

A First-Time Attendee's Guide to the 2013 AAPOR Annual Conference

This guide, prepared for you by the AAPOR Conference Support Committee and the Membership Committee, provides helpful information about AAPOR and the upcoming annual conference for those who are new to AAPOR or are attending the conference for the first time. It is divided into the following sections:

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I. Pre-conference and Conference Activities

There are several programs and events leading up to and during the conference aimed at new AAPOR members and first-time conference attendees more generally.

Before the conference:

- **Docent program:** The Conference Support Committee organizes a Conference Docent program, which connects people who are attending the conference for the first time with seasoned AAPOR attendees who can help answer questions and provide a friendly face at the conference. If this is your first AAPOR Conference, someone from the Conference committee will contact you before the conference with more details about the program and to connect you with your docent.

At the conference, for first-time attendees:

- **AAPOR Passport Program:** All first-time conference attendees will receive a "Passport to AAPOR." The objective of the passport program is to introduce new members to different aspects of AAPOR and get you to meet more folks at the conference. You can get your passport "stamped" at multiple locations at the conference, and those who turn in a completed passport are entered into a drawing to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.
- **New Member/All-Chapter Reception:** This reception, held on Thursday evening of the conference, gives first-time conference attendees a chance to mingle with long-time AAPORites, representatives of AAPOR's regional chapters, and connect with your docent early in the evening to get your passport stamped.
- **Thursday Evening Dinner:** Special tables will be reserved at the Thursday evening dinner for Docent groups to continue networking and learning about AAPOR.
- **AAPOR Booth:** Membership Committee Members will be on hand at the AAPOR Booth (located near the Conference Registration) to welcome members, provide information about AAPOR membership, and generally offer a friendly face. We encourage you to stop by the booth as soon as you are registered to connect with us!

II. Practical Information About the AAPOR Annual Conference

Travel and Hotel

This year's conference takes place at the Seaport Boston Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. The AAPOR web site at http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Annual_Conference.htm has the latest information about the conference, including information about room availability, alternate hotels in the area, and travel options. Note that rooms at the Seaport have already sold out for most nights during the conference, but the web site lists several alternative hotels nearby.

A consistently great part of the AAPOR annual conference is the location. This year's hotel is no different. The Seaport Boston hotel web site lists some of the amenities available, such as the Wave Health and Fitness Club, as well as amenities nearby like golf and sailing. You can read more on these activities at the Seaport Hotel's web site at <http://www.seaportboston.com>.

Your registration packet will have maps of the hotel conference rooms that AAPOR will be using during the conference. AAPOR also has signs, either electronic or posters on easels, for every room, as well as conference volunteers who can help direct you where you are going. The hotel provides an overview of their meeting spaces on their web site at <http://www.seaportboston.com/meetings-and-events/event-venues.aspx>, which you can use to find the sessions you are interested in.

Food at the Conference

Another great part of AAPOR is the food. On Friday and Saturday mornings, the conference provides a continental breakfast of pastries, coffee, tea, and juice available in the Exhibit Hall, where we also have refreshment breaks during the morning and afternoon. This is a great time to casually network with other AAPOR attendees and to visit booths and exhibits in the hall before sessions begin for the day.

Several meals are included in the conference fee, including lunch on Friday and Saturday. Dinner is provided on Thursday before the plenary session and on Saturday night during the Awards Banquet. You are encouraged to have dinner with your Docent Group on Thursday evening. There is no assigned seating during other meals, so it's a great time to continue meeting other AAPOR members from different organizations.

The hotel also has many restaurants on site, including Tamo Bar (bar and grill), Seaport Café (sandwiches and snacks), and Aura Restaurant. More information on the hotel restaurants can be found at <http://www.seaportboston.com/dining/eat-in.aspx>. The Seaport is also conveniently located right on the waterfront within walking distance to many restaurants. The hotel provides a list of restaurants within walking distance that they recommend, which can be found at <http://www.seaportboston.com/dining/eat-out.aspx>.

