

# SAPOR NEWSLETTER

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*Southern Association for Public Opinion Research*

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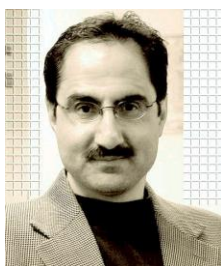
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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

MANSOUR FAHIMI, PRESIDENT



With warm greetings, I hope this newsletter finds you well. Following our 2011 Annual Conference last October, which took place at our new venue in Raleigh, I would like to thank those who were able to join us. Clearly, that successful event would not have been possible without the diligent teamwork of Kristin Fuller, the Conference Chair, Amber Rumsey, the 2011 Conference Vice-Chair and current Conference Chair, and our team of wonderful volunteers.

Also, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Executive Council members, whose technical and professional experiences will further enhance the scientific stature of our Chapter:

- ▣ Vice-President/President-Elect: Michael Lawrence (Knowledge Networks)
- ▣ Conference Vice-Chair: Gretchen McHenry (RTI International)
- ▣ Treasurer: Adam Sage (RTI International)

Given the many events and activities that will be needed for a successful conference, the Executive Council has already started preparing for the 2012 event. Towards this goal we have reached out to our Chapter members to help us identify this year's theme. Based on the feedback we have received and in light of the growing interest in alternative methods of survey administration, the theme for our 2012 SAPOR Conference will be *Thinking Outside of the Traditional Survey Research Toolbox*.

For decades, the survey research community has relied upon the theories and methodologies developed by an impressive cadre of scientists and practitioners across a wide range of survey related disciplines. For varying reasons, however, our existing survey research toolbox is in need of new and innovative methods that can address the emerging challenges for conducting reputable survey research in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Broadly speaking, such challenges are related to two distinct sources of bias: undercoverage and diminishing response rates. And as always, cost continues to be an

overarching challenge, creative remedies for which are among the most pressing needs in today's economy.

I am delighted to announce that our 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference will be held this October in Raleigh, NC. Calls for papers and further details about the conference will be announced in coming months, so please be on the lookout and consider participating. The richness of our program is entirely a function of your input and contributions. As always, you can check our website to learn more about SAPOR and our upcoming events: (<http://www.southernassociationforpublicopinionresearch.org/index.htm>).

Best Wishes,

Mansour Fahimi, Ph.D.  
SAPOR President

## **REVIEW OF THE 2011 SAPOR CONFERENCE**

### **AMBER RUMSEY, CONFERENCE CHAIR**



Our 2011 SAPOR Conference took place this past October, and was a great success! I'd like to thank Kristin Fuller, our previous Conference Chair, as well as the many conference volunteers for all of their efforts in coordinating such a great event. Many thanks to all of you! For the members who were not able to attend, below is a brief recap of the highlights from our conference.

The conference began Wednesday afternoon, with a short course by Emily Geisen, from RTI International, and Caroline Jarrett from Effortmark, Ltd. The short course, *Introduction to Usability Testing for Survey Research*, received many positive reviews from those who were able to attend.

The presentations and posters at the conference were engaging and provided timely and actionable information for SAPOR members to take back to their organizations. We were especially pleased by the diversity of presentations this year, which ranged in topics from political research briefs to changing research methods, such as social media and web-based surveys. We want to extend a special thank you to our invited presenter, Dr. Peter V. Marsden from Harvard University. His presentation on the General Social Surveys of 1972 to 2010 was an informative highlight of selected trends stressing liberal and conservative movements in both social and political orientations, and changing affiliations of Americans with other individuals and within groups.

As we began our Thursday evening activities with the social hour, we were pleased to see SAPOR members conversing and networking with both old and new colleagues. In addition to providing exposure to the latest research topics, this truly is one of the most valuable features of the SAPOR Conference – establishing connections between

practitioners in the research community. We were extremely fortunate to have Dr. Michael Link from The Nielsen Company as our keynote speaker. His presentation about Smartphone application-based research was both informative and thought provoking.

We are indebted to our sponsors for the 2011 annual conference. Their generous contributions enabled us to offer a high-quality professional conference while maintaining an affordable membership cost. We would like to thank the following loyal sponsors for their continued support of SAPOR:

- ▣ RTI International;
- ▣ The Nielsen Company;
- ▣ Marketing Systems Group;
- ▣ Headway Workforce Solutions; and
- ▣ Avar Consulting.

The enthusiasm, dedication, and energy that our SAPOR members brought to the 2011 annual conference can only mean that even better things are to come for SAPOR in 2012. We hope to see you all at the annual conference in the fall. We will strive to make it the best one yet!

