

## Happening in SRO

You can find this “Happening in SRO” and all similar newsletters on the SRO Intranet Home Page, located at: <http://isr-wp.isr.umich.edu/srointranet/> under Key Updates.

***If you have items for the newsletter or if you would like to highlight an event, please let Brenda Spaulding or your subunit director know.***

### Conference Season 2025 (Lisa Holland)

Professional conferences provide an important venue for sharing our work and for learning about the work of others in our field, and we have come to recognize April and May as ‘Conference Season’ because of the larger number of meetings that take place in these months. Although staff sometimes have opportunities to attend conferences as audience members, usually SRO staff members are making contributions based on their work throughout the year. Typically, they submit their abstracts for presentations, panels, and posters months in advance, and if accepted, they travel (or participate remotely) to present their work. Conferences also provide a great opportunity to talk informally with our colleagues from other organizations (and our organization!) and to learn about their experiences.

In April, the International Blaise Users Conference (IBUC) took place in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. This week-long conference was the 21<sup>st</sup> annual meeting of this group celebrating 40 years of Blaise software! As one of the earliest adopters of Blaise, SRO always plays a prominent role in these meetings. This year, Jude Perillo, Kelly Lieske, Karl Dinkelmann, Shane Empie, and Stephanie Chardoul represented SRO at this conference which also included the Blaise Corporate License User Board meeting. The SRO team presented the following three papers:



- Multilingual Survey Development in Blaise: Streamlining Localization
- Using Accordion Templates for Expandable Rosters
- Optimizing Blaise Servers for High-Concurrency Survey Environments



The 2025 Comparative Survey Design & Implementation workshop (CSDI) took place in North Macedonia April 7-8. This workshop provides a forum for researchers active in cross-national or cross-cultural survey research to share work relevant to comparative survey methods. Before joining the IBUC conference, Stephanie attended CSDI and presented her paper, *Longitudinal survey design to study the health and wellbeing of children experiencing armed conflict: Ukrainian families across multiple settings*.



Later in April, Jeffrey Albrecht presented his work at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting in Denver, Colorado. The 2025 meeting theme was *Research, Remedy, and Repair: Toward Just Education Renewal*, and Jeff’s paper explored *Testing Recruitment Methods for a Longitudinal Web Survey of Community College Students*.

The 58th Annual Conference of the International Field Directors and Technologies Conference (IFDTC) scheduled to take place in Providence, Rhode Island was canceled this year. This conference brings together colleagues from academic and government organizations who carry out data collection, and the conference focuses largely on the operational and technical aspects of our work. SRO is always well-represented at this conference, and 2025 was set to follow suit, as Minako Edgar, Mouna Mana, Taghraid Lovell, and Sarah Crane had received notifications that their

abstracts were accepted, and they were preparing to present. Unfortunately, the large contingent of federal employees who typically contribute to this conference were unable to attend, resulting in the need to postpone the conference until 2026. We thank our SRO contributors and hope we can support them at next year's event.



The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) held its 80<sup>th</sup> annual conference May 13-16 in St. Louis, Missouri. The 2025 conference theme was *Reshaping Democracy's Oracle: Transforming Polls, Surveys, and the Measurement of Public Opinion in the Age of AI*. The conference organized sessions intended to explore the role of new technologies in data collection and to examine the use of large language models, natural language processing, and machine learning algorithms to

inform the ways we measure public opinion. Presentations on the breadth of topics that make up survey methodology are also a prominent part of the AAPOR program. Although not everyone attended the conference, SRO had many staff members contributing to conference presentations this year.

MPSDS student Grace DesJardins presented her work, *Evaluating the Feasibility of AI-Driven Translation: A Comparative Analysis of ChatGPT-4 and Human Translators in Survey Research*, which she carried out in collaboration with Andrew Hupp, Raphael Nishimura, Makenna Harrison, Meredith House, and Liliana Grueber. Andrew and Makenna also worked with Wen Chang and other U-M colleagues to present their work, *Towards Understanding Costs in Large-Scale Video Interviews*. As our field has seen an increased interest in research about survey costs, James Wagner organized an AAPOR 'Idea Group' titled *Preparing Survey Cost Estimates – Strengths and Shortcomings*. This was a three-hour discussion session focused on the development and tracking of cost estimates in survey research. SRO was represented in this session by Nicole Kirgis, Piotr Dworak, and Andrew Hupp.



