

## Data Quality in Dissemination and Ethics

By Daniel Kasprzyk, Mathematica – MPR

*This is the last in a series of articles related to the SRMS mission statement (see last page). Previous articles are listed below. Thanks to all for their great contributions:*

*January 2001: David A. Binder and Georgia R. Roberts, "Can Informative Designs be Ignorable?"*

*July 2001: Tommy Wright, "Selected Moments in the Development of Probability Sampling: Theory & Practice."*

*January 2002: Clyde Tucker, "Nonsampling Error in Sample Surveys".*

*July 2002: Daniel B. Carr and Yuguang Zhang, "An Introduction to Dynamically Conditioned Choropleth Maps".*

*January 2003: Wendy Rotz, "The Washington Statistical Society's Quantitative Literacy Group."*

## Focusing on Data Quality in Dissemination and Ethics

By Daniel Kasprzyk, Mathematica – MPR

During the past 15 years, a number of conferences focused on "survey data quality." This is particularly true with respect to data quality in National Statistical Offices: Statistics Canada, Statistics Sweden, Eurostat, the United States as well as other countries have sponsored conferences

highlighting this topic. In 1996, the U.S. Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) contributed to the general interest in the topic by organizing a subcommittee to review the measurement and reporting of data quality in federal data collection programs. The subcommittee's eighteen members reflected the experiences of twelve statistical agencies. In particular, the FCSM subcommittee focused on the accuracy dimension of quality, a dimension that has a history of measurement and reporting. The subcommittee reviewed statistical indicators that describe survey accuracy in relation to various error sources, how the indicators are measured, and whether and how they are presented to data users. The following four questions helped guide the approach taken by the subcommittee:

- ❖ What measurement methods do statistical agencies use to identify sources of error in surveys?
- ❖ To what extent do statistical agencies report information on sources of error to the user community?
- ❖ How does reporting error sources vary across different types of publications and dissemination media?
- ❖ What information on error sources should statistical agencies provide and how should they provide it?

To understand current practices, the subcommittee conducted three studies (McMillen and Brady 1999; Atkinson, Schwanz, and Sieber 1999; Giesbrecht, Miller, Moriarity, Ware-Martin 1999) to help characterize agency practices in reporting sources of error. The studies focused on the extent to which agencies reported sources of error in surveys in each of three types of data dissemination products: short-format reports, analytic reports, and the Internet. The results indicated agencies often did not produce sufficient information to analysts about limitations of the data and that differences existed between stated agency policies and actual practices when reporting sources of error in surveys.



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In addition to conducting the three studies, the subcommittee reviewed the "survey data quality" literature in terms of the typology of sources of error described by Kish (1965): sampling error, nonresponse error, coverage error, measurement error, and processing error. The subcommittee's report (U.S. Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology 2001) discusses the measurement of each source of error - the measurement techniques and methods used; then it presents current practices for reporting information about the error source (as identified through the three studies identified above); and, finally, it presents recommendations for measuring and reporting survey error. A synthesis of the report and its recommendations will soon be available in the *Journal of Official Statistics* (Kasprzyk and Giesbrecht 2003).

The subcommittee concluded that U.S. statistical agencies should dedicate more effort to inform data users about the dimensions of data quality. Many agencies have written policies for informing data users about various aspects of the quality of data. These policies follow from a professional ethic of openness about the process of data collection and analysis, without which data used to inform public policy decisions would not be credible. However, the subcommittee found that data quality information users need is not always made available and is not consistently reported across agencies. While the diversity of publications and the decentralized structure of the U.S. statistical system make it difficult to institute consistent and comprehensive reporting of data quality content, it is important for agencies to maintain a dialogue with each other to improve reporting practices, to pay attention on a continuous basis to data users' need for information, and place high priority on providing such information through the various dissemination media.

To obtain a copy of the subcommittee's report, *Statistical Policy Working Paper 31: Measuring and Reporting Sources of Error in Surveys*, go to the FCSM website at <http://www.fcsm.gov> or contact Brian Harris-Kojetin at the Office of Management and Budget [bharrisk@omb.eop.gov](mailto:bharrisk@omb.eop.gov)

## References

Atkinson, D., Schwanz, D., and Sieber, W. K. (1999). "Reporting Sources of Error in Analytic Publications." In *Statistical Policy Working Paper 28: Seminar on Interagency Coordination and Cooperation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Management and Budget. 329-341. Available at <http://www.fcsm.gov>.

