Being Survey Savvy:
Design and Implementation Tips
for More Effective Surveys

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Dartmouth Biomedical Libraries
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Surveys are everywhere…

“USA Today has come out with a new survey. Apparently, three out of every four people make up 75% of the population.”

--David Letterman
Be careful HOW you ask...

- HOW you ask will impact WHAT you get...
  - Small changes in question wording or form can cause large differences in responses.
Learning Objectives

- Identify the main activities involved in designing a self-administered survey.
- Learn about common errors that should be minimized in designing surveys.
- Learn techniques for survey construction and administration that can increase participation and accuracy.
But first …

What is your current level of survey savvy?

Let’s evaluate…
Question 1

Though it will dramatically decrease access to care, do you agree with Congressman Apple’s proposed legislation to require mandatory parental notification for all youth who test positive for an STI or HIV?

a) Yes
b) No

Q 1 is leading and judgmental
Question 2

Would you like to be rich and famous?

a) Yes
b) No

Q 2 is “double-barreled,” asking two separate questions.
Question 3

How many times have you been hospitalized in the past year?

a) None
b) 1 time
c) 2 times
d) 3 or more times

Q 3 can be interpreted in many ways.
Question 4

With the economy the way it is, do you think investing in the stock market is a good idea?

a) Yes
b) No

Q 4 assumes person knows how the economy is, or sees the economy in the same way as surveyor.
Question 5

During the past 30 days, has your health limited your ability to do vigorous activities, such as jogging, swimming, or biking?

a) Yes  
b) No

Q 5 is not appropriate for people who do not participate in vigorous activities.
In your opinion, why does your city, Smallville, have a teen HIV infection rate four times higher than the national one? (Please answer below)

Q 6 good for getting at perception, but requires significant effort by respondent
What makes a good survey?
Good surveys are ones that …

- People are willing to fill out and to answer all questions (minimize non-response error).
- Produce answers that are “reliable” and “valid” measures of what you want to describe (minimize measurement error).
- Include only items that will be analyzed (minimize survey “flab”).
Reliability and Validity

- **Reliability**: level of consistency of answers when what is being described does not change.

- **Validity**: level of accuracy of answers; answers correspond to some hypothetical “true” value of what is being assessed.
Key Aspects of Survey Design

1. Deciding what you need to assess
2. Deciding who should be surveyed, and administration method
3. Question design
4. Response format and choices
5. Page formatting and layout
6. Pre-testing and refining survey
How to begin?

“We’re in our lab coats. Now what?”
Before writing a single survey question...
Decide what you need to assess…

Answer the following:

- What problem do we need to solve? (Research Question)

Example:

“We need to know whether the library services that we provide are the ones our users most want or need.”
Answer the following…

- What information is needed to solve our problem? (Survey Objectives)

Example:

- Frequency of use of current services
- Importance of current services to user
- User-identified gaps in services
Seek Help

- Conduct focus group or individual interviews with...
  - Members of your study population
  - People who will make decisions based on results
  - Experts in the field
Seek Help

- Ask them about…
  - What are the important questions to ask?
  - How should they be worded?
  - What are the appropriate response options?
  - Who should be surveyed and how best to reach them?
Answer the following...

■ How will we use the information collected? (Data Analysis Plan)

Example:

■ Services that are infrequently used, and rated lowest on importance will be eliminated.

■ Most frequently cited service gaps will be addressed in strategic plan.
Be Disciplined

- ONLY include in survey those items that will generate information you plan to use.
  - Refer to your Data Analysis Plan often when designing survey.
Answer the following…

- How much money and staff resources do we have to conduct and analyze the survey? (Budget)
  - Available budget and staff will determine survey method and format.
Administration Methods

- Mailed
- Handed out
- Dropped off with mail/fax back
- Internet (Email, Website)
- Computer Kiosk
- Mixed Mode (combination of the above)
Some Format Considerations

- Scannable forms vs. data entry by hand.
- Number of open-ended questions requiring narrative text entry and analysis.
- Embedded in email or on a Website
Survey Planning Example

Research Questions:

- Which library services are most frequently used?
- Which services do our users think are most important?
- What are the most important gaps in services?

