



The Verbatim

Newsletter of the Minnesota/Upper Midwest Chapter of the MRA

Fall 2008

Volume 11 Issue 2

President's Corner

Tammie Frost-Norton, PRC

We are in the middle of a very exciting MRA year, both for our Chapter and for National. Our Chapter is rolling out our newly redesigned website! Look in this issue for more details, and watch for your personal mailing announcement packet. As a Chapter, we are also pleased to announce two new Committee Chairs: Robin McDougal, PRC, Research Manager with Maritz Research has taken on the Chair position for the Membership committee. You'll hear more from Robin and her committee as to their initiatives this year. Patricia Scott, General Manager with Field Research Services has accepted the Chair position for the Publicity committee. She is really looking for some new members to help with a variety of things, for a few volunteer minutes for each event to be contacts with some major local news outlets, to writing an occasional recap for a Chapter event, and more. Please contact Patricia! We are equally pleased that Jeanine Hesse, PRC, Sr. Project Manager with Questar continues to chair our very successful Programming Committee. You will see more info in this issue about our recent events, as well as information about upcoming events and our new 18-month conference schedule. Please don't hesitate to contact any of these chairpersons with suggestions or feedback. We are also pleased to announce the national award of our Minnesota Upper Midwest Chapter Service award in this issue. Our Past President Committee is working on our Member Satisfaction Survey, conducted every three years. We'd appreciate your participation and feedback!

National is also having an exciting year. They just announced the merger of MRA and CMOR. Look for an article in this newsletter. They have also unveiled their Virtual Business Guide – a free service for members. More details later in this issue.

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2009 Upcoming Events

**Watch for MRA-AMA
event in February**

“Navigating Your Future?”

**Use The Spring Conference As
Your Compass
May 21, 2009
8:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

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President's Corner cont'd

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While the economy is proving challenging for most of us (as is the high level of unemployment in our market!), it is strengthening to know our Chapter and National are solid and thriving, improving tools and information to help us and our companies. Continue to demand nothing but the best for your membership dollar! Voice your opinion to let us know any way which we could offer more. We are listening!

MRA & CMOR Merge!!



At the 2008 Fall Conference in Las Vegas, MRA announced the merger with CMOR (Council for Marketing and Opinion Research). The benefits to MRA members include improved services and high end deliverables at no charge. The benefit to CMOR members (whose membership is made up of companies, not individuals) includes the full suite of MRA member services at no increase in cost of membership. The profession benefits from one unified voice representing the profession on its most critical issues.

Specific benefits to MRA members include: Compliance Guide, tracking studies, The Shield, Federal watchdog, State watchdog, Grassroots lobbying efforts, research expertise, legal expertise, Professional government affairs staff, and independent research professional for insight. ADDED VALUE TO MRA MEMBERS - \$3,000.

One professional association means:

- ✓ ONE legislative and regulatory representative
- ✓ ONE industry outlook and direction
- ✓ ONE voice of the profession
- ✓ ONE complete networking service
- ✓ ONE dues payment
- ✓ ONE association representing all of the research needs of the profession (companies and individuals) and its sub-groups, at a lower price than any other association membership pricing for inclusive services!

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Professionalism Defined

Marketing Research Association to Close Professional Researcher Certification Open Enrollment December 31, 2008

The professional Researcher Certification program (PRC) is designed to recognize the qualifications and expertise of marketing and opinion research professionals.

The goal of PRC is to encourage high standards within the profession to raise competency, establish an objective measure of an individual's knowledge and proficiency and to encourage professional development.

Achieving and maintaining your PRC validates your knowledge of the market research industry and puts you in a select group of like-minded professionals. It's a visible badge of distinction, demonstrating for all your professional skill, commitment and dedication. Your PRC is also a valuable tool to generate new business.

PRC 2.0 - The Next Evolution of the PRC Program

- New flexible education requirements
- A simplified classification structure
- Increased recognition for PRCs
- New robust PRC Web site

See the MRA National website <http://www.mra-net.org/prc/become/routes.cfm> for more detailed information.

