

Report from the Past Section Chair

By Bill Kalsbeek

I'm pleased to report that 2007 was another banner year for the Survey Research Methods Section. First, by vote of the Section's members in last spring's ASA elections, we revised our charter to indicate that we no longer wish to also be known as the "Section on Survey Research Methods." But more than what we like to be called, we have continued to be active and vibrant in many ways during the past year. We are also financially sound with a December 2007 balance of about \$62,000 in our treasury.

Our accomplishments were numerous. The 2007 SRMS program at the Joint Statistical Meetings in Salt Lake City was the largest and most diverse among all section programs offered there. Of the 37 sessions that were scheduled by our program chair, Steve Heeringa, eight were invited, including two that were allocated to the SRMS in competition with other ASA sections and one late-breaking session (about methods used in an Iraqi mortality survey) that was hugely popular well beyond our own section's membership. Outstanding work, Steve!

Dave Marker also did a great job organizing the Section's roundtable luncheons and experimental breakfast breakouts, all of which were well-attended.

Dave is well on his way to producing another outstanding program for the Denver meetings next year.

The continuing education short-courses on latent class analysis (Paul Biemer) and on modeling and data analysis for complex surveys (Jay Breidt and Jean Opsomer) were also successful, thanks to Leyla Mohadjer's considerable efforts in organizing them. Leyla meanwhile has been working on another great continuing education program for JSM 2008.

Another result of the recent charter revisions will be the addition of an education officer-elect position to the committee starting with the 2009 elections. This new position will provide the Section with greater resources to find and organize useful continuous learning options for our members.

Beyond the many wonderful SRMS offerings at JSM, we all had a good time at the Section business meeting, thanks in part to the wonderful refreshments that were once again provided by MSG-Genesys, despite a hotel meeting room that was about two sizes too small. At this meeting we recognized Mary Thompson, the 2007 Waksberg Award winner, as well as the Section's student paper and travel awardees.

Two informative Section newsletters were published last year thanks to the dedicated efforts of our newsletter editors, Laura Flicker and Emily McFarlane. Thanks, Laura and Emily, for doing a great job at this (and for twisting oh so gently, but firmly, the arms of those of us who made written contributions). Also, our thanks to Eric Rancourt for his efforts as publications officer in providing information about the Section for the Third International Conference on Establishment Surveys (ICES-III). At last, the Section can move its JSM papers onto our online proceedings archive as soon as the ASA Proceedings CD-ROM becomes

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available, rather than waiting for 2-3 years as in the past.

Along with our successes have been many important issues where work remains to be done. Among them is the issue of the future of the survey methods workforce, which I raised at the JSM business meetings of the Government Statistics Section and our section. The consensus of the discussion thus far seems to be that we should move ahead towards determining the adequacy of the future workforce both in quantity and quality. Since JSM movement in this direction has been supported by the Committee on National Statistics, OMB, NSF, and the heads of several federal statistical agencies. In addition, Connie Citro from the National Academy Sciences has drafted both a broader prospectus to cover the entire survey research community and a more focused one aimed at the federal statistical workforce only. Funding to begin work in either of these directions is currently being arranged. Other issues were raised at the Section business meeting by Mike Larson, one of our representatives to the ASA council of sections. They included professional certification, increased emphasis on poster sessions as a potential solution to an ever-expanding JSM program, and when in the week to begin and end each JSM. As we move into another year of Section activity, I want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve as your chair. This experience has shown me how important our profession is to you and how committed you all are to enabling it to continue to grow and improve. Without exception, members have been willing to freely give of their time and talents to help conduct the Section's business at hand. For this I am most appreciative. It has also been a privilege to work with the Section's dedicated executive committee. In particular, I wish to acknowledge with thanks Steve Heeringa, Roger Tourangeau, and Marilyn Seastrom, all of whom rotated off of the committee on December 31, 2007. Roger provided excellent leadership for the Section in the previous year, thus making life easier for me, Steve so ably served as the principal architect of the Section's 2007 JSM program, and Marilyn has been most faithful in recording the minutes of the Section's many deliberations.