How to Dress

The conference program states that dress at the conference is "business casual," though actual attire worn by attendees often ranges from casual (shorts and polos) to formal (suits and ties - particularly among those who are presenting). People tend to "dress up" more for the President's Reception and the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening. Also note that while average temperatures in Boston in May are usually in the mid-60s, the weather can vary significantly. Hotel meeting rooms can be quite cool, so you may want to bring a sweater or jacket regardless of what the weather is in Boston that weekend.

III. Conference Tips and Highlights

Presentation Sessions

The AAPOR annual conference has hundreds of presentations and posters on research conducted by AAPOR members and others. The final conference program is available on the AAPOR website and available in hard copy at the conference.

The sheer volume of presentations can be daunting, and we encourage first-time attendees to look through the final program before arriving at the conference to identify the sessions, papers, and posters that may be of particular interest to you. Presentations and posters cover a variety of fields, including health care, politics, economics, education, public policy, and many others. Many AAPOR attendees divide sessions into two types: those that focus on public opinion and those that focus on research methodology. You may get the most out of the conference by planning to attend both types of sessions, regardless of your research interests, since the conference is a good place to learn something new.

AAPOR presentation sessions generally consist of 4-5 papers presented by different authors. At previous AAPOR conferences, most presentation sessions were assigned a chair (who introduced the speakers and manages the question-and-answer period after the presentations) and a discussant (who provided a summary of the papers presented and offered feedback to the authors). This year, the chair and discussant roles have been combined into a single facilitator/moderator, a role that is intended to go somewhat beyond the traditional chair role in terms of summarizing themes and offering feedback to the authors, but not quite to the level of discussants (who often would prepare a full presentation summarizing their feedback on the research presented).

It is acceptable to “float” between rooms during sessions if you want to hear one paper in a given session and another in a session taking place at the same time; just be courteous by sitting on the aisle or near the back of the room and try not to leave in the middle of a presentation. Also, we encourage you to ask questions of the presenters at the end of the session or to ask for a copy of the presenter’s paper, which they can usually email to you during or after the conference.

Poster Sessions

Poster sessions are more informal than presentation sessions. There are three poster sessions during the conference, one each on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Poster presenters set up their posters in the Exhibit Hall and talk about their research as attendees look at the posters during the poster session time. At the same time in the Exhibit Hall, several events will be going on including demonstration sessions of products from companies attending the conference, “Meet the Author” sessions near the book exhibit, and snack or dessert breaks. Like session presentations, we encourage you to ask questions of the poster presenters as well as for copies of their papers when you are interested in knowing more about their research.

Short Courses

We would be remiss not to mention the short courses available before the AAPOR annual conference. The short courses occur on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning before the conference begins, and on Sunday morning (the last day of the conference), and are led by subject experts in the field. The short courses are not only an opportunity to learn more specific information about a topic of interest to you and your research, but they are also an opportunity to meet leading experts in the field and ask questions about the short course subjects. Short

courses are not part of the conference registration, so there is a separate registration for those. You can see the short courses available for this conference at the AAPOR Short Courses page at http://www.aapor.org/Short_Courses5.htm.

Networking

An important aspect of the AAPOR annual conference, and a reason that many members attend year after year, are the networking opportunities available. As previously mentioned, networking often happens at meals during the conference, but the schedule also includes other chances for new and old members to meet and connect with one another. One tip for first-time attendees: don't be afraid to approach unfamiliar faces and strike up conversations, including with those who are senior in their fields. Most long-term AAPOR-ites are thrilled to meet new people at the conference and learn about their research as well as share their own professional experiences.

On Thursday and Saturday evening before dinner, we have two receptions where you can meet and mingle with other AAPOR members. As highlighted above, the **New Member/All-Chapter Reception** takes place on Thursday at 6 p.m. This is a great time for new members to meet their docents and learn more about regional chapters. Each chapter will have a table at the reception, including giveaways and regionally-themed raffle items. For more information on the seven AAPOR regional chapters and to find out which chapter covers your region, check out the AAPOR Chapters page at <http://www.aapor.org/Chapters1/5554.htm>. The **President's Reception** on Saturday evening is another great chance to mingle.