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## Section News



### Research Industry Coalition

The Research Industry Coalition, which has been an active subcommittee for several years under the guidance of Warren Mitofsky, has recently folded. The members have not decided how to dispose of the assets. They likely will be donated to a research activity rather than be returned to the members.

### New SRMS Editor

Beginning with the next issue of the SRMS newsletter, Brian Meekins will begin serving as the new SRMS newsletter editor. Congratulations to Brian, and thanks for your upcoming service to the section. Brian's contact information can be found toward the back of this newsletter in the table of executive officer contact information.

## Outgoing Section Officers

A big thanks to:

- ❖ Lars Lyberg, for his leadership role on the SRMS executive committee for the past 3 years as chair-elect, chair, and past chair.
- ❖ Howard Hogan, for his great interest in the JSM conference program for the past two years as program chair-elect, and program chair. His contributions to the newsletter are greatly appreciated as well.
- ❖ Leyla Mohadjer, for her two years of service and active contributions as SRMS secretary. I think all officers would agree that her minutes were second-to-none.
- ❖ Rachel Caspar, for fulfilling her three year commitment as one of two SRMS council of sections representatives. Her dedication to SRMS is much to be thankful for.

## Incoming Section Officers

We welcome the following new SRMS officers:

- ❖ Sarah M. Nusser, Chair-Elect
- ❖ Rachel M. Harter, Program Chair-Elect
- ❖ Elaine Zanutto, Secretary
- ❖ Stephen H. Cohen, Council of Sections Representative

Contact information for all section officers can be found toward the back of this newsletter. We look forward to your service to the section and wish you the best.

## SRMS Newsletters On-Line

Once this edition of the newsletter is placed on-line, fifteen of the eighteen newsletters, dating back to 1995, can be viewed at: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/newsletter.html>.

Thanks goes to Tony An, the Assistant Editor, Amstat On-Line, for his work in this area.

## SRMS Listserve

The SRMS listserv is a great platform to find information about survey research and to make announcements. Current topics have included:

- ❖ What are good return rates for scientific surveys?
- ❖ Effect of multiple data collection firms on data quality
- ❖ Sampling for political opinion polls
- ❖ Call for papers for the Social Science Methodology Conference that will be held in Amsterdam, 17-20 August 2004

All postings are sent to: [SRMSNET@listserv.umd.edu](mailto:SRMSNET@listserv.umd.edu)

To subscribe to SRMSNET, send a message to [listserv@listserv.umd.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.umd.edu) and in the body of the message, type 'subscribe SRMSNET *your name*'. Please remember that if you click on 'reply', your answer will go out to everyone on the SRMSNET. So be sure to direct personal replies to the sender's own e-mail address. To unsubscribe, in your message to [listserv@listserv.umd.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.umd.edu), type in the body of the message 'unsubscribe SRMSNET'.

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## Executive Committee Reports

### Report from the Past Section Chair

By S. Lynne Stokes

If you did not make it to our Business Meeting at JSM this year, you missed a great time. The mixer preceding the SRMS Business Meeting at JSM was generously underwritten by Marketing Systems Group. Our meeting was attended by four representatives from Marketing Systems Group: Dale Kulp, President and founder, who is a member of our section; Alan Lambert, Assistant Vice President for Account Services; Ashley Hyon and Tim Antoniewicz, Account Executives. Marketing Systems Group is a long time friend of the ASA and exhibitor at JSM. This year, though, they chose to make a contribution directly to our section. When they approached me about doing so, they explained they would like to help our section specifically since their company and its employees have interests closely aligned with ours. Ashley told me that they were interested in helping us so we could free up even more of our Section funds to expand services for our members. As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, we will be doing that, as the executive committee approved several new initiatives this year that were discussed at the Business Meeting, including a new student JSM travel award program, seed money for a Telephone Survey Conference to be held in 2006, and co-sponsorship of a mini-meeting on current trends in sample surveys and official statistics to be held in Calcutta in January 2004. We hope you and/or your students will be able to take advantage of one or more of these opportunities.

Marketing Systems Group is the creator of GENESYS, a stand-alone sample design and generation system. Their services also include sample design consultation and complete lines of RDD, listed household, business and specialty samples, data/list enhancement services, and ID*plus*, an operator-attended number screening service. They also provide PRO-T-S telephony systems, a dialing and interviewer management system, which integrates computer and telephone hardware/software, designed to improve interviewer productivity and accuracy.

