

Executive Committee Reports

**Are We on Course to Having an Adequate Workforce of Survey Researchers in the Future?
Report from Section Chair Bill Kalsbeek**

Cliff Zukin’s 2006 article on the future of the survey research profession (*Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70(3): 426-442) raised a number of important issues and questions for me, as did the findings of an informal poll of recent chairs of the SRMS and presidents of AAPOR that I conducted. The purpose of the poll was to hear what these leaders see as looming issues for the field. Findings from these two sources confirmed a number of concerns that I’ve heard anecdotally from others and felt myself during the past decade. I’m going to suggest below that most of what I see in these findings points to a central but unanswered question that we should answer very soon; namely,

Will the future workforce of survey researchers in the US be adequate, in terms of both numbers and quality?

I’ll then toss in a couple of thoughts on how we might address this matter, with the hope of generating discussion that will lead to any needed action.

The Zukin article and my poll point to several important concerns, in order of importance according to the combined number of mentions.

1. *Maintaining a highly trained workforce of survey researchers* – Implied here is concern about how well we recruit new people to the field, the capacity and penetration of our training infrastructure within the academic community, and the adequacy of how and what we teach new recruits and current survey practitioners.
2. *Maintaining professional standards in how surveys are conducted* – The general concern here is with how, as one respondent in my poll stated, “just about anyone can design, implement, and publicize the results of a survey,” often at lower cost and quality than those committed to higher professional standards.
3. *The allure of relatively inexpensive web surveys* – The underlying issue with collecting data via the internet seems to be the absence of a serious balancing of cost vs. error tradeoffs because of obvious cost advantages and less obvious error implications.
4. *The overall cost of surveys* – This item raises the question of how surveys can continue to be conducted if traditional approaches are costing more while at the same time budget line items for these surveys are diminishing.
5. *The perception of surveys outside of the profession* – Here the need is to make users of survey findings more discerning and appreciative of what goes into conducting a “good” survey.

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6. *Maintaining the integrity of survey samples* – The concern here is challenges to the quality of samples from such things as frame exclusions (e.g., cell-only households), declining response rates, and continuing pressure to relax standards in how rigorously samples are chosen.
7. *The need for more methods research outlets* – The point implied here is that one can't promote high quality survey methods and methods research, or to support those whose professional livelihood depends on them, unless there are enough top-tier journals to publish survey methods research.
8. *Scientific objectivity and survey findings* – This concern mourns the tendency for some to slant survey design or findings for subjective purposes, thus moving surveys away from their intended use as sources of objective information.

While each of these concerns is distinguishable by who or what is affected, most are tied to having an adequate future supply of survey researchers. For instance, resolving the training concern would contribute to the quality of the workforce. Moreover, a preponderance of qualified survey researchers would be more likely to expose the failings of a minority of those subscribing to lower professional standards, provide the knowledge base to more fully understand the implications of web-based data gathering, make users of survey findings more aware of their strengths and limitations, find solutions to inadequate sample representation, and promote the objective use of survey data.

What is sobering to me about the future workforce issue is that to my knowledge little or nothing is currently being done about it. I strongly believe that this wait-and-see attitude must change, lest we fall into the same trap as those who continue to doubt the reality of climate change or the likelihood of the future insolvency of the Social Security system.

So what should we do? First, we could determine whether existing concern about the future workforce issue is justified. Roundtables and/or invited sessions on the topic at the next couple of JSMs and

AAPOR annual meetings would be a start. Then, drawing on our own proclivity to seek information and find answers, we might look into funding a more thorough study to answer our workforce questions and to propose solutions as needed. In addition to the SRMS and AAPOR, groups like the, the National Science Foundation, the Committee on National Statistics, the Office of Management and Budget, and other statistical committees and professional organizations with a focus on survey research might be brought into this effort. The idea is to act now to deal with an issue that, if left untended, could adversely affect the future quality of survey research in this country.

Let me hear your thought on this, or any other related concerns you may have. Feel free to contact me anytime at kalsbeek_srms@unc.edu.