The *SPECTACULAR* and *ALL NEW* WEBSITE!

We hope we caught your attention! Our Chapter is very pleased to announce the introduction to our exciting, newly redesigned website!

Check out www.mnmra.org and see for yourself!

Our redesign was undertaken to bring more useful information to YOU; resources that could be beneficial to each of you in your job and career, helpful to your company, and energize our local community by being a local industry resource.

You will find our **HOME** page has the latest news and event links, as well as lots of tidbits of really useful information in the **DID YOU KNOW** feature at the top right. You'll find our current Board and Committee Chairs on the **ABOUT** page. The **EVENTS/TRAINING** page brings you a calendar where you can find upcoming event as well as descriptions of past events. Our **NEWSLETTER** tab has some of our past Bait Box and Verbatim issues for your convenience. You will find our **CAREER CENTER** with information about Professional Researcher Certification (PRC) as well as helpful hints on how to enter our industry, for those surfing the web to learn more about us. And there are tons of **EXTERNAL LINKS** to our affiliates, our fellow organizations as well as other resources you may find helpful.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our newest volunteer and webmaster, **Roelf Kuetse** of **Cybermind Design** (www.cyberminddesign.com), to the leadership of our past-President Bonnie Sargent of Field Research Services, and a team of others, we have an all new Chapter website. Beyond the highlighted new tabs above, you'll also find recent "People on the Move" updates about our local community and the mission statement and purpose of our Chapter. For those truly nostalgic, a history of the chapter is still included as well.

We welcome feedback and suggestions for changes and additions to the website. Please contact Jeff Cook – Ipsos with any "People on the Move" news as well! We'd also like to thank the team that supported this redesign. Others on the team include; Josh Holly -- Satisfaction Management Systems, Linda Daniel – Harris Interactive, Gayle Belkengren, Jeanine Hesse – Questar, Danelle Gorra – Delve, Tammie Frost-Norton, John Schamber – MarketLine Research, Julie Heise – Harris Interactive, Carol Duling – Questar, and Tish Pasqual – GfK Custom Research. Thank you, Team!

Publicity Revitalized

MRA MN Upper Midwest Chapter is revitalizing its Publicity Committee. Our new committee Chair is Patricia Scott from Field Research Services. Patricia has been General Manager for Field Research Services in St. Paul for the past year and a half.

New to the Publicity Committee is Jeff Cook of Ipsos Research. Jeff will be updating our newly redesigned website. Please contact him via email with "People on the Move" news including announcements of changes for people or companies. These will be posted on our website homepage. Jeff.cook@ipsos.com

Not new to the committee is Linda Daniels. Linda has been writing our Bait Box and event invitations for several years. Linda has also been our Transition Chair while we searched for a new Chairperson. Many thanks, Linda!

One of our goals is to make contacts at the MN Business Journal, Star Tribune and Pioneer Press. If you have always wanted to expand your skills regarding publicity of our research industry, we'd love to have you join the committee! Or if you love to write articles or event recaps, we'd love to add you as a staff writer for our newsletter! Any interest in building your skills in PR is needed. Just contact Patricia at PatriciaScott@fieldresearchservices.com.

In Polls We Trust

To those who attended the October 10th event, *Spin it to the Right, Spin it to the Left, Spin it 'till your Dizzy* at the Airport Hilton, we learned how political parties, candidates, and lobbyists use political and other opinion polling. We also got a fun dose of their predictions. Our panelists included Sarah Janecek, Director of Political Coverage, Dolan Media Company and Publisher of Politics in Minnesota; and Mark Andrew, veteran of state politics and founder of GreenMark. Our moderator was Gayle Belkengren, whose avocation has been in politics since the 70's and has held several volunteer offices for her party.