## Report from the Section Chair

By Sharon Lohr

As you can tell from the contents of this newsletter, these are exciting times for the Survey Research Methods Section. Many section members have contributed their time and knowledge to section activities, and in this column I would like to acknowledge some of these contributions.

After crafting eight wonderful SRMS newsletters, Tom Krenzke and Leslie Wallace are stepping down as editors. Tom and Leslie have gone far beyond informing SRMSers of current happenings in survey research---recent issues have also featured the contributions of noted survey researchers and presented timely and interesting articles on survey practice. Editing the newsletter is one of the most challenging jobs in the section, and Tom's and Leslie's creative contributions are very greatly appreciated.

On behalf of the section I would like to offer a special thank you to the outgoing members of the Executive Committee: Lars Lyberg (past chair), Howard Hogan (program chair), Leyla Mohadjer (secretary), and Rachel Caspar (council of sections representative). All of them have made tremendous contributions to the section.

The SRMS continues to be one of the most active sections of the ASA. Thanks to the efforts of Partha Lahiri, SRMS will be sponsoring six invited paper sessions at the joint statistical meetings in Toronto, as well as numerous contributed sessions. We continue to co-sponsor interesting and informative conferences, and provide a resource for survey methodologists and for other persons interested in survey methods.

In 2004, one focus for the section will be on providing opportunities and resources for students interested in survey research. The new student travel awards will help students come to the joint statistical meetings and learn about current research and problems. Please encourage the students you know to apply for these. The section is also providing financial support to the Statfest program led by the Committee on Minorities in Statistics; this program presents conferences with prominent statisticians at schools with large minority enrollments and encourages the students to pursue careers in statistics. Survey research is a key part of each Statfest program, and I am pleased that the SRMS will be participating in it.

I welcome your input on how the section can serve you and the wider community even better. Best wishes for a great 2004.

## Report from the Program Chair

By Partha Lahiri

This year SRMS is sponsoring six exciting invited paper sessions in the JSM 2004 to be held in the wonderful city of Toronto. These sessions cover a wide range of state of the art theoretical and applied research topics. Here are the sessions with the organizers' names:

- ❖ Software Development in Survey Organizations (Howard Hogan)
- ❖ Resampling Methods in Surveys (Jiming Jiang)
- ❖ Disclosure Limitation Methods for Protecting the Confidentiality of Statistical Data (Jai Choi and S. Chatterjee)
- ❖ Multilevel Modeling with Survey Data (Michael D. Larsen and Shijie Chen)
- ❖ Outliers in Finite Population Sampling (Malay Ghosh)
- ❖ The Future of Methods and Software for Analyzing Complex Samples (Barry Graubard and Lisa LaVange)

One special feature of the JSM 2004 program is the invited poster entitled "Graphical Display of Uncertainty and Related Tools for Inference in Small Domain Estimation" by John Eltinge. This will provide the SRMS members a unique opportunity to discuss the subject with John on a one-to-one basis.

I would like to organize a record number of topics contributed sessions in JSM 2004. These sessions are generally better organized and well attended than the regular contributed sessions since the presentations within such a session share a common topic. Speakers get more time and generally get better time slots than those presenting in regular contributed sessions. A topic contributed session could be in one of the following formats:

- ❖ a collection of five contributed paper presentations (including possible discussions);
- ❖ a minimum of three and a maximum of five panelists who provide commentary on a topic; or
- ❖ a poster cluster containing approximately three to six posters on a given topic. This is a relatively new idea and can provide a very nice format in which colleagues can present different perspectives on a given statistical controversy, or can present side-by-side analyses of an especially challenging dataset.

If you are interested in organizing a SRMS sponsored topic contributed session, panel or poster, please send me an email (plahiri@survey.umd.edu) immediately and definitely before February 1, 2004, the JSM deadline for paid registration and submission of abstracts. Your email should include the names of the organizer (i.e., you), speakers, discussants (if any) and the topic.

Rachel Harter is the JSM 2005 Program Chair-Elect and she is responsible for organizing all the JSM 2004 SRMS roundtable luncheons. Please contact her at harter@noremail.uchicago.edu in case you are interested in hosting one such luncheon or if you have ideas for an invited session for the JSM 2005.