## **2011 SAPOR SURVEY**

**MANSOUR FAHIMI, PRESIDENT**

As in the past years, subsequent to our Annual Conference we reached out to all SAPOR members for their opinions about the 2011 event. This survey was hosted on-line and members were invited to partake via several email announcements. We are delighted to have received valuable input from members who joined us at the conference, as well as those who were not able to attend. The majority of those who were not able to join us have indicated that inadequate funding has been the key reason for their absence.

This year our conference was held at a new location in Raleigh, NC. We are pleased to hear the majority of conference attendees were extremely happy with this new venue. Accordingly, we are planning to hold our 2012 conference at the same location as well. In the coming months we will inform you about the final logistics, including abstract submission and other related activities.

Results from the survey also informed us about the various activities and features of our 2011 conferences. We have heard interesting suggestions for future short courses, the need for including discussants for all sessions, and the preferred choice for the schedule of our 2012 conference. As always, your feedback and suggestions are the primary source for the direction that SAPOR will take in the future. Please feel free to contact me or any of our Executive Council members should you have any suggestions for the upcoming conference, or other Chapter related issues. This is your Chapter.

## **WELCOME NEW SAPOR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**STACEY WEGER, SECRETARY**



Elections were held at the 2011 SAPOR Conference last October for three newly vacated positions on the Executive Council. Thanks to all of our members who participated in the election, whether they nominated someone, accepted a nomination, or cast their ballots in the election. We appreciate your active participation in this process!

We would first like to extend our thanks and heartfelt gratitude to the SAPOR members who are transitioning out of their roles. Many thanks to Kristin Fuller, for her unwavering dedication in the role of Conference Chair; Jennifer Marks, for her diligent attention to detail as our recent Treasurer; and to Lauren Cohen, whose keen leadership skills made her exemplary in her former position as SAPOR President.

As we begin 2012 and launch our plans for the annual conference in 2012, we would like to take the time to welcome and congratulate our new Executive Council members. We are very excited to welcome them to the leadership team in the roles of Vice-President/President Elect, Conference Vice-Chair, and Treasurer.

### **MICHAEL LAWRENCE, VICE-PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT ELECT**



Mike Lawrence is the Vice President for Research Development in the Government and Academic Research unit at Knowledge Networks. He is a senior manager and survey statistician with more than 40 years of broad technical experience with an emphasis on management, program operations, and development for Government, Commercial and Academic clients. Mike joined Knowledge Networks in 2006 having come from RTI International. His surveys have spanned topics as varied as uranium mining to flu vaccination, with health care and related topics dominating his recent efforts. He has also taught survey methods courses at the George Washington University graduate school. His interests are in solving vexing survey problems related to sampling, measurement, and evaluation. He received his BA in Sociology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and his MA in Family and Child Sciences from Michigan State University. He has worked for different firms and conducted everything from traditional to, at the time, very innovative research. In his current role, Mike's responsible for designing and supervising the execution of dozens of simultaneous surveys on a wide variety of topics using KnowledgePanel®, custom survey panels, and other sample sources.

**GRETCHEN MCHENRY, CONFERENCE VICE-CHAIR**



Gretchen McHenry holds a B.S. degree in Sociology from Appalachian State University and a Masters degree in Sociology from North Carolina State University. She has worked at RTI as a survey specialist since 2008. Gretchen has experience in field operations and data collection, specifically managing field interviewers and monitoring field observations. She has served as a SAPOR conference planning volunteer from 2008 to 2011. Gretchen would like to see SAPOR's annual conference grow in

attendees and scope of papers presented.

**ADAM SAGE, TREASURER**



Adam Sage joined RTI in 2008 as a survey manager. His experience includes data collection management, survey design and methodology, and the utilization of new technologies and social media. Adam holds a B.A. and M.A. in Sociology from Kent State University, and is currently a student in UNC's Certificate Program in Survey Methodology. Much of Adam's research involves understanding and utilizing data from social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. As part of this work, he actively tracks and blogs about

emerging social media and technology trends. Adam is the creator and managing editor of RTI's SurveyPost, a blog with contributors that are experts in using digital technologies in social science research. Adam has been an active member and volunteer for SAPOR and AAPOR since 2009.

**SAPOR MEMBERS - WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!  
STACEY WEGER, SECRETARY**

As always, we hope to connect with all of our SAPOR members on a regular basis and not rely only upon our annual conference as a way to catch up with you. Please consider sending us updates throughout the year so that we can highlight your accomplishments and share information about your research activities with other SAPOR members.

Our Executive Council members are here to serve you, so always feel free to contact any of us with questions or suggestions for improving and growing our organization . You can also find out more about SAPOR on our website. Be sure to check in every now again for conference updates, calls for papers, networking and volunteering opportunities, and more!

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