Survey Objectives:

- Assess frequency of use of current services
- Assess importance of each service to user
- Identify gaps in services
Survey Planning Example

Data Analysis Plan:

- Response percentages calculated for frequency of use of each type of service.
- Mean score on importance response scale for each service.
- Text responses to “gaps” question coded into common categories and number of people that mentioned each “gap” counted.
## Survey Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Domain</th>
<th>Subdomain</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Service Use</td>
<td>Library-performed</td>
<td>1. In past 12 months, how many times have you requested a literature</td>
<td>Never, Once or twice, About every few months, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>literature searches</td>
<td>search from the librarian?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interlibrary loan</td>
<td>2. ... requested a book or journal article through inter-library loan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic Journals</td>
<td>3. … downloaded articles from the available journals on the library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>website?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing Survey Questions: A Ridiculously Brief Guide
Goals of Question Design

Questions should…

1. **Be specific** so as to get as close as possible to exactly what you want to measure
Possible Ways to Measure Income

- Individual’s monthly wages
- Individual’s total annual income from all sources including wages, bonuses, dividends, etc.
- Household’s current annual income of wages from all earners in household
- Total household gross income for 2004
Goals of Question Design

Questions should...

2. Require an answer from all respondents, unless they are told to skip
“Optional” Questions

“Do you ever forget things you did while using alcohol or drugs?”

“When you go out to eat, which type of food do you most prefer?”
Goals of Question Design

Questions should...

3. Be interpreted in the same way by every potential respondent
Vague Question

“How many times have you been hospitalized in the past year?”
Instead, try this …

“During the past 12 months, how many different times have you been admitted to a hospital as a patient overnight or longer?”
Avoid Incomplete Sentences

Don’t do this:

“Number of years lived in MA:____”

“Your city or town:_________________”

“Your county:_____________________”
Instead, do this…

Use complete sentences to ask questions…

- “How many years have you lived in Massachusetts?”
- “In what city or town do you live?”
- “In what county do you live?”
Avoid:

- Past year, past month, past week, past day, etc.

Instead, do this:

- Past 12 months, past 30 days, past 7 days, past 24 hours, etc.
Questions should...

4. Be easy to understand.
Use Simple and Clear Wording

Choose simple over specialized words:

- “tired” vs. “exhausted”
- “honest” vs. “candid”
- “free time” vs. “leisure”
- “work” vs. “employment”

Avoid use of abbreviations or jargon, e.g., PCP, CDC, CHC, etc.
Question Wording (cont.)

- Use age-appropriate language
  - MS-Word has option to print reading grade-level of survey language
- Give definitions for terms that may not be well known or shared widely
Goals of Question Design

Questions should...

5. Be able to be answered as easily and as accurately as possible.
Question Difficulty

"I refuse to answer that question on the grounds that I don't know the answer."

--Douglas Adams
Questions Likely to Get Inaccurate Answers

“What kind of health insurance plan do you have: a staff model HMO, an IPA, PPO, or unrestricted fee-for-service plan?”

“During the past 12 months, how many times have you eaten away from home?”

“In the past 7 days, how many times has your child felt sad or blue?”
Question Difficulty

- Provide appropriate time periods for accurate recall
- Avoid questions that have built-in assumptions about knowledge or experience on the part of respondent

“Do you agree or disagree with the hospital’s new consultation policy?”
Avoid double-negatives:

“Should we not call you for a follow-up interview?”
- Yes
- No

Avoid asking two questions in one (double-barreled):

“Are you physically able to run or swim without difficulty?”
Question Difficulty

- Avoid having respondent make unnecessary calculations:

  Don’t do this:

  “What percentage of your weekly grocery bill is spent on dairy products?”
Instead, try this…

“On average, about how much money do you spend per week on the following items?”

- Milk _______
- Cheese _____
- Etc.

“On average, about how much do you spend on all groceries per week?”
This takes too much work:

Do the following **barriers** make it difficult for you to walk or bike to or from the places listed here? Please circle an answer in each box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is too far</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too many hills along the way</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime (strangers, gangs, bullying, drugs)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier to drive here on way to something else</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many busy streets to cross</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not allowed to because of my age</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other children walk or bike to this place</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Questions should be ones that respondents are willing to answer.
Objectionable Questions

“Are you on welfare?”

“Have you ever shoplifted something from a store?”

“What was your total annual income from all sources in 2004?”
Instead, try this …

“Which of the following broad categories best describes your total income from all sources in 2004?”

- $10,000 or less
- $10,001 to $30,000
- $30,001 to $50,000
- $50,001 to $100,000
- $100,001 or more
Goals of Question Design

Questions should NOT…

7. Predispose or bias a respondent to give a particular answer.
Biased/Leading Questions

- Avoid use of …
  - loaded or non-neutral words or phrases
  - leading introductions to questions
    
    “More Americans exercise regularly now than they did 10 years ago. Do you exercise regularly?”