I look forward to working with our new Chair, Mary Mulry, to keep things moving forward in another great year for the ASA Section on Survey Research Methods.■

Greetings from Incoming Section Chair

By Rod Little

Dear fellow survey researchers, I am honored that you have chosen me as Chair-Elect of the section in 2008 and chair in 2009. With the great leadership of Bill Kalsbeek and Mary Mulry in 2007-8, I am sure the section will be in great shape when I step into the breach, and I plan to represent and serve the section to the best of my ability.

I may not *have* much ability but I do have grey hairs. Looking back at old correspondence I noticed a letter from my dear friend Fritz Scheuren in the 1980's, apologizing in his usual self-effacing way for running against me as section chair some 20 years ago! The section had the good sense to elect him then; it is great leaders and enthusiasts like Fritz who make the section great!

With the Iowa caucuses coming up as I write this, you might be asking about my election platform. Well, nothing too specific, but I do have one thought that I'd like to pursue as section chair. As an academic, I wonder how we can stimulate more refereed research on survey methods in high-visibility journals. Of course a lot of great research is happening, but a lot of it ends up in unrefereed proceedings papers or specialized journals that are not read much outside our field. My impression is that research in survey methods is – how shall I say – a little sleepy, compared with research in some other areas or statistics, like informatics and statistical genetics.

One reason may be that our field consists largely of practitioners, who are more focused on working on important applied projects than polishing methods articles. Practical relevance is one of the features that makes survey methods great, of course; but reviewing applicants for ASA Fellow the last two years, I've been struck by the fact that a lack of peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals can hurt the prospects of our leading lights becoming Fellows (despite the strong efforts of the section to

sponsor applicants, and sensitivity concerning the need to elect a fair share of Fellows from government and industry). Of course there are other more important reasons to value high-quality methods research, but this is what got me thinking about the issue. More on this later, but I welcome your thoughts and ideas – drop me a line or email me at rlittle@umich.edu. And, happy new year to you all! ■

Message from the Program Chair-Elect

By Elaine Zanutto

I would like to take this opportunity to ask for your assistance with organizing the Survey Research Methods Section Roundtables for JSM 2008. Roundtables are a great opportunity to have the type of in-depth conversations that aren't always possible in the regular JSM presentation format.

If you have a topic in mind and are interested in leading a roundtable session please contact me by email at ezanutto@nationalanalysts.com. Roundtables can be breakfasts (7 am) or lunches (noon). Breakfasts are quite early, but registration for participants is cheaper (roundtable registration is free for discussion leaders).

If you do not wish to lead a Roundtable discussion but have a topic in mind, feel free to pass that suggestion on to me also and I will see if I can find an appropriate organizer for such a session. The 2008 JSM Roundtable program must be finalized by February 4, 2008 so please contact me as soon as possible so that we can take the steps necessary to put your suggestions into action for JSM 2008.

Also, it is also not too early to begin looking ahead to the 2009 Joint Statistical Meetings that will be held August 2-6, 2009 in Washington, D.C. The Program committee will be planning the Invited Sessions for JSM 2009 beginning in the Summer of 2008. If you have an idea for a topic and would like to organize one of the SRMS Invited Paper sessions for JSM 2009 please forward the topic suggestion and a brief abstract to me at the e-mail address listed above before June 2008. ■

Section News

Outgoing Section Officers

A hearty thanks to:

Steve Heeringa, Section Chair-Elect, Section Chair, and Past Section Chair.

Roger Tourangeau, Program Chair-Elect, Program Chair, and Past Program Chair.

Marilyn Seastrom, Secretary

Incoming Section Officers

We welcome the following new SRMS officers:

Rod Little, Section Chair-Elect

Elaine Zanutto, Program Chair-Elect

Jonaki Bose, Secretary

New Executive Committee Bios

Dr. Roderick Little, SRMS Section-Chair-Elect, is Richard D. Remington Collegiate Professor and Chair of the Department of Biostatistics at the University of Michigan, where he is also Professor of Statistics and Research Professor in the Institute for Social Research. Prior to that, Little held faculty appointments at the University of California at Los Angeles and University of Chicago, an ASA/Census/NSF research fellowship at the U.S. Census Bureau and non-academic positions at the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the World Fertility Survey. Actively interested in federal statistical issues such as the census undercount, he has served as a member of the Committee on National Statistics and a number of other National Research Council committees. In 2005 he was awarded the American Statistical Association's Wilks Medal for research contributions, and gave the President's Invited Address at the Joint Statistical Meetings.

