

Floor Discussion

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The first paper, presented by J. Michael Brick from Westat, Inc., discussed the functionality of WesVarPC, a Windows-based software program for computing estimates and replicate variance estimates (sampling errors) for statistics collected from complex survey designs. WesVarPC uses the replication method for variance estimation because of its simplicity and generality. The software supports a wide range of sample designs, including multistage, stratified and unequal probability samples. According to Mr. Brick, the WesVarPC software and documentation are available at no charge to all interested persons and organizations and can be downloaded from the Westat Internet home page at <http://www.westat.com/>.

Patrick B. Murphy from Batelle/Survey Research Associates, Inc. presented the second paper which discussed systems, data, metadata and output standards for BLAISE III, an integrated system for developing and administering computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) surveys. The system standards he discussed focused on hardware requirements, user interface and monitoring methods for interviewer supervisors to monitor progress of the interviews. The discussion of metadata standards included topics on question texts, answer sets, data dictionaries and data models, and how these emerging standards can improve the resulting quality of the survey data.

A question was posed to Mr. Brick regarding the elimination of cluster members when a jackknife procedure is used in WesVarPC. Will the elimination of the one member require the elimination of the cluster (household in his example)? Mr. Brick replied that the software offers the alternative of deleting either the one member or the complete cluster.

Glenn Wolfgang of the Bureau of the Census asked if there were any limitations to the number of records (cases) or variables that the WesVarPC system can process. Mr. Brick responded that there was a limitation of 14,000 variables per file that has been eliminated with the version of the software Westat just released, which will have no limitation of number of records.

A question was posed to Mr. Murphy regarding how the BLAISE software can accommodate multiple database keys. After some discussion, the consensus was that with BLAISE one can have one primary key and any number of secondary keys.