    - Yes
    - No
Biased/Leading Questions

- Beware of asking questions that have socially desirable responses, e.g.:
  - “Did you vote in the last presidential election?”
  - “Did you like today’s workshop?”
Biased/Leading Questions

- State in the question **both** sides of response scales used, e.g.

  “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?”

  “How uncomfortable or comfortable do you feel being asked this question?”

  “How much did you like or dislike the movie?”
We’re half-way through!

5 minute Stretch Break
Response Format Types

- **Open-ended**: free-text response
- **Close-ended with ordered options**: e.g., numeric categories, agreement scales, etc.
- **Close-ended with unordered options**: e.g., race/ethnicity
- **Partially close-ended**: response choices with “Other:_________” option at the end
Decision 2004
Exit Poll Question – Form 1

(Fixed List, Single Response):

Which ONE issue mattered most to you in deciding how you voted for president?

- Moral values
- Iraq
- Economy/Jobs
- Terrorism
- Health care
- Education
- Taxes
- Other, not on list

Exit Poll Question – Form 2

(Open-ended, Multiple responses allowed):

What one issue mattered most to you in deciding how you voted for president?

## Comparison of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fixed List % (N=567)</th>
<th>Open-ended % (N=569)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral values</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/jobs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Open-ended responses of “moral values,” “social issues,” “candidate’s morals” combined.

Available response choices will limit the information that you get, even with partially close-ended format.

- Critical to get feedback about what response options to offer.
- Pilot-test to see which response options are rarely chosen, and what responses get written in.
Response Format Issues

- Category order will affect responses

  - Respondents more likely to choose from first categories in self-administered, and last in interviews

  - Offer 5 or fewer options per question, unless using numeric rating scale (e.g., 0-10)
Response Format Issues

- Avoid “check all that apply”
  - “Primacy effect”: more likely to choose from first few categories
  - “Satisficing” behavior: likely to choose a “sufficient” number to “satisfy” surveyor
Avoid this…

"Which of the following activities would you like to see your child participate in during the next year?" Check all that apply

- Sports
- Music
- Art
- Science
- Chess
Instead, try this…

Would you like your child to participate in the following activities? **Circle one answer for each**

- a. Sports
  - Yes
  - No
- b. Music
  - Yes
  - No
- c. Art
  - Yes
  - No
- d. Science
  - Yes
  - No
- e. Chess
  - Yes
  - No
Response Format Issues

■ For **Frequency** questions:
  ■ “Vague quantifiers” in response options (e.g., Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often) will be interpreted differently across respondents.
  ■ For more consistent interpretation, use response scales of “number of times,” “number of days,” or number of times/days per week, month, etc.
Response Format Tips

- Response options should be visually clear, mutually exclusive, and comprehensive:
  - Avoid the following: Fewer than 3, 3 to 5, 5 to 7, More than 7.
  - Instead, do this: None, 1 to 3, 4 to 5, 6 to 7, 8 or more.
Response Format Tips

- Avoid unbalanced response scales: use equal number of positives and negatives, with neutral in middle (if appropriate)

- Include “Don’t Know”, “Not Applicable”, “Undecided” when appropriate to minimize skipped questions or guessing
Response Format Tips

- Use most appropriate response categories for each question: don’t be tempted to make one size fit all. For example, don’t do this…

- **How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the Children’s Hospital library?**
  - Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor
Now, for the artist in you...

Survey Formatting
Paper Survey Formatting

- **MYTH**: Fewer pages is always better

- **MORE IMPORTANT**: The easier to fill out, the better
  - Respondents should be able to easily read and respond to each question, and go from question to question without getting confused or making mistakes
“Don’t block the entrance”

- Should be uncluttered, so save description of study for cover letter
- Include contact information in case of questions
- Give only enough information to get respondent started with first question, save further instructions for where they will be used
Question Order

- **First question is most important!**
  It should...
  - Be easy to answer by everyone
  - Reflect purpose of the study
  - Be close-ended with a few response options

- **Place sensitive questions near back,**
  **including most demographic questions**
Question Order

- Keep questions on same topic together, and progress logically through survey.

- Beware of carry-over effects among questions: response to a question may be influenced by previous question.
Give them forewarning...