Many SRO projects were reflected in this year's presentations. Piotr Dworak presented work based on CDS, *Designing a Web Survey Experience for Adolescents: Lessons Learned from Caregiver and Adolescent Participation in the 2024 Panel Study of Income Dynamics Child Development Supplement Study*. Two papers were based on data from the NDWS projects: *Designing Incentive Experiments for the National Dementia Workforce Study: Insights into Engaging Facility Leadership and Staff* and *How Much Will It Take? Results from a Community Clinician Survey Incentive Experiment*. With colleagues from collaborating organizations, Piotr worked with James Wagner and Margaret Hudson on these two presentations. Raphael Nishimura presented a poster called *Sample Stratification for Election Studies* to which Paul Burton and ANES colleagues

also contributed. Raphael moderated a session on *Prob/NonProb - Methods to Combine or Adjust Data to Improve Survey Estimates*, and he organized and moderated a panel called *Weighting on Recalled Vote: Taboo or Trap?* in which he presented his own work, *How Much Measurement Error in Recalled Vote Can Offset Nonresponse Error Reductions in Weighting? a Simulation Study*.





Eva Leissou and Shonda Kruger Ndiaye both contributed to a paper led by Mike Elliot titled *Obtaining a Probability Sample of a Birth Cohort Via Prenatal Care Practices Using Birth Certificates As a Sampling Frame*, which is based on data from SRO's ECHO project. As a member of our Clinical Contact Protocol team, Lisa Lewandowski-Romps has collaborated with AAPOR colleagues on the topics of supporting respondents and collecting sensitive information over the past few years. This year, she participated with this group as a panelist, discussing *Developing Distressed Respondent Protocols in Survey Research: Considerations from Project Proposal Review through Data Collection*, and Nicole Kirgis and Stephanie Chardoul, AASRO President-elect, represented

SRO at the annual lunch of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations.

We congratulate our participants and thank them for representing SRO. We appreciate the time they spent planning and preparing their presentations on top of their daily project work! If you are interested in attending IFDTC, AAPOR, or other conferences, talk with your supervisor about how you might share your experiences and represent SRO while you build your professional network.

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## Accessibility Update (Carol Lively)

In January 2025, the Provost sent an email announcing the launch of the public phase of a new strategic initiative focused on enhancing digital accessibility. This initiative is intended to ensure the University of Michigan's full compliance with new federal regulations. The [Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) provides guidelines on the scope and timeline for digital accessibility compliance at public universities, setting a new federal compliance deadline of **April 2026**. Consequently, the Institute for Social Research (ISR) must ensure equitable access for users with disabilities, adhering to the digital accessibility standards defined by the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA](#) across digital content, services, products, programs, and communications. Fortunately, this initiative aligns with the university's existing [SPG 601.20 on Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility](#).

SRO has been actively collaborating with the ISR Accessibility Committee to understand the requirements and establish priorities. As directed, our initial focus will be on external web content. CMT will scan and monitor all external content hosted by WordPress for accessibility. To meet the new standards, external content hosted outside of WordPress will need to be addressed by SRO.

TSG is preparing to comply with these accessibility standards by concentrating on MSMS web applications, Blaise instruments, Blaise web portals, and our new applications (logging, locating, and payment). We will utilize accessibility tools supported by ITS to scan our existing web applications to establish a baseline. New applications will be developed using the React frontend framework, alongside MUI Core, a popular component library that supports accessibility standards to facilitate the creation of accessible web applications. The Blaise Survey Platform Development team is working on identifying the required elements that need to be addressed to ensure that we meet the WCAG 2.1 Level AA standard. This includes adding the necessary components to the Blaise Resource Database (BLRD) and identifying and using tools that aid in testing the accessibility of a given survey. Finally, we are working on a template that will allow a Blaise programmer to assess all of the elements that are part of meeting the Level AA standard.



We invite you to familiarize yourself with our [Digital Accessibility Strategic Initiative](#) and the resources available on the [Digital Accessibility website](#), which includes tools, training, and practical guidelines. Should you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

## LHMS Spring 2025

(Gary Hein)

The 2025 Life History Mail Survey (LHMS) Spring wave, scheduled to start production in June 2025, has set aside part of its sample for a web pilot. LHMS is an HRS ancillary study that started in 2015. Every two years, LHMS contacts new HRS respondents and previous LHMS non-responders and attempts to collect information on life experiences, which we may not have had time to touch on in main HRS. This includes questions about their previous residences, jobs, education, and relationships. Throughout its history, LHMS has primarily been a mail study. Respondents are mailed a packet with a 37-page self-administered questionnaire (SAQ), welcome letter, informed consent brochure, \$25 check and business reply envelope (BRE). For those who complete the SAQ and return it to Ann Arbor, we log receipt of the SAQ and send the booklet to DataForce for scanning and processing. There are a few reminder mailings to non-responders, including a postcard and a packet with an additional SAQ, and in some waves we have included reminder calling.