The **Exhibit Hall**, including the **book exhibit** and **Meet the Authors** is also a great way to meet professionals in the field. The Exhibit Hall includes booths from conference sponsors ranging from commercial survey vendors, to software providers, to academic research programs. The book exhibit is open whenever the Exhibit Hall is open and you may want to peruse the books and find some to add to your collection. In the afternoons on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, authors from some of the books displayed will be available to talk about their books and other research. You can also purchase books at a discount at the book sale, which takes place on Saturday from 1:15-2:15 in the Exhibit Hall. The sale is very popular with AAPOR conference attendees, so be sure to make your selections and attend early.

AAPOR also organizes a formal networking activity called **Speed Networking**. Organizations that are either looking to hire in the coming months or who want to promote their business take time to meet interested conference attendees. You can sign up for these networking sessions to learn more about organizations and to begin making connections that may lead to job opportunities. Sign-up sheets for the 15-minute Speed Networking slots will be available at the conference registration desk. Speed networking slots fill up fast, so sign up as soon as you know you would like to talk to.

Other conference events

We also want to highlight two other events at the conference that may be of interest to first-time attendees. First is the AAPOR Town Hall, on Friday from 3:15 pm to 4:00 pm. Come and meet "your" AAPOR leadership team and ask any question you like! Learn what is on the minds of members like you and what the Executive Council, committees and Chapters are doing to serve your interests. This is a first-time event, and it should be fun and insightful.

Want to know more about what goes on “behind the scenes” at AAPOR? The **AAPOR Membership and Business Meeting**, held on Saturday from 4-6 pm is a great chance for students to learn more about how AAPOR works, and to hear about the association’s recent accomplishments and future initiatives. All members are encouraged to attend, and to ask questions and exchange ideas with members of AAPOR’s Executive Council and other leaders in the association.

Tweet your conference experience!

Many AAPOR members (those attending as well as those not attending) make use of Twitter during the conference to share interesting tidbits of information they pick up, offer opinions on happenings at the conference, pose questions, or announce events. If you are a Tweeter, feel free to join the conversation using hashtag #AAPOR! There will also be an electronic Twitter board at the conference where you can read what others are posting.

IV. Fun Stuff to Do at the Conference

Fun Run/Walk

If you like competition, or just want a good workout while at the conference, the Fun Run/Walk is for you. This annual event happens early on Saturday morning beginning at 7 a.m. This year’s Fun Run/Walk will take place along two miles of the Seaport’s beautiful waterfront. All AAPOR conference attendees are welcome to participate, and prizes are awarded to the fastest runners and walkers.

Annual AAPOR Golf Outing

If you love to golf, make plans this year to arrive early enough to play a round during the Annual AAPOR Golf Outing before the annual conference begins. The annual outing will be held on Thursday, May 16, at the William J. Devine Golf Course at Franklin Park, with tee times starting at 7:30 am. William Devine Golf Course is the second oldest public golf course in the nation and has been rated by Golf Digest as one of the best places to play in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

Applied Probability

The Applied Probability session, better known as poker, happens Saturday night after the awards banquet. Many AAPOR conference members enjoy the Applied Probability session, and new conference attendees are always welcome. Check the final program for location.

Fenway Park Tour

Join your AAPOR colleagues at 6:30 pm on Friday, May 17, for an evening tour of the famous ballpark complete with a ride on the Old Town Trolley, appetizers, and a non-alcoholic beverage at the Bleacher Bar. Find your own way back to your hotel while stopping to enjoy any one of hundreds of options that Boston has to offer.

Around Boston

Even though Boston is one of the largest cities in the country, its accessibility is unparalleled with many sites to easily see. Information about Boston activities and tours can be found on the AAPOR conference web site at <http://events.bostonusa.com/aapor/>.

V. Getting The Most Out Of Your AAPOR Membership

There are many ways to learn about the various benefits of AAPOR membership, and we encourage you to visit the AAPOR website, attend the new member welcome webcast (mentioned above), and stop by the AAPOR booth at the conference. Below are just a few highlights of AAPOR member benefits that may be of particular interest to you.

AAPORnet

AAPORnet is a listserv for AAPOR members only. It offers a great way to ask questions about research and methodology, share ideas, see job postings, or just to gain insight into what leading professionals in your field are discussing. AAPORnet is also a useful place to ask questions and get information about the conference from those who have attended many times before.