Since we all now know the outcome of the 2008 election, we can make our own judgments of how accurate the polls were. At the event, Mark Andrew noted that some polling has become Nano-Polling. They are accurate for a nano second immediately after an event, for example a debate. Rob Daves, who originally was not able to make it to the event, was able to attend after a schedule change, added some insights from his years running the Minnesota Poll for the Star Tribune. He indicated it is not that polls are not to be trusted, rather that polls can be used inaccurately; there are flash polls, media polls, political polls, and more -- and they are not all equal. They don't get it wrong; they just measure it differently. It was also noted that journalists often don't help, as they are eager to grab information in time to get a story to press.

All agreed that the mode chosen can affect the polling process. It was noted that Rasmussen and Ipsos were within a ½ point of accuracy in 2004. Rasmussen uses voice and push button modes. It was generally agreed that Harris and Gallop use reliable modes. Survey.com used robo-polling and their results did well in 2004 also. In general, it was agreed that accuracy on National polling has been getting better over the years. It was discussed that internet panels were the least accurate in 2004. Zogby (internet) was in last place for accuracy, according to our panelists. Janacek added that www.RealClearPolitics.com combines all the polls which may help average out the good and bad practices by some polls, and Andrew added that www.fivethirtyeight.com does as well.

There was some discussion how Minnesota as a state does with polls predicting outcomes. Andrew noted that traditionally the greater Minnesota area was made up of the classic democratic farmers. He has seen things change where now the Edina/Minnetonka regions have become democratic strongholds. Janacek and Andrew seemed to agree that the "undecideds" are over-rated as the "decision makers" in how elections might differ from polls. "Undecideds" are swayed by the last good speaker or argument made by a candidate. Janacek added that
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people hear what they want to hear, and therefore confirmation bias does take place. The difficulty is that information sources are so fractured now; people can choose to only hear what they want to hear from a few select sources, where they can find a mirror for their beliefs. She advised, on a personal level, that voters should look for information with unified facts, and independent research firms with a reputation for no spin. She does recommend her website www.politicsinminnesota.com. Andrew indicates that the way to know if you are “getting it right” when you are in politics, is to use empirical data and experiential, intuitive insights. He looks at several polls for accuracy, based on past performance and the integrity which becomes the “brand” of those polls. Janacek believes more in the methodology and screening questions they use. She agrees that more difficult screens in general have better quality responses. (And acknowledges those are more expensive!)

Rob Daves gave an example that the most accurate poll results he has seen are based on wording in the screener, including naming all the candidates. The worst poll accuracy he has seen is when one candidate is named vs. “other” un-named. Respondents seem to create a dream candidate, moving the responses away from accurate poll results. It was noted that political polls tend to use only top box and bottom box, unless the “somewhat” category is very high. Both panelists agree that “frugging” (fundraising under the guise of research) does exist; and it seems to work, as both sides continue to do it.

The panel closed with some predictions. There was a feeling that there were “undercurrents” which would make a huge impact on the election, as they may be under-polled. These include youth, African Americans and cell phone only voters. We know now that President-Elect Obama had a landslide of two to one in the electoral votes, and a 7 point difference in the popular vote. You can form your judgments about our '08 polls and undercurrents! Attendees of this MRA Minnesota Upper Midwest chapter event felt a victory in attending this educational and informative panel.

MRA Launches Virtual Business Guide

The MRA has launched an essential resource for managing day-to-day business objectives. The new Virtual Business Guide is the latest addition to MRA membership benefits. IT IS FREE TO MEMBERS!

Found on the MRA Web site www.mra-net.org, members can use the guide to access tools for human resources, finance, sample contracts and agreements, business management or careers. Periodically new resources will be added, making this an essential tool that anyone doing business will use on a daily basis. It is intended to be a living space for members to access resources and to collaborate on business issues. After the launch, a blog will be introduced to create space for members to act as a collective brain trust.

"In a time when company resources are tight it is essential to have a tool that can help with everything from contracts to human resource issues," says MRA CEO, Larry Brownell. "This living tool will become an essential business tool for all researchers."

Does Your Writing Keep Your Clients Happy?

