

## **2014 Kennedy Achievement Award Winner - Martha Van Haitsma of the University of Chicago Survey Lab**

Martha Van Haitsma, Co-Director of the University of Chicago Survey Lab, has been named the 2014 recipient of the John M. Kennedy Achievement Award given by the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO) for her service and leadership in academic survey research.

Van Haitsma is the founding Director of the Survey Lab. Under Martha, the Survey Lab grew from a small basement operation, using borrowed and donated resources, to an established and respected resource for students, faculty, and staff. The Lab's reputation for insightful research design is due almost entirely to Martha's thoughtful and thorough approach. Her mentorship and training of the new director and many others have made the continuation of this tradition possible.

Van Haitsma is known at the Survey Lab as an accessible and generous leader, whose door is always open, and whose dedication to teaching means that she is always willing to discuss the finer points of a question at any level. As David Chearo, Director of the Survey Lab, explained, "When you work on a project with Martha, you know that she really cares about getting the details right, and that she cares just as much about making the process a learning opportunity for everyone involved. Faculty and students often return to the Lab as clients and collaborators, attracted by the opportunity to work with Martha again."

Van Haitsma has also played a critical role in the growth and development of AASRO. She served as treasurer of AASRO at its inception and early years in which she managed AASRO's finances, developed systems for collecting dues and managing financial resources, and put AASRO on sound financial footing. She also guided AASRO through the challenging process of becoming a 501(c)(3) organization. "Martha was there when AASRO was first formed and has made great contributions to our organization ever since," said Tim Johnson, Director of the Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

But her work with AASRO has not been limited to her role as treasurer. She also conceived and authored a "New Director Handbook" which has been a significant help to people stepping into the role of director of an academic survey research organization. "In moving to my current position several years ago, I found the Handbook extremely useful as a guide to getting started," noted David Redlawsk, Director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University.

For existing academic survey centers, Van Haitsma developed a Capacity Assessment Tool which provides an exhaustive range of methods, techniques, and levels of service that an academic center may provide and allows a center to assess its own capacity in each area. "Many individuals have contributed to the formation and development of AASRO, but, as treasurer, as principal author of the center assessment tool and the new director handbook, and through her dogged efforts to secure 501(c)(3) status, Martha has clearly done a great deal of the

heavy lifting needed to help AASRO succeed for all of us,” said Larry Hembroff, Director of the Michigan State University Office for Survey Research and past AASRO president.