Report from the Program Chair and Chair-Elect Steve Heeringa and David Marker

SRMS in Salt Lake City

The 2007 Joint Statistical Meetings will be held July 29-August 2 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Coming on the heels of a highly successful 2006 program in Seattle, the response by the SRMS membership as we prepare for this year's meetings has been overwhelming.

SRMS will be the primary sponsor for 38 sessions at the 2007 JSM: 9 Invited Paper Sessions: 7 Topic Contributed Sessions and 22 Regular Contributed Sessions. As part of the 2007 program activities, SRMS members have organized 2 Round Table luncheons and 2 Round table "coffee" sessions. Individual SRMS members are also participating in the enhanced Poster Sessions that will be held at convenient times during the five-day program. The final program for the annual meeting is now available online at <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2007/> (choose Program/Overview from the menu).

A downloadable .PDF version of the final program will be available July 15, 2007 at the JSM 2007 program website.

SRMS Invited sessions

The SRMS Invited Paper program for the JSM2007 features presentations on a diverse set of topics of interest to survey statisticians, methodologists, and practitioners. The session numbers, titles, scheduled days, and starting times for these SRMS Invited Paper sessions are given below:

#41 The Role of Statistical Standards in Federal Surveys; Sunday, 07/29, 4:00 PM

#119 A Sampling Revolution? List vs. Area Frames for Probability Sampling; Monday, 07/30, 10:30 AM

#175 Analyzing Multiple Response Categorical Data from Complex Samples; Monday, 07/30, 2:00 PM

#228 Resampling Methods in Small Area Estimation; Tuesday, 07/31, 8:30 AM

#262 Confronting the Realities of Massive Imputation in Complex Surveys; Tuesday, 07/31, 10:30 AM

#363 Improving the Agricultural Resources Management Survey, Wednesday, 08/01, 8:30 AM

#455 Web Panel Surveys- A Solution to Declining Response Rates; Wednesday, 08/01, 2:00 PM

#452 War and Death in Iraq- A review of the Iraq Casualty Studies; Wednesday, 08/01, 2:00 PM

#525 Topics on Survey Design and Inference In Honor of JNK Rao's 70th Birthday; Thurs, 08/02; 10:30 AM

We would like to draw special attention to the final invited session that Paul Levy has organized in honor of Jon Rao's 70th birthday. This session (#525) will be a celebration to honor an SRMS colleague who has contributed so much to both theoretical developments and practical applications in the field of survey statistics. In addition, SRMS has worked with the Alan Rossman, Program Chair for JSM2007, to sponsor a special invited session (#452) on the controversial series of population based studies of casualties and "excess deaths" resulting from the war in Iraq.

In addition to these nine sessions, SRMS will be joining Social Statistics, Government Statistics, Epidemiology and other ASA sections to co-sponsor 13 additional sessions that are relevant to the

interests of our Section's members. If you visit the 2007 JSM Program and restrict your search to Invited Paper/Invited Poster sessions and SRMS sponsorship, you can view session summaries and abstracts for all of the sponsored and co-sponsored sessions. We encourage you to take time to review the full program on-line and plan your conference schedule in advance of the Salt Lake meetings.

Topic Contributed and Contributed Sessions

The SRMS Topic Contributed and Contributed paper sessions span a wide range of topics in survey statistics and methodology. The Topic Contributed and Contributed sessions provide SRMS members the opportunity to present their most recent work, often before it has been published elsewhere in reports or peer-reviewed journals. Attendees at these sessions can expect to hear about the very latest developments in survey methods and statistical procedures that our colleagues having been working on during the past year. Here again, advance planning of your conference schedule can help you take greatest advantage of the Topic Contributed and Regular Contributed paper sessions. We encourage you to visit the JSM 2007 website and view the online program and paper abstracts in advance of your arrival at the meetings.

Poster Sessions

In planning for the JSM 2007, the Program Committee placed a special emphasis on improving the scheduling and display conditions for Contributed Poster sessions. While JSM poster sessions have not historically received the prominence they have at meetings of other professional societies, the Program Committee is working to change this. We strongly encourage SRMS attendees at JSM 2007 to set aside time to view the poster presentations and engage in discussion with the authors.