Elaine Zanutto, SRMS Program-Chair-Elect, is Vice President of Methodology at National Analysts Worldwide Research and Consulting where she works on survey design and analysis, choice experiments, and predictive modeling. Before joining National Analysts, she was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Statistics at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

She received her Ph.D. in statistics from Harvard University. She has served as the SRMS Secretary (2004-2006) and as JSM General Methodology Chair (2002) and is currently the chair of the SRMS E.C. Bryant Scholarship Committee.

Jonaki Bose, SRMS Secretary, is a statistician at the Office of Applied Studies (OAS) at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the Department of Health and Human Services where she works on the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Prior to joining OAS, Jonaki worked at the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics. She received her M.Sc. in Survey methodology from the Joint Program in Survey Methodology at the University of Maryland. She served as ASA's 2004 Social Sciences Program Chair and is currently on the ASA Survey Review Committee. She is also currently the Washington Statistical Society's Chapter Representative to ASA and the incoming Vice-Chair for the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology's Committee on Data Access and Disclosure. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Student Competitions

SRMS offers eight student awards this year up to \$400 each for students to attend 2008 Joint Statistical Meetings. The deadline for the submission of the award application is March 31, 2008. The application can be found on the following page or at: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/index.html>

The Social Statistics, Government Statistics, and Survey Research Methods Sections are pleased to announce a competition for student and postgraduate papers to be presented at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) in Denver, Colorado on August 3-7, 2008. At least five awards will be granted. A subsidy of up to \$800 is provided to each winner in order to cover JSM 2008 expenses. Winners will be notified in early January 2008 and must register for the meetings by January 31, 2008.

AmStat Online

We are pleased to announce that the online edition of the **Proceedings** of the Survey Research Methods Section of the American Statistical Association (1978-2006) is now available at the SRMS website at: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/Proceedings/>.

Upcoming Conferences

- American Association for Public Opinion Research,
May 15-18, 2008,
New Orleans, Louisiana
- Joint Statistical Meeting 2008
August 3-7, 2008,
Denver Colorado

New Web Publication – Survey Practice

AAPOR is calling for papers for its new web-only publication, *Survey Practice*. Articles of approximately 1,500 to 2,500 words are ideal for an online publication. *Survey Practice* will have two sections – Research and Features. Research articles could include alternative or better methods of analyzing public opinion results, best practices for conducting and managing surveys, experiments with survey technology, and emerging quantitative and qualitative survey methods. The Features section will focus on topics relevant to conditions affecting surveys and about the people who work in the survey industry.

If you have an idea for either section, even if it does not seem to fit within the above guidelines, feel free to contact the editor or associate editors to explore the idea. The research articles will be reviewed by the *Survey Practice* editorial board; the reviews will be similar to magazine reviews, with the editorial board working with authors to develop useful, interesting ideas. Please see www.surveypactice.org for more detailed editorial guidelines.

SRMSNET

Subscribe to SRMSNET. Find out how at: http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/srms_net.html

JSM 2008 Invited Session Preview

Thanks to the efforts of our Program Chair, David Marker, JSM 2008 will offer six invited sessions, up from four in 2007. They include Post-Imputation Variance Estimation, Robust Methods in Small Area Estimation, Understanding and Improving Communication with Survey Respondents, Non-Ignorable Missingness and Incomplete Auxiliary Data, Privacy Breaches in Federal Data Collections, and Reducing Disclosure Risk While Reaching out to the Data. You can read abstracts from just two of these below. Be sure to watch for the others online, <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/>.

Privacy Breaches in Federal Data Collections

Privacy breaches of personally identifiable information and the related threat of identity theft have been the focus of considerable recent publicity. The Washington Post and numerous trade publications have variously dubbed both 2005 and 2006 the "Year of the Data Breach" as many well-publicized breaches occurred across the private sector, academia, and government. Certainly by 2007, many organizations were working toward solutions, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) led the federal effort by issuing a key policy memorandum that addresses data breach notification, unnecessary collection, retention of personally identifiable information, and a number of other privacy and security aspects. The OMB has issued specific guidance to Federal agencies on breach notification requirements, including reporting to the government and affected individuals. While government-wide in scope, the policy guidance has a distinct impact on statistical agencies whose mission is collecting personally identifiable data and whose lifeblood is maintaining the public's trust.