Those who attended The Art and Science of Writing, the first ever Chapter Spotlight Event found ways to ensure they keep their clients happy with their reports, executive summaries, and even email communications! Writing is at the core of our business. Clients do not want data anymore, they want INSIGHT! The quality and clarity of your writing can establish a long life with a client or end it quickly.

The half-day event occurred on September 10th, 2008 at the Minnesota History Center. After a networking lunch, attendees could choose from a qualitative session on report writing with Janese Evans of Strategic Toolbox LLC (jevans@strategictoolbox.com); or a quantitative session with Liz Reyer of Reyer Coaching and Consulting (www.deliverchange.com).

Liz Reyer's presentation *Effective Quantitative Reports; Vision meets Detail* gave us key insights on telling a story that flows by using vision – and how to clarify the vision that will be aligned with your clients' needs. She also gave tips on managing the details to show both quality and give clients confidence; and the importance of immersing yourself in the data. The closing included when to trust your gut, the importance of finding a good editor, and ethical considerations; as well as hints on how to prepare for and handle the unexpected issues that can come up during the presentation.

Janese Evan's qualitative presentation focused on seeing things from the client point of view. For example, clients tend to hear two things: what they expected/always knew and what surprises them that are hard to believe. Janese stressed that clients need both. If they only hear what they expected, they would say, “why did we spend that money, we knew that.” And, if they only get surprises, they'd say, “I'm in this business, I've never heard that, I don't believe it.” If they get both parts, the familiar gives credibility to the unfamiliar. She also included checklists for ways to help clients learn from both what they know, and what they are surprised by.

All attendees then came together for an interactive workshop with Dr. Stephen Wilbers on effective writing. Dr. Wilbers is a writing consultant, author, and syndicated columnist (www.wilbers.com). Since 1983 he has offered training seminars in effective writing to more than 6,500 business, technical, and academic writers. And he did not disappoint! With humor and specific examples, Dr. Wilbers led us through his five elements of effective writing; he had us each take a writing skills assessment (self reporting of results was optional.) He introduced his “Writing for Results” theme with a review of the effective 3-step memo, tips on proofreading, as well as his guide to improving your writing over time. He also teased us with some top grammar lessons he is compiling for his next book. Ask any attendee what they learned about clarity in writing by using Stephen's exercise in extraneous language using the poem “Harlem” by Langston Hughes – they will remember!

In addition, thanks to the generous sponsorship of General Mills, we were able to provide all attendees with Dr. Wilbers' book, *Writing for Business*, a helpful, easy-to-apply advice book for everyone who writes on the job. It won the Minnesota Book Award. Attendees also received an indispensable copy of the *U of M Style Manual*.

If you missed this event, watch for it again in the future. This extremely popular event will no doubt be scheduled again through our Chapter!

“Communicating Through Flower Talk”

By Linda Daniel, Harris Interactive

Periodically I re-read my MRA newsletter humor articles to help jump-start my imagination when facing a new writing deadline. I noticed that a lot of my articles were about my problems communicating with various types of technology and how that has influenced my ability to communicate with my clients.

My technology woes are legendary at Harris Interactive: the postage machine and my computer laugh at me, the color copier taunts me, my phone ignores the numbers I dial and connects me to whomever and wherever it wants, and there was that unfortunate instance when my attempt to follow instructions from the IT department resulted in sparks shooting from an outlet. I’ve tried various approaches when dealing with such issues, including telling my computer that it can’t fly and that when I throw it from the top floor of my building it will be very sorry for all of the trouble it has caused me. I also regularly threaten the office printer with a hammer when it refuses to do its job.

Perhaps I’ve been using the wrong form of communication, though. What if, instead of considering my phone, computer, printers, fax machine, and whatnot to be evil contraptions, I start thinking of them as....friendly flowers in need of love and comfort? I came up with this idea after I found an article on the internet about talking to plants. In 1848, [Dr. Gustav Theodor Fechner](#) suggested in his book *Nanna (Soul-life of Plants)* that [plants](#) were capable of emotions, just like humans, and you could promote healthy growth by showering your plants with attention and talk. Another author, Luther Burbank (inventor of the Idaho potato), wrote in his book, [Training of the Human Plant](#), that plants may not understand the spoken word, but they were capable of telepathically understanding the meaning of speech.