- Transition statement is helpful whenever starting new line of questioning:

  - Example:

    “The next 5 questions ask how important specific library services are to you.”
More Formatting Tips

- Use **Vertical Layout** of questions and response options
  - Presenting questions both vertically down and horizontally across a page may result in skipped questions
Avoid this…

Section B: Your Views About Policies and Programs

B1. What is your school’s policy about alcohol use on campus by students, staff, and faculty? (Choose one answer.)
- Alcohol prohibited for everyone, regardless of age
- Alcohol prohibited for all students, regardless of age
- Alcohol prohibited for everyone under 21
- Alcohol allowed for those over 21 but only in designated locations or at special events
- No school policy
- Don’t know school’s policy

B2. Would you describe your school’s current alcohol policy as…? (Choose one answer.)
- Too strict
- Fair/Reasonable
- Too lenient
- Don’t know

B3. In your opinion, how strongly does your school enforce its alcohol policy? (Choose one answer.)
- The alcohol policy is strongly enforced
- The alcohol policy is enforced
- The alcohol policy is weakly enforced
- The alcohol policy is not enforced at all
- Don’t know school’s policy / No school policy

Go to B4 in the next column.

B4. Which of the following do you think should be your school’s policy about student drinking? (Choose one answer.)
- The current alcohol policy
- A policy which imposes greater restrictions on alcohol use
- A policy which imposes fewer restrictions on alcohol use
- Don’t know school’s policy

B5. Are you aware of any changes in your school’s alcohol policy? (Choose one answer.)
- Yes → Go to B6
- No → Go to B7
- Don’t see any changes → Go to B7
- Don’t know → Go to B7

B6. How do you think overall student drinking has changed as a result of changes in your school’s alcohol policy? (Choose one answer.)
- Overall student drinking has increased
- Overall student drinking has decreased
- Overall student drinking has not changed
- Don’t know

Go to B7.

B7. How likely is each of the following to occur at your school? (Choose one answer in each row.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Unlikely</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Chances of a student getting “written” up for violating alcohol policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Chances of a student getting fined for violating alcohol policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Chances of a student having their on-campus housing revoked for violating alcohol policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Chances of a student facing disciplinary action or judicial sanctions for violating alcohol policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Chances of a student being prosecuted for violating alcohol policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Chances of a student having a fake ID confiscated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which format is better?

How old are you?

a. 1-8  b. 9-15  c. 16-21  d. 22 or older

How old are you?

- 1-8
- 9-15
- 16-21
- 22 or older
More Formatting Tips

- Use type formats such as bold, caps, etc. to emphasize specific words or instructions, but use sparingly.

  - Example:

    “During the PAST 3 MONTHS, how many times did you visit the Children’s Hospital Library?”
More Formatting Tips

- Use arrows and other visual cues, not just text, to show where respondent should go next in skip pattern

- Example:

  “During the PAST 30 DAYS, did you ever visit the library?”

- Yes ➔ CONTINUE TO NEXT QUESTION

- No ➔ SKIP TO QUESTION 25 ON NEXT PAGE
More Formatting Tips

- Give instruction at end of question for how respondent should record response.
  - Example:
    “During the PAST 30 DAYS, which library service did you use MOST OFTEN? (Check only ONE box)”
    - Inter-library loan
    - Librarian-conducted literature searches
    - Electronic access to journal articles, ETC.
More Formatting Tips

- Use all these formatting techniques **consistently** throughout survey.
- Make the survey look professional and clean to the eye. For example…

  - **Line everything up!** Use “hanging indent” to line up wrapped text:

    1. *During the past 7 days, how many times did you access a journal article through the library’s website?*
Survey Format Don’t

How much do you think people risk HARMING themselves (physically or in other ways) if they did the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No risk</th>
<th>Slight risk</th>
<th>Moderate risk</th>
<th>Great risk</th>
<th>Can’t say, drug unfamiliar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Try marijuana once or twice</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Smoke marijuana regularly</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Try MDMA (Ecstasy) once or twice</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Take MDMA (Ecstasy) regularly</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Try cocaine or crack once or twice</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Take cocaine or crack regularly</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Try heroin once or twice</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Format Do

How much do you think people risk HARMING themselves (physically or in other ways) if they did the following? *(CHECK ONE BOX FOR EACH)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No risk</th>
<th>Slight risk</th>
<th>Moderate risk</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Try marijuana once or twice</td>
<td></td>
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<td>c. Try MDMA (Ecstasy) once or twice</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Take cocaine or crack regularly</td>
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<td>g. Try heroin once or twice</td>
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</table>

Sion Kim Harris, PhD
Lastly…

Include at the end of survey…

- Open comment space for respondents to make any comments or give any additional information
- A show of appreciation: “Thank you very much for your help!”
- Instructions on what to do with completed questionnaire
Printing Tips

- Make sure each question fits in its entirety on the same page, including response options.