ASA 2008's invited session, Privacy Breaches in Federal Data Collections, explores these issues. The first speaker, Shelly Martinez from the OMB Statistical Policy Office, will discuss the new OMB requirements and procedures. Nancy Gordon, Acting Privacy Officer for the U.S. Bureau of the Census, will discuss the written policies and procedures established and implemented at the Census Bureau. Marilyn Seastrom, Chief Statistician at the National Center for Education

Statistics, will describe the handling of a data breach in a longitudinal study --the analysis conducted, the notification procedures used -- and present data on the effect the notification process had on continuing participation in the study. The session's Discussant, Stephen Feinberg from Carnegie Mellon University, is a nationally recognized expert on topics related to privacy, confidentiality, and privacy breaches.

Reducing Disclosure Risks While Reaching Out to the Needs of the Public

This invited session brings together international and domestic perspectives from renowned leaders in the field on the topic of releasing microdata, tabular data, and offering web-based query systems to the public. The authors and discussant will focus on recent advancements toward meeting data user needs in their respective organizations.

Natalie Shlomo (University of Southampton) will present information loss measures to quantify the effects of SDC methods on bias and variance and other statistical analysis tools as well as examine statistical hypothesis tests. Dr. Shlomo will also demonstrate a Disclosure Risk-Data Utility assessment on sample data drawn from a Census (where the population is known) as well as real data sets with an emphasis on practical implementation. Neil Russell (National Center for Education Statistics) will discuss a recent policy shift away from public use microdata files and towards web-based Data Analysis Systems (DAS) as the main means for releasing public-use data.

An NCES Task Force was recently charged with examining the DAS data protection methods versus users' statistical and data needs. Some of the Task Force findings will be presented with a description of how the DAS currently protects data. Laura Zayatz (Census Bureau) will present three areas of current disclosure avoidance research at the Census Bureau: noise for tabular magnitude data, synthetic tabular frequency and microdata, and a remote microdata analysis system. Jean-Louis Tambay (Statistics Canada) is the discussant for the session presentations. This session is scheduled for Thursday, August 7, from 8:30 to 10:20.■

**American Statistical Association Survey Research Methods Section
2008 Student Travel Award Application**

The Survey Research Methods Section (SRMS) of the American Statistical Association offers a Student Travel Award for students in doctoral programs in statistics, survey methodology, or allied disciplines. Support is offered for students to attend the Joint Statistical Meetings, to be held in Denver, Colorado, August 3-7, 2008. Preference is given to students presenting a paper at the conference. In addition, applications must be supported by a current member of the SRMS section (see below). Up to 8 awards will be granted to cover expenses up to \$400. Travel fellows will also be allowed to attend one of the continuing education short courses offered by SRMS. Winners are expected to attend JSM sessions and the SRMS mixer on Wednesday night in order to be recognized by our section for your award. Previous winners are ineligible for this award.

Name: _____

Department: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Home phone: _____

Degree Objective: _____

Are you presenting a paper at the conference? YES NO

Have you previously attended any professional meeting
on statistics, survey research, or a related discipline? YES NO

If YES, please describe (meeting, location, dates):

Signature of Applicant

Date Submitted

Support from Current SRMS Member

As a current SRMS member, I endorse this student's request.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

APPLICATION CHECKLIST – ATTACH THE FOLLOWING:

- Copy of most recent transcript or advising report from your university.
- Double-spaced essay, no more than two pages, describing your interest in survey research methods and your interest in attending the Joint Statistical Meetings
- Letter of support from faculty advisor or supporting SRMS member

Application material may be sent by fax, mail, or email to:

Breda Munoz, RTI International; 3040 Cornwallis Rd.; Cox Bldg 221; Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194;
Phone: (919)990-8304, Fax: (919) 541-6416; breda@rti.org

Application for 2008 Student Travel Award must be received by: March 31, 2008

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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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