The big change for LHMS 2025 Spring is that 10% of the sample, about 411 respondents, will be invited to complete the survey online. When respondents are mailed their initial packet, instead of an SAQ and BRE, they will have a letter that contains a web URL with login credentials and a QR code, along with the informed consent brochure and \$25 check. They may complete the web study at their leisure, in as many sessions as they like. Follow-up includes a reminder letter, postcard, an email reminder (if provided), and a packet with an SAQ. If they choose not to do the survey over the web, they have the option of filling out their SAQ and mailing it back to us.

The survey is programmed in Blaise, the sample management and the email reminder in WSMS, and logging of returned SAQs in WebLog. Since web respondents may choose to fill out the SAQ, their login IDs are also loaded into WebLog. As a daily process, it will upload WebLog data to WSMS to ensure that web respondents cannot access their web link if they return an SAQ.

When you were 10, how much did you feel part of your local area? (That is, the area within a 20 minute walk or about a mile of your home.) The closer your mark is to a statement, the more strongly you agree with it.

I felt I did not belong to this area

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

I really felt part of this area

Q10

When you were 10, how much did you feel part of your local area? (That is, the area within a 20 minute walk or about a mile of your home.) [Check one box]  
The closer your mark is to a statement, the more strongly you agree with it.

I felt that I didn't belong in this area

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

I really felt part of this area

Example question from web (top) and paper SAQ (bottom).

The goal of this pilot is to see if a web survey is feasible for this study. Study staff will examine response rate, data quality and a comparison of web and SAQ responses before making a feasibility determination. Based on the success of this pilot, HRS staff may choose to increase or decrease the percentage of sample offered the web mode for LHMS Fall 2025.



Barb Aghababian-Homburg will begin her well-deserved retirement on May 31 after 35 incredibly productive years with the University of Michigan.

Barb taught in two Chicago suburban public elementary school districts for a total of 11 years before bringing her considerable talents to the Survey Research Center.

The first project she worked on with us was as an interviewer for Ron Kessler's "Everyday Experiences in Everyday Life." This project was local to the Detroit area and the predecessor to the National Study of Health and Stress (NSHS). Her first permanent position was as a study manager in 1990 as part of the group now known as PDMG on an incontinence study in older adults with Regula Herzog. One of her proudest accomplishments was working with a team to create the Study of the Oldest Old, the first cohort added to HRS, and the first national study to use laptops. Training was two weeks long - with the first week spent training on how to use a laptop (most of the staff had never touched a computer).

She moved back to Chicago in 1995 and split her assignment as a study manager and a Regional Field Supervisor for the field staff in Chicago. Thus began her return to her first calling, education and children, this time through research. She has become instrumental to our work in that area. She began that journey as the field manager on the very first wave of the Child Development Supplement (CDS) and has worked on many projects since then. Some of her favorites were the school studies – Monitoring the Future (MTF), Study of Instructional Improvement (SII), Understanding Teaching Quality (UTQ), and her pivotal role on Every Dollar Counts (EDC) which she worked on continually from its inception - pilot, three waves of data collection and the qualitative component.

Many thanks to Barb for her calm and steady leadership as an instrumental part of our work.

Congratulations!

## Survey Process Forum (Rachel Orlowski)

### Survey Process Forum's Summer Lineup

With Memorial Day being the unofficial start of summer, the SRO Survey Process Forum (SPF) has kicked off its summer lineup.

- **Financial Services Group (FSG) Lunch and Learn Series**

Tuesday, May 27 - Cost Reporting System (CRS) Review: The summer is already slipping away! The first session of the FSG Lunch and Learn Series covered the summary pages and the detail tabs of the CRS. There was a discussion of various financial concepts, as well as questions and concerns raised by attendees. There's more financial fun in the sun to come!

Tuesday, June 17 - Excel/Pivot Table Workshop: In 1300, FSG will hold an in-person workshop on using Excel and pivot tables. Space will be limited, so stay tuned via email for more information.

Tuesday, July 8 - Resource Forecasting Tool (RFT) Review: [RFT](#) is such an important tool in our project management and administrative supervision toolkit. Come to this Zoom session for a review of its functionality and features. Bring questions and use cases for discussion.

- **Design, Methodology & Statistical Support (DMSS) Lunch and Learn Series**

Spring was in full bloom with sampling and statistics. Thank you DMSS for breaking down a full-semester course into six one-hour sessions – we're ready to ace the exam (or at least get a passing grade)! If you want to check out the Sampling/Statistics Cliff Notes, slides and recordings from the sessions are posted on the [SRO Intranet](#).