Social Networks

Find AAPOR on **Facebook** at www.facebook.com/pages/American-Association-for-Public-Opinion-Research-AAPOR/51165007173. Be sure to “like” us and check back often for the latest updates. Facebook is also a great place to see who else is a member of AAPOR and/or will attend the conference. Through Facebook, you can get to know other conference attendees in advance.

AAPOR is also on **LinkedIn**. Learn more about, and join the group at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/American-Association-Public-Opinion-Research-1573607/about>. LinkedIn is great for job-seekers as well as those looking to network or to post and answer questions about public opinion research, market research, and the like. Some of AAPOR’s chapters also have their own LinkedIn groups, which may include local job opportunities:

- NYAAPOR (<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1913912&trk=group-name>)
- PAPOR (<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=2396275&trk=group-name>)
- DC-AAPOR (<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3850098&trk=group-name>)

Webinars

In 2011, AAPOR began offering webinars on a broad spectrum of research topics. This is a great way to learn new skills and information right from your home or office. For students who are members of AAPOR, participation in most webinars costs only \$15. For more information on upcoming webinars or to purchase recordings, see the AAPOR Webinars page at <http://www.aapor.org/source/education/>.

Public Opinion Quarterly (POQ)

Your AAPOR membership includes a free subscription to *Public Opinion Quarterly (POQ)*, including hard copy and online access. Published since 1937, *POQ* is among the most frequently cited journals of its kind and is rated in the top ten scholarly journals in communications, political science, and interdisciplinary social sciences. *POQ* selectively publishes important theoretical contributions to opinion and communication research, analyses of current public opinion, and investigations of methodological issues involved in survey validity including questionnaire construction, interviewing and interviewers, sampling strategy, and mode of administration.

Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology (JSSAM)

AAPOR recently announced the addition of a new interdisciplinary journal to be published in conjunction with the American Statistical Association (ASA). The purpose of *JSSAM* is to publish cutting-edge articles on statistical and methodological issues for surveys and censuses. It also will publish empirical and theoretical papers as well as applied papers and review papers. In addition to *POQ*, AAPOR members will receive a free subscription to *JSSAM* beginning with the inaugural issue, expected in July 2013.

Survey Practice

Survey Practice is AAPOR's e-journal journal. It provides current information on issues in survey research and public opinion useful to survey and public opinion practitioners, new survey researchers, and those interested in survey and polling methods. Check it out at <http://www.surveypractice.org/index.php/SurveyPractice>.

AAPOR Website

AAPOR's website (www.aapor.org) contains many great resources, some public and some of which can be accessed only by members. These include the **Events Calendar** (www.aapor.org/Events_Calendar.htm), listing upcoming events of interest to AAPOR members; the **Career Center** (jobs.aapor.org) for posting and reading job listings; the **Blue Book** (www.aapor.org/Blue_Book1.htm), a directory of organizations that provide public opinion research services and information; and a section on **Resources for Researchers and Students** (www.aapor.org/Content/aapor/Resources/ForResearchers/default.htm), including links to best practices, white papers, and task force reports.

Regional Chapters

A great way to learn more about AAPOR while connecting with a smaller group of professionals in your own geographic area is to get involved with one of AAPOR's seven local chapters.

Most chapters hold their own local events, ranging from two-day conferences, to short courses and workshops, to happy hours and networking events. Chapters charge an additional fee for membership beyond the AAPOR membership fee, but for students these fees are small (all are under \$20), and like AAPOR, many offer students their first year of membership for free. You can learn more about the chapters at <http://www.aapor.org/Chapters1/5554.htm>, or by visiting the individual chapter websites:

- Midwest (MAPOR): www.mapor.org
- Pennsylvania-New Jersey (PANJAAPOR): www.panjaapor.org
- New York (NYAAPOR): www.nyaapor.org
- Pacific (PAPOR): www.papor.org
- Southern (SAPOR): www.southernassociationforpublicopinionresearch.org/
- Washington, D.C.-Baltimore (DC-AAPOR): www.dc-aapor.org
- New England (NEAPOR): http://www.aapor.org/New_England.htm