

## **Minutes of the August 12, 1997, ASA Survey Research Methods Section (SRMS) Business Meeting**

Meeting called to order: 5:00 p.m.

Approximately 90 members were present.

### **1. Results of the recent election**

Our section's new officers are Bob Groves (Section Chair 1999), Nat Schenker (Program Chair 1999), and Carol House (Council of Sections Representative 1998-2000).

### **2. Financial report**

Lars Lyberg gave the treasurer's report. SRMS ended calendar year 1996 with a USD 4,700 deficit, mainly due to large costs for printing, binding and typesetting. Our main revenue came from sales (USD 12,600). Also we earned USD 1,400 in royalties from the Wiley Monograph Series. Our section's general financial state is that we have USD 26,300 on hand at the end of 1996. However, the 1997 budget has an estimated deficit of USD 5,200. Obviously, this state of affairs must be carefully reviewed by the Board. It is important that investments in the production of publications are balanced by sales so that expenses are repaid. We need to have a certain surplus to cover operating expenses for at least two years.

Our financial accounting for the year-to-date (January to July 1997) is very incomplete at this point. Considerable income from sales (USD 6,200) has been posted, though. Income from royalties, proceedings, and interest is expected to be available in September.

### **3. Communications/publications report**

Chuck Proctor informed that the web page had been brought up-to-date and that the newsletter had changed editors (see below). Most of his work had concerned the contents of the proceedings. Chuck had rejected a few of the AAPOR submissions based on the criteria that an eligible paper should relate to bias and/or variance and or provide some data. Typically, a few papers dealing with usability testing of new technology had been rejected.

There was a lively discussion about the criteria per se and whether there was a need for criteria at all. The most recent editors had accepted all submissions to the proceedings but some members claimed that criteria had been used before then. Kirk Wolter, the chair, informed the meeting that the executive council had discussed the matter and that an evaluation of the joint effort between SRMS, AAPOR and to some extent the Canadian Statistical Society would take place. At any rate, the current situation was not

satisfactory since AAPOR authors had not been told about the criteria. Kirk mentioned that SRM members can submit comments on the criteria business until October 1. Also Chuck would announce previous criteria on the net.

#### **4. Report on the 1997 program**

Mary Mulry reported that 149 contributed papers had been submitted and were presented in 27 sessions. There were two contributed panel sessions and 12 contributed posters. In addition there were six invited sessions, one panel and five paper sessions with a total of 17 invited papers. Also there was one invited poster. Mary mentioned that she had received lots of help, especially from John Kovar and Bob Schultz, with the heavy workload associated with organizing the program.

#### **5. Report on the 1998 program**

Betsy Martin had started soliciting topics for invited sessions and had so far received six suggestions. The deadline for submitting additional suggestions was set at September 5. Betsy wanted to get reactions on ASA proposals concerning ideas on session compression, for instance by skipping formal discussants. The executive council's view was that formal discussants added value to the sessions and should remain, especially if there was a specific session theme. The meeting supported that view and added that more sessions could be squeezed in if ASA allowed competition in the 4 p.m. time slot. Betsy was encouraged to convey these ideas in the program planning process.

#### **6. Report on council of sections**

Jim Lepkowski provided information about the Council of Sections meeting.

The Council discussed the Strategic Planning Committee and the five year planning process. It is the intent of the Board of Directors to repeat this process every five years..

There is an ongoing quality improvement program at the ASA office, for instance regarding the budget reporting system.

We are in the midst of a 10 year process of converting computing systems for the Association. The ASA will own the new system and expects to have it up and running by the end of 1997.

There have been concerns about the size of the program. The Committee on Meetings will now require as of the 1998 meeting that individuals can only be a speaker once during the meetings, although individuals can still organize, chair, and be discussants at sessions. Also several ideas on session compression were discussed.

(a) Sentiment is against having a referee process for deciding who will present papers.

(b) The length of the meetings is considered by many, particularly those in industry, as too long.

(c) Special contributed session changes decrease the role of discussants to increase the time for papers to be presented.

(d) The number of invited sessions allowed for the Association is mandated by our current contract with other Joint Meetings organizations.

(e) The view was expressed that papers might be reviewed and then allocated to poster or oral presentation sessions. Poster sessions could also be much larger than at present.

(f) The question was raised whether attendance at the meetings was falling off. General Association membership has declined over the last several years following the recruiting drive.

The constitution revision committee reported that the current revision is by no means as extensive as the last, mainly concentrating on fine tuning changes made during the last revision.

ASA finances are in good shape due to a fiscally conservative approach. Membership is tailing off after the membership drive several years ago, from nearly 20,000 members to around 16,000.

The Board is interested in increasing its outreach. The Board intends also to focus on office optimization to do things better through quality management and to emphasize the image of the organization.

Council members raised several questions. Only one-half of Association members are in sections at the present time. Should there be section membership drives?

A broader salary survey of the members was discussed. The current survey covers only academic salaries, and is collected from chairs of departments.

The Journal of Statistical Education is experiencing a short term funding crunch.

Awards and certificates for statistical presentations by youth were discussed. Sections were asked to provide base funding for an increase in the level and number of awards that are made.

Budget and financial statements are in the process of being improved. There is such a variety of budget needs across sections that it is delaying development. Written budget policies and procedures are needed for each section concerning who expends funds to assist in the process of passing along financial operations from old to new officers.

## **7. Reports from standing committees**

Chuck Cowan had sent in a report on the activities of the Research Industry Coalition. The main activity has been the preparation of a brochure on ethics in the conduct of market and opinion research.

Seymour Sudman had sent in a report on the activities of the behavioral risk factors working group. The group has provided recommendations on sampling and survey quality issues to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

Barbara Bailar has chaired the SMRS fellows nominating committee this year. The executive committee is pleased to welcome the following very deserving members as fellows of the ASA: Cynthia Clark, Steven B. Cohen, Edward I. George, Cary T. Isaki, William D. Kalsbeek, James Massey (posthumous), and Elizabeth A. Stasny.

Trena Ezzati-Rice and Elizabeth Zell are in charge of our newsletter. The July issue was out and next deadline for submissions is November 1.

Fritz Scheuren had sent in a report on the work on the series "What is a Survey?" Two new pamphlets were presented at the meeting (focus groups and mail surveys) and four more are expected by next spring. Some of the earlier pamphlets have been reprinted several times and improvements have been made at each reprinting.

There is also a committee on short courses. Potential topics for next year's meeting include those that were dealt with at the conferences held in Bristol and San Antonio and that were sponsored by our section. It would be good if we could investigate the market for SRM courses at conferences other than the ASA meetings.

The meeting wanted to thank all those who work on the standing committees for the very good job they are doing and for their contributions to our



profession. Special thanks go to Fritz Scheuren and Wendy Alvey for their services to our section.

### **8. Conferences**

The monograph from the Bristol conference was published by Wiley in February. The San Antonio conference monograph is scheduled for early 1998, the 1999 conference on nonresponse is underway (Bob Groves) and a repeat conference on business survey methods is suggested by John Kovar to be held in the early 00's. Bob and John told the meeting about their plans.

### **9. New initiatives**

SRMS does not yet have a welcoming package for new members. Sarah Nusser has agreed to put one together and she will report on her work in November.

SRMS does not have many awards. Don Rubin has promised to look into this matter.

Meeting adjourned: 6.30 p.m.