Round Table Sessions

On top of all the presentations, the Program Committee has prepared four Round Tables where issues discussed should attract the interest of many. These are organized in two Round Table luncheons and two Round Table coffee sessions. Both of the luncheons are related to the role of statisticians in

improving elections, which is the topic of the June Amstat News President's Invited Column.

M07 Web Panels – The Future of Survey Research?; Monday 07/30, Breakfast; Chair: Karol Krotki, RTI

T06 Transition from Graduate School to a Career; Tuesday 07/31, Breakfast; Chair: Edward English, NORC

#M29 What Happened in Florida – 13's congressional election last year?; Monday 07/30, Lunch; Chair: Arlene Ash, Boston University

W28 Auditing Election Results; Wednesday 08/01, Lunch; Chair: Wendy Rotz, Ernst & Young.

Final Preparations for JSM 2007

By the time you receive this issue of the SRMS Newsletter, the main registration for JSM 2007 will be open. Here is a schedule of upcoming key dates for the 2007 JSM authors and conference participants:

- **June 21, 2007** (midnight Eastern Daylight Time). Last day for Early Bird Registration to be received at the ASA office by this date.
- **June 22-July 12, 2007** - Advance Registration (increased fees apply).
- **July 2, 2007** - Hotel reservations deadline.
- **July 15, 2007** - Downloadable PDF version of the Final Program available on JSM web site.
- **July 28 - August 2, 2007** - Onsite registration (increased fees apply).

Our best wishes to all of our SRMS and ASA colleagues. We look forward to seeing you in Salt Lake City at the 2007 Joint Statistical Meetings.

Message from the Continuing Education Officer Leyla Mohadjer

The SRMS is pleased to co-sponsor the following two short courses during the Joint Statistical Meetings in Salt Lake City.

Latent Class Analysis of Survey Error - In this one-day short course, given on Saturday July 28, Paul Biemer will present a statistical framework for modeling and estimating classification error in surveys. The course begins by examining some of the early models for survey measurement error. Then these models are cast in a general latent class modeling (LCM) framework where the true values of a variable are assumed to be unobserved (latent) and a survey response constitutes a single indicator of the latent variable. The course covers the basic concepts of the classical measurement error model, particularly as it applies to categorical data, and how to construct the likelihood functions for a range of latent class models and determine their identifiability. The course will introduce the students to the ℓ EM software for fitting a wide-range of LCMs that can be downloaded from the Web at no charge.

Individuals in government, universities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations who are involved in the development, implementation, or evaluation of surveys will find this course useful. The course content is accessible to anyone having an intermediate background in statistics and sampling methods. Participants should have a working understanding of elementary probability theory, expectation, bias, variance, multinomial distribution, hypothesis testing and model goodness of fit. Knowledge of categorical data analysis is helpful but is not required to grasp the essential concepts of the course.

Modeling and Data Analysis for Complex Surveys - Jay Breidt and Jean Opsomer will present this one-day short course on Sunday July 29. The course will review the main aspects of surveys that affect data analysis and model fitting, including stratification, clustering, calibration, survey weights, nonresponse, and imputation. The students will acquire a thorough understanding of the issues involved in model fitting and analysis for survey data and will become aware of the statistical issues

SRMS Meetings at ASA Conference

SRMS Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, 7/30/07, 6:00-8:00pm (includes a meal)
Grand America Hotel (see final program for room)

SRMS Business Meeting

Wednesday, 8/1/07, 5:00-6:30pm
(5:00-5:30 pm refreshments, courtesy of MSG)
Salt Palace Convention Center (CC-151 A&B)

related to informative designs and their effect on estimates. The course will describe and compare model-based and design-based approaches to estimation and inference with complex survey data, review available software, and illustrate with example data sets.

This course is aimed at researchers with a basic background in statistical theory (elementary probability, sampling properties of estimators, likelihood) and methods (point and interval estimation, hypothesis testing, regression analysis) who need to analyze complex survey data. No previous background in survey sampling is assumed.