So, I launched my new plan with my computer, the evil....I mean... flower that frustrates me the most. I started every morning telling Athena how clever she was. Don’t you think it was a nice compliment to name my computer after the Greek goddess of knowledge and wisdom? I praised her when she let me know I had misspelled a word. I gently patted her head (?) when she made sure conditional formatting was working properly in Excel. I told her she was sweet, beautiful, smart, and completely responsible for my success in marketing research. As a plan, it was great.

However, it turns out that the Idaho potato guy is the more accurate of the two authors. I know this because, while giving Athena lots of “flower talk,” I was still thinking those dire “she’s-out-to-get-me” thoughts. Athena telepathically sensed my ploy and began to spontaneously reboot—every 10 minutes. Obviously, this plan needs more work. WARNING! Clients might be a lot like flowers, too. Even though we are cordial and sweet to them, they may have the telepathic abilities of flowers and sense what we are really thinking, so be very careful!



State of the Chapter

Bonnie Sargent

Past President (2007 – 2008)

As Past-President I have been asked to give members a report about the state of our chapter: how we are doing, and how we deliver value to our members. It is our mission along with National's to promote excellence in the opinion and marketing research industry by providing members with a variety of opportunities for advancing and expanding their marketing research and related business skills.

Our chapter has sponsored events on continuing education in the market research industry, such as Rob Daves' *Eye Tracking* session in March. At the fall '07 conference, we presented a number of sessions such as *Respondent Cooperation; Latest Development in Qualitative Research; Going Wireless; and Marketing Research Challenges and the Effect on Teaching Future Professionals*. We keep you aware of latest technologies like our April event (which packed the room) when Stu Rosen of The Dcypher Group presented *What Are Your Respondents Really Saying? Research Into the Expression of Emotions Through the Written or Spoken Word*. And our Spotlight Event in September on *The Art and Science of Writing* really spoke to core skills we can all improve. These educational events offer a great value to our members as a resource for information and expertise.

Another opportunity for our members to advance in their industry is being involved in MRA activities. It has been my personal experience that volunteering is the best way to network. Volunteering allows you to enjoy camaraderie with people in your related industry, and you gain new leadership skills at the same time. Even though there are great advantages to volunteering for a few hours a month, word has not gotten out to all of our members. This "state" of our chapter is not doing as well as we would like, and need people to step up and get involved with our community.

An exciting new endeavor we have taken on this year is a new chapter website. Roelf Kuitse volunteered to be our cyber mastermind and guided us through this process. I can honestly say I think you will like it. It has taken us many months to finalize it, and you can read about it in this newsletter!

Another positive endeavor for our chapter has been Director At Large, Josh Holly's work with the AMA to co-sponsor some events. Expanding this collaboration will enable larger events, lower costs, and a more diverse network our local industry. Watch for our first joint event in February 2009!

Our chapter gained 19 new members in 2007, and 24 so far in 2008 and that is outstanding. Welcome to all new members! At the same time, we have seen our member base decline a bit. Our membership as of today stands at 108, down from 130 a few years ago. Going forward, I believe that by continuing to offer quality programming, exciting educational events, and networking opportunities, we will see membership rebound. We need companies to support their employees for continuing education in market research.

So how is the state of our Chapter? I am proud of our chapter and I am confident that all of our members will continue to support a strong chapter. Out of 12 chapters serving National MRA, the Minnesota/Upper Midwest Chapter serving Minnesota, Northern Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota continues to be a strong voice for market research in the upper Midwest.



Notice To Our Members

We neglected to publish our 2007 P&L to our members earlier this year. It is listed below for your information. Watch for the 2008 P&L in the spring *Verbatim* edition.