But wait, you can still attend summer school!

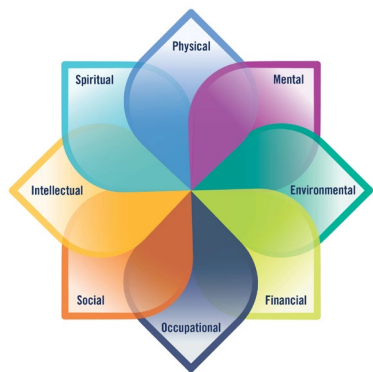
Tuesday, June 3 - Mapping and Geocoding: You're not the only one making summer travel plans! Join this Zoom session to take a closer look at the SRO web mapping tools and geocoding process.

- **Responsive Survey Design Journal Club**

Wednesday, June 25: What is Responsive Survey Design? Join our Journal Club discussion in 2300 or via Zoom, as we go back to the origins of the concept as introduced by Bob Groves and Steve Heeringa in 2006 and talk about its nearly 20-year evolution in the field of survey research methods. We have some suggestions for your summer reading/movie list! We identified a [couple of articles and a webinar](#) that you can review ahead of time if you chose or just come as you are with questions or examples from your own experience.

**All sessions are from 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.** Lower your shades and look out for emails from SPF! Calendar invitations with Zoom links and more details about the sessions are coming your way. Contact the [SPF team](#) with questions or ideas for future sessions.

We hope to see you at an SPF summer event!



## **SRO Wellness News** (SRO Wellness Committee)

Please reach out if you are interested in being part of the committee or if you have ideas to share. [srowellcomm@umich.edu](mailto:srowellcomm@umich.edu)

[Joyful June 2025](#) Calendar from Action for Happiness.

## **FREECYCLE - Wednesday, June 4**

Our next Freecycle event will be held on **Wednesday, June 4, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.** in G150 AB Perry.

[Click Here to Add to Your Google Calendar](#)

What is Freecycle? Freecycle is about no-strings-attached gifts of physical items which would otherwise go into landfills. As we start thinking about spring cleaning and decluttering, Freecycle offers a way to get rid of or pick up some items which you or others can use. And most importantly - it is **FREE**.

We will have the room open for dropping off items on **Wednesday, June 4 starting at 7:00 a.m.**

NOTE: If you have a free item that is too big to bring in, take a picture and leave it with a contact name, email, and phone number.

Feel free to stop by at any time from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. to pick up any items you want! Stop by periodically throughout the day since more items arrive as staff do.

At 2:00 p.m. we will be packing up the room and taking items to be donated.

## FARMER'S MARKET WALK

Our SRO Farmer's Market walks for the season will be on the following dates:

June 25 - [Click Here to Add to Your Calendar](#)

July 30 - [Click Here to Add to Your Calendar](#)

August 27 - [Click Here to Add to Your Calendar](#)

September 24 - [Click Here to Add to Your Calendar](#)

Please join us! As a reminder, we'll gather in the Perry lobby at 12:00 p.m. and we'll leave for a walk at 12:05 p.m.



*SRO staff on the first Farmer's Market walk of the season, 5/28/25*

- ★ FREE tote bag for joining us!
- ★ About a mile walk both there and back. We'll walk there together and then return at our leisure.

For more information on the Farmer's Market: [Ann Arbor Farmers Market Website](#)

## ICE CREAM WALKS!

We'll take a walk and enjoy a scoop of ice cream or shake sponsored by the SRO Wellness Committee. Fresh air, ice cream, nice walk, and bonding with fellow colleagues. We will have a series of three walks with a limit of 10 people each to increase the opportunity to interact more easily.

Meet in the Perry lobby at the scheduled time.

NOTE: If inclement weather, your SRO Wellness Committee walk lead will contact the group to reschedule.

\*Sign up is open to any regular appointment SRO staff and only one sign up per person.

If the list is FULL, please type your name below the FULL line and we will let you know if space opens up.

**Wednesday, June 25 - Michigan Creamery - 4:00 p.m.**

[Click Here to Sign Up for Michigan Creamery](#)

**Wednesday, July 9 - Washtenaw Dairy - 12:00 p.m.**

[Click Here to Sign Up for Washtenaw Dairy](#)

**Wednesday, August 13 - Blank Slate - 4:00 p.m.**

[Click Here to Sign Up for Blank Slate](#)

## UPCOMING M-HEALTHY and U-M ACTIVITIES

- ★ MHealthy Movement Consultations - This is a free confidential 45-minute virtual consultation to explore ways to incorporate daily physical activity in your routine. [More information on Movement Consultation.](#)