For more information about the content to be covered in each of these courses refer to <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2007/onlineprogram>, or contact Leyla Mohadjer at leylamohadjer@westat.com.

Report from Council of Sections Representative Mike Larsen

The delay between the publication of the Joint Statistical Meetings proceedings CD-ROM and the posting of the SRMS proceedings papers to the SRMS website has been eliminated. Previously there was a two-year delay between the publication of the CD-ROM and the posting of SRMS papers on the web site. That delay allowed the ASA to sell a few more copies of the CD-ROM.

Beginning this year, all registrants at JSM will receive the CD-ROM. Because of the wide dispersal of the papers and requests by SRMS, we will be allowed to post SRMS proceedings papers promptly to the web, thereby making the proceedings even more useful as a method of communication of research in survey methods. 2005 and 2006 SRMS proceedings are now on the web site: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/proceedings>.

At the Business Meeting of the SRMS at JSM, we would be interested in hearing from members about their opinions on poster sessions at JSM. As membership in ASA increases and attendance at the annual JSM reaches new levels, what should be done about the size of the meeting? Due to cuts in government funding this year for travel by some

employees and smaller anticipated attendance in Salt Lake City, there will not be as much of an issue of space for the upcoming meeting. In future years, however, sustained high levels of attendance could force the ASA to consider only select sites for conferences.

One space-saving option is to have more posters. What would make a poster presentation option attractive to SRMS members? If posters are not desirable, then should the ASA consider refereeing of abstract submissions or adding an afternoon to the conference? In part, the idea for discussing this now is to put the SRMS at the lead of considering these issues so that the ASA pursues options that are as agreeable as possible to the SRMS membership.

2008 Waksberg Award Sharon Lohr, Chair 2008 Waksberg Award Committee

The journal *Survey Methodology* has established an annual invited paper series in honor of Joseph Waksberg to recognize his contributions to survey methodology. Each year a prominent survey statistician is chosen to write a paper that reviews the development and current state of an important topic in the field of survey methodology. The paper reflects the mixture of theory and practice that characterized Waksberg's work. Previous winners have been Gad Nathan (2001), Wayne Fuller (2002), Tim Holt (2003), Norman Bradburn (2004), J.N.K. Rao (2005), Alastair Scott (2006), and Carl-Erik Särndal (2007).

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.

The author of the 2009 Waksberg paper will be selected by a four-person committee appointed by *Survey Methodology* and the American Statistical Association. Nominations of individuals to be considered as authors or suggestions for topics should be sent before February 28, 2008 to the chair of the committee, Bob Groves, by email to bgroves@isr.umich.edu or by fax to (734) 763-9831.

**Publication Officer's Report
Eric Rancourt**

This being my first report, I would like to start by thanking my predecessor, Stuart Scott who passed me the baton. As publication officer, I am responsible to make sure that all members of the SRMS as well as others see what we accomplish. In this respect, I will do my share of the work, but I also need your help in informing me of what has been accomplished. When you do, my role becomes that of a magnifying glass, helping people to see your work!

The JSM2007 is coming soon and will be a great occasion to meet each other and present our work. As you know, knowledge and history are intertwined with writing. Therefore, I urge you to write your papers and submit them for the proceedings! Speaking of proceedings, we can now post proceedings on our Web site as soon as they are ready (and it is not necessary to wait for 2 years as before). If you go to our web site (<http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/index.html>), you will be able to find the 2006 proceedings. Concerning the Web site, I must thank Tony An for his continued work over the years.

I wish to warmly thank Laura Flicker and Emily McFarlane for their very hard work on the newsletter. Again, if there are events, stories, announcements, papers, or news that you would like to be known by our members, please do contact Laura (lflicker@rti.org), Emily (emcfarlane@rti.org) or myself (eric.rancourt@statcan.ca). We can also have a voice in Amstat news. In the June issue, we have information on our section, but I would like to be in possession of more material so that we can let all of the ASA know about us more often. Do not hesitate to provide me with information to publish. Feel free to email me at eric.rancourt@statcan.ca.