Both Rachel and I need your help in organizing an outstanding SRMS program in JSM 2004.

## **Publications Officer Report**

**By Michael P. Cohen, BTS**

First I would like to say that Tony An, our Webmaster (a.k.a. Amstat Online Assistant Editor) continues to provide us with his expert webmastering. Check out <http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/index.html> if you have not done so recently.

As is the practice of the Section, our 2003 Proceedings will contain not only the papers delivered at the Section's sessions at the 2003 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM), but also appropriate papers delivered at the annual meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion Research. It also will contain papers delivered at a meeting of the Biometrics Society at a session cosponsored by SRMS.

Historically, a high percentage of the papers given at the SRMS sessions at the JSM are published in the Proceedings. I would very much like this to continue and perhaps even increase as it benefits the survey research community.

Lastly, I wish everyone a happy and productive 2004!



## **Awards**

### **New in 2004: JSM Student Travel Awards**

**By Tom Belin, SRMS Treasurer**

An SRMS initiative will make its debut for the 2004 Joint Statistical Meetings: a new student travel award program. Following deliberation and proposal development by a newly formed Student Travel Award subcommittee of the SRMS Executive Board, a program was approved at the 2003 Joint Statistical Meetings to offer eight travel awards of \$400 each for graduate students interested in survey methods research to attend the 2004 JSM.

The rationale for this program was multi-faceted, building on the desire to get young statisticians interested in survey methods research and to provide services to the section membership that involves an investment in the future of the section.

The student travel award winners will also be provided with support to attend one of the SRMS continuing education short courses at the JSM. To keep consistency across the section's award programs, the winners of the JSM student paper competition will similarly be offered support to attend one of the SRMS continuing education courses. Student travel awardees will be asked to attend the SRMS mixer and business meeting so that they have the opportunity to meet SRMS section members and vice versa.

The application will seek a recent transcript and a short essay from the student about their interest in survey research methods and in attending the JSM. An idea that surfaced at the SRMS Business Meeting at the JSM in San Francisco was to require that applicants obtain a letter of support from a current SRMS member. The Student Travel Award Committee has endorsed this approach.

Current plans call for applications to be due in the spring, after the February 1 abstract deadline, and possibly on April 30, 2004 to coincide with the Bryant Scholarship deadline. The travel award will not require that applicants give a presentation at the meetings, as there was interest in providing an opportunity for interested students to gain exposure to the conference environment early in their graduate studies. However, student presenters would certainly be welcome to apply.

The Student Travel Award Committee has been formalized as a committee of the SRMS Executive Board. It will be chaired by the Treasurer, and the other committee members

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will be the Continuing Education Officer, the senior Council of Sections Representative, and the Past Chair.

Stay tuned for further details. Correspondence related to the student travel award program can be directed to Tom Belin at [tbelin@ucla.edu](mailto:tbelin@ucla.edu).

## SRMS Standing Committees

### Behavioral Risk Factor/Survey Committee

Jim Lepkowski, Cynthia Nelson, Donna Brogan, Paul Lavrakas, Sarah Nusser, Michael Elliott

### Committee on ASA Fellows

Mary Mulry (Chair) (817) 927-9570  
(817) 921-4085 (fax) [mary\\_mulry@yahoo.com](mailto:mary_mulry@yahoo.com)

Don Dillman, Paul Biemer, Lynne Stokes, Clyde Tucker, Chris Skinner

### SIPP Working Group

Michael Sheridan (Chair) (613) 951-6155,  
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Rachel Connelly, Mick Couper, Thomas MaCurdy, Fritz Scheuren, Allen Schirm, Roger Tourangeau

### Census Bureau Staff:

Alan Tupek, Daniel Weinberg, Lawrence Cahoon

## Bryant Scholarship Awarded New Applicants Sought

Each year an outstanding graduate student in Survey Statistics is awarded the Edward C. Bryant Scholarship to help support the student's graduate education. Westat established the Edward C. Bryant Scholarship Trust Fund in 1995 to honor its co-founder and long-time leader. Under Dr. Bryant's leadership, Westat, an employee-owned statistical firm established in 1961, grew into what is now one of the world's leading statistical research firms with a full-time permanent staff of 1,500. Selection of the scholarship recipient is made by the ASA Bryant Scholarship Award Committee. The selection criteria include potential to contribute to survey statistics, applied experience in survey statistics, and performance in graduate school. The award consists of a certificate and a \$1,500.00 cash prize.