Chapter 2007 Profit and Loss Statement

Revenues

Membership Dues	\$3,290.00
Meetings	\$17,785.00
Interest	\$384.97
Other	NA

Total Revenues **\$21,459.97**

Expenses

Meetings	\$13,055.70
Professional Services	\$200.00
Board Expenses	\$2681.16
Postage	\$2612.98
Newsletter	\$2366.63
Website	\$89.28
Bank Fees	\$204.63

Total Expenses **\$21,210.38**

Surplus **\$249.59**

Linda Daniel Awarded Volunteer of the Year!

At the MRA National Conference in New York City in June 2008, Linda Daniel, PhD, of Harris Interactive was awarded the Minnesota Upper Midwest Chapter Volunteer Award for 2007-2008. The Chapter re-awarded the plaque to Linda at the Minnesota Upper Midwest Spotlight Event: *The Art and Science of Writing* on September 10, 2008 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

Linda's work as a volunteer is well known to all of you, but perhaps not on a first name basis! Linda is the wry humorist who writes our Chapter invitations and the Chapter Bait Box news/event email. She often has an article in our Chapter newsletter, *The Verbatim* as well. Linda's well-earned award also comes from her years on the Chapter Board. Linda was our President from 2006-2007, and is currently also our Committee Chairperson for the Past Presidents Committee. Before becoming Chapter President, Linda served on the Board as a Director at Large in 2003-04 and 2004-05 and as President Elect in 2005-06. She has been a tireless volunteer for the past five years, and much like the energizer bunny, she just keeps going and going!

Linda is one of those people who really make a difference, not just to our chapter, but to our local research community. We thank her and Harris Interactive for their volunteer contributions and congratulate her on her well-deserved award!



Welcoming New Members

The MRA MN Upper Midwest Chapter is very pleased to welcome many new members in 2008. Please welcome them at events and check out their businesses!

Name	Company	Position	Location
Kristen Rodacker	Jostens	Sr. Manager, Market Intelligence	Minneapolis
Lori Kruse	InsightsNow, Inc	Principal Consultant	White Bear Lake
Abigail Longstreet	Wellmark Blue Cross & Blue Shield	Market Research Analyst	Des Moines
Molly McNeill Vincent	Wellmark Blue Cross & Blue Shield	Team Leader, Market Insights	Des Moines
Jason Johnston		Sr. Analyst	Minneapolis
Trudy Madsen	Lawrence & Schiller	Research & Account Planning Strategist	Sioux Falls
Krista Noren	Lawrence & Schiller	Research & Account Planning Coordinator	Sioux Falls
Billie Jo Waara	Lawrence & Schiller	Director of Research & Account Planning	Sioux Falls
Jeffrey C. Rasmussen	IFAI	Market Research Manager	Minneapolis
Harlan Wahrman	Northwestern Mutual	Director - Market Research	Milwaukee
Bridgette Niezwaag	Food Perspectives	Sales Associate	Plymouth
Kimberly Gibson	3M	Marketing Research Manager	St. Paul
Christine Kelley	Wolters Kluwer Financial Services	Sr. Market Research Analyst	Green Bay
John F. Schamber	MarketLine Research	VP General Manager	Minneapolis
Leslie Rivette	Smith-Dahmer Associates	Research Associate	Minneapolis
Patricia Jo Scott	Field Research Services	General Manager	Saint Paul
Carol Russell	Russell Herder	Principal/CEO	Minneapolis
Christine S. McMahon, PRC	MNDoT	Director of Market Research	St Paul
Pam Nelson, PRC	Genworth Financial Services	Consumer Insights Leader	Richmond
Lauren Katherine Gervais	DataProbe, Inc.	President	Winnipeg
Cindy L. Logue	Vernon Research Group	Operations Manager	Cedar Rapids
Corene Miller	Best Consulting	Administrative Partner	Neenah
Katherine Plueger	Aveda	Market Intelligence	Blaine
Miranda Harrison	Minnesota State University, Mankato	Student	Mankato



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The Verbatim

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