Thank you and have a great summer!

SRMSNET

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ASA Election Results 2007

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SECTION ON STATISTICAL CONSULTING

- For Section Charter Proposed Revision, Approved
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology 2007 Research Conference

November 5-7, 2007

Arlington, Virginia

FCSM will hold its research conference at the Sheraton Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia. The Conference provides a forum for experts from around the world to discuss and exchange current research and methodological topics relevant to Federal government statistical programs. Each day of the conference will offer papers on a wide range of topics including the use of advanced technologies for survey design and data collection, processing and dissemination, variance estimation, treatment of missing data, improving coverage and response rates, confidentiality and disclosure issues, record linkage, sample design and estimation, cognitive research, and data quality. Technical demonstrations on a variety of applications will run concurrently on the second day of the conference. Applications include demonstrations of audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI), a pen-based data collection system, computer-assisted recording interviewing (CARI), the use of hand-held computers for data collection, the use of GPS hand-held receivers in agricultural surveys, and data dissemination using the web. Sessions feature papers and demonstrations by government, private sector, and academic researchers from nine countries. In the opening plenary session Jon Krosnick from Stanford University will be our guest speaker. All paper sessions will include an open discussion and some sessions will include a formal discussion. Conference Fee: Registration is \$195. For a copy of the advance program and registration information please refer to <http://www.fcsm.gov/events/#upcoming>.

Workshop on Calibration and Estimation in Surveys (WCES)

October 31 - November 1

Ottawa, Canada

The conference will focus on conceptual, technical, and practical aspects of calibration and more generally estimation in surveys. Topics included will cover inference, the foundation of survey sampling, generalized regression estimation, dealing with nonresponse, imputation variance and small area estimation. The special invited keynote speaker will be Carl-Erik Särndal, who has made major contributions to these topics throughout his career. For more information, please contact Eric Rancourt (+1-613-951-5046; eric.rancourt@statcan.ca)

The **Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) Teacher Partnership** links teachers of mathematics in schools, museums, technical institutes, two-year colleges, and universities with teachers in different environments and with mathematicians working in business and industry. AWM invites individuals to join the partnership. Partnership activities include electronic communications, teaching projects, classroom visits, and informal educational activities. Examples of collaborations include a university instructor inviting a schoolteacher to visit a class of prospective teachers, a high school teacher collaborating with a mathematician working in industry, or children's museum activity programmer collaborating with a mathematician. Partners may share electronic communications, visit each other's classrooms, collaborate in teaching, or cooperate on grant proposals. The AWM Teacher Partnership Program will pair teachers (classroom or informal) with mathematicians. It will also maintain a website for sharing resources and information.

Eligibility: Anyone interested in contributing to the formal or informal mathematics education of students at any level may request a partner working at a different level or in a particular area. For more information, visit www.awm-math.org/teacherpartnership.html. If you have any questions or comments, please contact one of the organizers: Pao-sheng Hsu (hsupao@maine.edu), Suzanne Lenhart (lenhart@math.utk.edu), or Erica Woolich (woolich@aol.com).

ANNOUNCEMENTS, Cont'd

SRMS Student Travel Award Program

Dear SRMS members,

I am writing in my role as chair of the Student Travel Award Committee of the Survey Research Methods Section (SRMS) of the American Statistical Association. For 2008, SRMS is repeating its *Student Travel Award program*. This initiative aims to encourage students to gain exposure to opportunities in survey research methods and to become familiar with the section and its work.

Key features of the program are as follows:

- Travel awards of \$400 each will be awarded.
- Awardee may also attend a continuing education course sponsored by SRMS at no expense.
- Awards are restricted to graduate students whose applications are "endorsed" by a current SRMS member.
- Winners are expected to attend JSM sessions and the SRMS mixer in order to be recognized by our section for your award.
- Preference will be given to students presenting a paper.
- Application deadline is March 31, 2008.

Interested students can find the application on the following page of this newsletter or online at http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/travelapp_2008.pdf

Please disseminate this information to potential applicants. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Breda Munoz

SRMS Treasurer

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.



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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