Congratulations to the 2003 winner Sunghee Lee, from the University of Maryland. The 2004 winner will be presented at the Presidential Address at the JSM in Toronto.

*For more information about the 2004 scholarship including an application, see [www.amstat.org/awards/bryant.html](http://www.amstat.org/awards/bryant.html).*

An additional contact is Jean Opsomer, the Committee Chair at [jopsomer@iastate.edu](mailto:jopsomer@iastate.edu) or (515) 294-0212. Applications and letters of recommendation must be received by April 30, 2004 for consideration.

## Executive Committee Members

### Voting Officers—Survey Research Methods Section

Phone: FAX: E-mail:	<b>Past Chair (2004)</b> S. Lynne Stokes Southern Methodist University (214) 768-2270 (214) 768-4035 <a href="mailto:slstokes@mail.smu.edu">slstokes@mail.smu.edu</a>	Phone: FAX: E-mail:	<b>Program Chair (2004)</b> Parthasarathi Lahiri University of Maryland (301) 314-5903 (301) 314-7912 <a href="mailto:plahiri@survey.umd.edu">plahiri@survey.umd.edu</a>	Phone: FAX: E-mail:	<b>Publications Officer (2003-2004)</b> Michael P. Cohen/U. S. Dept. Trans. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (202) 366-9949 (202) 366-3385 <a href="mailto:michael.cohen@bts.gov">michael.cohen@bts.gov</a>
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## Executive Member Bios

**Sarah M. Nusser**, SRMS Chair-Elect, is director of the Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology and Prof. in the Department of Statistics at Iowa State University. Her research interests are survey methods for natural resource surveys and computer-assisted data collection for mobile field environments. She works with the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Department of Agriculture to investigate the use of geospatial data in mobile computing environments for large-scale surveys and censuses. She is currently on ASA's JABES Mgmt. Committee and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Committee, served on the ASA Survey Review Committee:1996-2001 and as SRMS Treasurer:2001-2002. She has a Ph.D. in Statistics from Iowa State University, and was elected ASA Fellow in 2003.

**Rachel Harter**, SRMS Program Chair-Elect, is V.P. and Admin. Dir. of the Statistics & Methodology Department of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. Harter has been responsible for complex probability sample designs, small area estimation, database management, survey and statistical analysis, edit and imputation processes, management of design transitions, and technical writing and editing. She joined NORC in 1995 after serving as Mgr. and Research Director at A.C. Nielsen Co., where she gained

experience with large-scale marketing research surveys of retail establishments in the packaged goods industry. Harter has a Ph.D. in statistics from Iowa State University.

**Elaine Zanutto**, SRMS Secretary, is an Asst. Prof. in the Statistics Department of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include imputation for nonresponse, propensity score analysis of observational studies, and applied data analysis. She has been a consultant to the Census Bureau since 1997 and is a representative of the ASA to the Census Advisory Committee of Professional Associations. She received her Ph.D. in statistics from Harvard University.

**Stephen H. Cohen**, SRMS Council of Sections Representative, is Dir. of the Mathematical Statistics Research Center at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) since June 1998. He chairs BLS' Disclosure Review Board. He recently authored legal affidavits that the Federal courts upheld denying release of confidential data collected by BLS. He is chair of the Committee on Data Access and Disclosure. His research interests include confidentiality research, nonresponse analysis and sample design research. He served as Chief of the Statistical Methods Group in BLS' Compensation Program before his current position. He worked at the National Center for Statistics and Analysis in the National Highway Traffic Safety Admin. and on the faculty of Clarkson College before coming to BLS. He received his Ph.D. from Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst. in Aug. 1974.



## Mission Statement

The mission of the Section on Survey Research Methods is to promote the improvement of survey practice and the understanding of survey methods by encouraging both theoretical and applied research on survey-related topics and by disseminating information on survey methods.

Areas of interest for the Section include all that employ survey methodology as a focus or as a prime tool of investigation. Of special interest are:

- ❖ Theoretical foundations of sampling;
- ❖ Sample design and estimation;
- ❖ Nonsampling errors and data collection methods;
- ❖ Analysis and presentation of survey data;
- ❖ Education of the public and students on the importance of scientific survey research;
- ❖ Publication and dissemination of survey research findings; and
- ❖ Ethics related to survey conduct and standards for survey practice.

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