- If more than 2 pages, print survey as a booklet to make more professional-looking and to avoid lost pages.
A Few Points about Web-Based Survey Formatting
Web-based Survey Formatting

- Create a **Welcome Screen** that has the following:
  - Survey name so people know they have the right website.
  - Brief note of thanks, that survey is easy to complete and will only take N number of minutes.
  - Clear instructions on how to proceed to first question (embedded hyperlink).
  - Login ID field to only allow access to authorized.
Web-based Survey Formatting

- First few questions should ...
  - Be easy to answer.
  - Completely fit on screen (question and response choices) without need for scrolling.
  - Use simplest response format (point and click radio button or check box). Avoid more unusual formats here.
Web-based Survey Formatting

- Limit to 1-2 questions per screen to minimize need to scroll (differences in computer display settings).
- Provide periodic updates to show progress through survey (“You have completed 5 out of 20 questions;” “You have 5 questions left in the survey”)
- Give brief instruction on how to record response for a new response format type.
Other Web-based Survey Tips

- Unless survey is <5 minutes long, allow respondents to save and return to the survey if interrupted.
- Allow respondents to go backwards and forwards through questions.
- When using skip patterns, have software automatically take people to correct question based on response.
Don’t Forget to Pre-test All Surveys!

- Identify pre-test sample that is similar to, and representative, of your study population.

- Pre-test survey for clarity of instructions and question wording, completion time, answerability, comprehensiveness of response options, and acceptability.

- Debrief pre-test participants to get feedback.
Proven Ways to Increase Participation Rates

Tips to Enhance Return Rates

- Use multiple administration methods (multi-modal) to allow everyone in study population to have equal chance of participating.
- Send brief advance notice to let people know that survey is coming.
- Personalize all correspondence; address using individual names (paper and email)
Tips to Enhance Return Rates

- Try **at least 4 times** to reach a non-responder with follow-up call, reminder postcards, repeat survey mailings, etc.
  - Use unique number ID to track who submits survey, to avoid unnecessary repeat mailings.
  - Be pleasant, non-pushy when following-up: “Some people have had questions about the survey and we were calling to see whether you had any questions or concerns about the survey.”
Tips to Enhance Return Rates

- Make responding to survey as easy as possible. For example...
  - For mailed survey, include self-addressed, stamped envelope.
  - Place drop-off boxes for surveys in multiple, convenient locations.
  - For Web surveys, have response automatically saved as survey is filled out.
Tips to Enhance Return Rates

- Provide small financial incentive when possible: “a small token of our appreciation.”
- Use raffles or drawings for responders that return survey by certain date.
- For non-responders, try much shortened questionnaire with 4 most important questions.
Cover Letter

- Carefully construct cover letter that accompanies survey that ...
  - Is addressed to them personally.
  - Shows positive regard: provides enough info on why survey is being done, conveys the importance of person to the outcome of the study, describes how privacy is ensured, etc.
Cover Letter

- **Shows appreciation for effort**: Say “Many thanks in advance for your valuable time.”

- **Asks for their advice or help**: Their advice, opinions, help is critical to study or effort.

- **Describes benefit to larger group**.
Emphasizes ease and shortness of survey: e.g., “We believe you will find the questions interesting and easy to complete. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.”

Promotes trust: Show survey sponsorship by legitimate authority.

Makes task appear important: Use official letterhead stationary.
Useful Resources


Now, let’s re-evaluate our survey savvy...
Staff

a. Library staff are respectful and helpful

b. Librarians are knowledgeable and adept at finding information
How satisfied are you with our access to Internet and other software applications?

How helpful is our staff?

How often do you ask a library for help?
I spend …

- 0-5 hours
- 5-10 hours
- More than 10 hours

… per week using the Library.
Are there other resources you would like the library to offer?

☐ More periodicals (print)    ☐ More periodicals (online)    ☐ More books
☐ More newspapers            ☐ More computers                ☐ More staffing
☐ More microforms            ☐ More online databases       ☐ More electronic books
☐ Other (please list): ______________________________

Any Questions?