. Posters are up a full day, but the presenter is expected to be there for 2 hours. To encourage their use, ASA will provide hook-ups and participation in an Invited Poster Session does not count against participation, but Contributed Poster Sessions do count.

Discussion: Steve encouraged our continuing participation in Student Paper Awards. Alan Zaslavsky asked how many applicants we had for the Student Awards, and whether we could increase the number of awards. Steve responded that we participate along with 2 other sections and would need to discuss this proposal with them, and that we would need to do more advertising if we increase the number of awards. Lynn Stokes, the Council of Section Chair, noted that there are 4 inputs to the allocation of sessions: meeting registrants, number of session attendees, number of contributed papers, and the number of papers in topic contributed and invited sessions. Rod Little suggested scheduling the Business meeting later next year, so as to not interfere with the Fisher Lecture. Brenda Cox suggested that SRMS ask for a larger room for next year's Business Meeting. (Evidently this year's request was not successful.)

6) Waksberg Award – Sharon Lohr

Sharon announced that the winner of the 2008 Waksberg Award is Professor Mary Thompson of the University of Waterloo. Professor Thompson will give the 2008 Waksberg Invited Address at the Statistics Canada Symposium to be held in the autumn of 2008.

7) Summary of Ideas from SRMS Issues/Concerns Discussion – Bill Kalsbeek

Bill reported that in his role as Chair of SRMS, he is worried about the future of the discipline and thus the section. With this in mind, he contacted past Chairs of SRMS and

AAPOR and asked for what they see as policy issues. Bill noted that he summarized the results in an article in AMSTAT News. The common thread can best be described as “Will the future workforce be adequate in numbers and training (i.e., quality)?” Bill acknowledged that we have some excellent programs, but questioned whether that is enough? He noted that he would like to get a sense of the membership as whether or not this is an important question for SRMS to address and answer.

Discussion: Cynthia Clark observed that there are never enough survey researchers (in the US or in England), but that the Joint Program in Survey Methodology (JPSM) at Maryland and Michigan has helped and is raising the bar. Another member noted that in light of falling response rates, the demand may go away. In response to this comment, a member from Purdue University reported that Purdue imposed a moratorium on unapproved surveys; this member also commented that as a journal editor, it is apparent that there are a lot of bad surveys and papers because everyone thinks they can do a survey. A student member noted that the profession needs to advertise the role of survey statistics, not just surveys. Another member reported that Statistics Canada only accepts about 5 percent of applicants and that they require all successful applicants to have a mathematics degree and then to complete a 3-year in-house training program. Bob Groves raised the question of why Universities have not stepped up; noting that it seems that applied statistics is dropping out of many substantive departments. He suggested an analysis of the courses offered in the top 50 universities to get a better idea how undergraduate and graduate students are being trained. Rod Little suggested that perhaps SRMS should communicate with the newly formed Caucus of Statistics Department Heads. Another member noted that in the UK the statistics emphasis is on biomedical work, since that seems to be where the money is; thus making it difficult to get students interested in social science survey work. Another member suggested that funding research assistantships would encourage students. Bill Kalsbeek concluded that the membership concurs that the topic of training and recruitment of survey methodologists is an important issue. On a final note David Judkins noted that “if the price isn’t there, people won’t come, or in other words take care of current members.”

8) Council of Sections – Mary Mulry

Mary Mulry reported that topics under consideration include changing the starting and ending schedule to end earlier, giving more prominence to poster sessions (perhaps through the use of interactive sessions), and instituting peer review for papers/abstracts with the goal of reducing the number of sessions. On this last topic, one possibility might be to have only invited and topic contributed sessions, with interactive poster sessions, rather than contributed papers. When asked if members would be willing to have their own papers moved to poster sessions, a show of hands yielded little interest.

Discussion: Two members noted that at other professional meeting posters are given more prominence, sometimes with food served alongside the posters. Another member noted that many other organizations do screen abstracts. Bob Groves noted that screening does not always improve quality. David Judkins noted that as a Past Program Chair he observed that you cannot screen the abstracts alone; he suggested that an alternative might be to require abstracts to be signed off by more senior person.

Mary Mulry also reported that the Council has established an Ad Hoc Committee to study accreditation, noting that several other countries have accreditation procedures in place. Under consideration is a review of recommendations and C.V.s, but no test.

8) Other Business

Roger Tourangeau commended and thanked Bill Kalsbeek for his service as Chair of SRMS.