

Designing and Implementing Online Surveys

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Abstract: Goals and Objectives

With the widespread penetration of the Internet, online surveys have become almost ubiquitous. Such surveys come in many different forms, such as online customer satisfaction surveys, the use of opt-in panels for market research, probability-based surveys of special populations such as college students, and online surveys as part of mixed-mode strategies (e.g., combined with mail or telephone surveys). Online surveys are widely used for social science data collection. However, the quality of such online surveys and the data they produce varies greatly.

The goal of this workshop is to foster the development and deployment of better-quality surveys conducted online. The workshop focuses both on issues of representation and of measurement. Representational challenges facing online surveys relate to coverage of the population of interest (e.g., who don't we have email addresses for and how do they differ from those for whom we do have addresses?), error arising from nonresponse (e.g., how do those who choose not to take part differ from those who do?), and methods of drawing samples for online surveys to facilitate inference. With regard to measurement, there is a large and growing body of research on the design of online surveys and how such design affects the answers obtained (e.g., how does the inclusion of images or the use of color affect answers?) Given the growing use of online data collection, the e-social science community has much to offer in terms of fostering high quality methods for the development and deployment of online surveys.

Intended participants

Intended participants are those with experience or interest in using the Internet to collect survey data and improving the quality of such data collection. Participants are expected to discuss their own survey experiences. Collectively, the workshop will share knowledge of relevant theory and best practices, and identify gaps in our knowledge of online surveys. Participants will be asked to send a one paragraph statement (a mini-position) about their experience with web surveys and goals for the workshop. The organizers can exclude a potential participant from the workshop on the basis of the statement but do not

expect a need to do so. Statements will be made available to all participants on workshop web site.

Structure and Sequence of Events

The workshop will be semi-structured, including a mix of prepared presentation, group discussion and exercises, and reactions by the organizers.

A possible agenda, assuming a half-day (3-hour) workshop, is as follows:

0:00 0:10 Couper and Conrad introduce workshop

0:10 – 0:30 Participant introduction; may include very brief summaries of statements submitted prior to workshop :

0:30 – 0:45 Big Picture in Web Survey Design and Implementation

0:45 – 1:45 Representation issues:

Couper and Conrad present overview of issues (30 minutes)

- Where do we find on-line respondents and how similar are they to the population of interest?

- o Non-probability panels: coverage, professional respondents

- o Probability panels: "layered" non-response, usability

- Response rates, non-response error

Group discussion with reaction from organizers who will draw on their personal presentation archives as needed (30 minutes)

1:45 – 2:45 Measurement issues

Couper and Conrad present overview of issues (30 minutes)

- Use of images

- Use of color

- Break-offs (abandonment) and their reduction

- Interactive features such as definitions

- Social presence

- What's on the horizon? Mobile web surveys, virtual interviewers

Group discussion with reaction from organizers who will draw on their personal presentation archives as needed (30 minutes)

2:45 – 3:00 Summarize Discussion Themes, Identify Gaps in Knowledge

Qualifications and expertise of leaders

Mick Couper and Fred Conrad have published extensively on the design of online surveys and, together with Roger Tourangeau, have an ongoing program of research funded by National Institutes of Health (US) and previously by the National Science Foundation (US) to improve online survey design. Conrad and Couper co-teach a graduate-level class on survey data collection, and have extensive experience in the area of survey design and data collection. Couper's "Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches," published in Public Opinion Quarterly in 2000, is one of the most-cited papers in this area. Conrad has led two workshops at CHI conferences on web site usability issues.

Maximum number of participants

20

Duration

Half-day

Equipment needed

Data display

Audio output/Speakers

White board or flip-chart