

survey research



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Survey research is often used to assess thoughts, opinions, and feelings.[1] Survey research can be specific and limited, or it can have more global, widespread goals. Today, survey research is used by a variety of different groups. Psychologists and sociologists often use survey research to analyze behavior, while it is also used to meet the more pragmatic needs of the media, such as, in evaluating political candidates, public health officials, professional organizations, and advertising and marketing directors. A survey consists of a predetermined set of questions that is given to a sample. [1] With a representative sample, that is, one that is representative of the larger population of interest, one can describe the attitudes of the population from which the sample was drawn. Further, one can compare the attitudes of different populations as well as look for changes in attitudes over time. A good sample selection is key as it allows one to generalize the findings from the sample to the population, which is the whole purpose of survey research. "

Survey Research Survey research is one of the most important areas of measurement in applied social research. The broad area of survey research encompasses any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents. A " survey" can be anything from a short paper-and-pencil feedback form to an intensive one-on-one in-depth interview.

Survey Methods

The survey is a non-experimental, descriptive research method. Surveys can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed (such as opinions on library services). Surveys are used extensively in library and information science to assess attitudes

and characteristics of a wide range of subjects, from the quality of user-system interfaces to library user reading habits. In a survey, researchers sample a population. Basha and Harter (1980) state that " a population is any set of persons or objects that possesses at least one common characteristic." Examples of populations that might be studied are 1) all 1999 graduates of GSLIS at the University of Texas, or 2) all the users of UT General Libraries. Since populations can be quite large, researchers directly question only a sample (i. e. a small proportion) of the population.

Types of Surveys | Instrument Design | Resources and Links

Types of Surveys Data are usually collected through the use of questionnaires, although sometimes researchers directly interview subjects. Surveys can use qualitative (e. g. ask open-ended questions) or quantitative (e. g. use forced-choice questions) measures. There are two basic types of surveys: cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal surveys. Much of the following information was taken from an excellent book on the subject, called *Survey Research Methods*, by Earl R. Babbie.

Cross-Sectional Surveys

Cross-sectional surveys are used to gather information on a population at a single point in time. An example of a cross sectional survey would be a questionnaire that collects data on how parents feel about Internet filtering, as of March of 1999. A different cross-sectional survey questionnaire might try to determine the relationship between two factors, like religiousness of parents and views on Internet filtering.

Longitudinal Surveys

Longitudinal surveys gather data over a period of time. The researcher may then analyze changes in the population and attempt to describe and/or explain them. The three main types of longitudinal surveys are trend studies, cohort studies, and panel studies.

Trend Studies

Trend studies focus on a particular population, which is sampled and scrutinized repeatedly. While samples are of the same population, they are typically not composed of the same people. Trend studies, since they may be conducted over a long period of time, do not have to be conducted by just one researcher or research project. A researcher may combine data from several studies of the same population in order to show a trend. An example of a trend study would be a yearly survey of librarians asking about the percentage of reference questions answered using the Internet.

Cohort Studies

Cohort studies also focus on a particular population, sampled and studied more than once. But cohort studies have a different focus. For example, a sample of 1999 graduates of GSLIS at the University of Texas could be questioned regarding their attitudes toward paraprofessionals in libraries. Five years later, the researcher could question another sample of 1999 graduates, and study any changes in attitude. A cohort study would sample the same class, every time. If the researcher studied the class of 2004 five years later, it would be a trend study, not a cohort study.

Panel Studies

Panel studies allow the researcher to find out why changes in the population are occurring, since they use the same sample of people every time. That sample is called a panel. A researcher could, for example, select a sample of UT graduate students, and ask them questions on their library usage. Every year thereafter, the researcher would contact the same people, and ask them similar questions, and ask them the reasons for any changes in their habits. Panel studies, while they can yield extremely specific and useful explanations, can be difficult to conduct. They tend to be expensive, they take a lot of time, and they suffer from high attrition rates. Attrition is what occurs when people drop out of the study.

A method of sociological investigation that uses question based or statistical surveys to collect information about how people think and act. For example, a possible application of survey research to a business context might involve looking at how effective mass media is in helping form and shift public opinion.

Conducting Field Research Some of the most valuable information in the world isn't located in a library or online. Field research is a way of unearthing that information. If you enjoy meeting and talking with people and don't mind what reporters call "legwork," you will relish the fun and satisfaction of obtaining ideas and information first hand. Field research can be an extraordinarily exciting and rewarding experience leading to important discoveries and breakthrough ideas. Its goal is the same as research done in the library or on the Internet: to gather information that contributes to your understanding of an issue or question and to organize those findings in a

cohesive and persuasive document that proposes a new insight, answer or solution.

Far from being at odds with one another-philosophically or practically-these three research techniques actually complement each other. Library and Internet research provides critical background information that prepares the researcher for making observations, and conducting interviews and surveys in the field. The results will verify or refute, inform and help shape the answer to your research question. Field research or fieldwork is the collection of information outside of a laboratory, library or workplace setting. The approaches and methods used in field research vary across disciplines. For example, biologists who conduct field research may simply observe animals interacting with their environments, whereas social scientists conducting field research may interview or observe people in their natural environments to learn their languages, folklore, and social structures.

Field research involves a range of well-defined, although variable, methods: informal interviews, direct observation, participation in the life of the group, collective discussions, analyses of personal documents produced within the group, self-analysis, results from activities undertaken off- or on-line, and life-histories. Although the method generally is characterized as qualitative research, it may (and often does) include quantitative dimensions. Any activity aimed at collecting primary (original or otherwise unavailable) data, using methods such as face-to-face interviewing, telephone and postal surveys, and direct observation.