



ANOTHER SURVEY?: MAKING YOUR NEXT SURVEY COUNT

RIPL California

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THIS SESSION

- Purpose of survey research
- Strengths and limitations for library needs
- Evidence-based best practices for:
 - Survey design
 - Pre-testing surveys

TO SURVEY OR NOT TO SURVEY?



PURPOSE OF SURVEY RESEARCH

- Gather standardized data from a group of individuals that is too large to be observed directly
- Aggregate that data to see the big picture

STRENGTHS OF SURVEYS

- Data from large number of people and/or subgroups
- Information about respondents' characteristics, thoughts, opinions, attitudes, and preferences
- Indirect information about behaviors, knowledge, and skills
- Multiple modes and item types
- Small investment of time and money
- Low burden for respondents (theoretically!)

LIMITATIONS OF SURVEYS

- Limited detail, nuance, and context
- Information about behaviors, knowledge, and skills is indirect
- Need to know likely responses
- Response rate and survey fatigue
- Wording and design dramatically impacts data quality
- Tempting to over-generalize findings

INTENTIONALITY



What do you
want to learn?

Who do you
want to target?

IT'S A PROCESS

1. Determine your purpose
2. Identify your target group
3. Create your plan
4. Draft questions
5. Place your questions into an outline
6. Review
7. Pre-test and revise
8. Collect data
9. Analyze your results
10. Apply what you learn

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TECHNICAL QUALITY

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Reliability: Consistency in what a survey measures

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- Follow evidence-based best practices when developing survey questions and overall instrument

HANDOUT

Tips for Writing Survey Questions

Tip	Why it matters
Use everyday vocabulary	Using simple, clear language will yield better data from your survey. If people don't understand exactly what you are trying to communicate, it is more likely that they will make mistakes or choose the wrong answers. Even worse, they may give up on your survey entirely!
Avoid jargon and acronyms	We use a lot of special terminology and jargon in libraries that makes sense to library staff but can confuse people taking our surveys. For example, use "library catalog" rather than "OPAC" and "checkout desk" rather than "circulation".
Avoid wording that is ambiguous or unclear	<p>A key goal in writing survey questions is to ensure that questions are interpreted the same way by everyone who answers them. Otherwise, you won't be able to draw conclusions from the data you obtain.</p> <p>To help all respondents interpret a question in the same way, avoid wording that is confusing or ambiguous. Often, questions that are long</p>

QUESTION TYPES



Mostly closed-ended

Dichotomous

Multiple choice

Rating scales

WRITING SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Use clear, everyday language
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Focus on one idea per item
- Ensure there is an answer choice for everyone
- Avoid overlapping answer choices
- Avoid leading language

PREPARING SURVEY INSTRUMENT

- Provide clear instructions
- Group related questions to ensure survey has a logical flow
- Number questions consecutively from beginning to end
- Provide contact information in case respondents have questions

PREPARING SURVEY INSTRUMENT

- For paper surveys:
 - Use plenty of white space and even spacing
 - Use easy-to-read font type and size
 - Avoid “breaking” questions by carrying them from one page to the next

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REVIEW



FIND THE FLAW

Crystal Springs Public Library (CSPL) is evaluating its preschool storytimes and has developed a survey to administer at the end of each storytime session.

1. Download and review the survey.
2. Work as a group to identify flaws that CSPL needs to fix by examining:
 - Instructions
 - Ordering and flow of questions
 - Wording of questions
 - Question types
 - Response choices
 - Formatting

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PRE-TEST



THINK-ALLOUD TESTING

- Type of interview used to pre-test and improve a survey
- Focused on how people process and respond to survey questions and instructions
- Use results to re-write and re-design the survey

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- Conduct think-aloud testing and use results to re-write and re-design

THINK-ALLOUD TESTING

- Testing process
 - Conduct individual interviews with 3-5 people who are similar to survey respondents
 - Ask participants to “think aloud” while taking the survey
 - Audio record the interview or take detailed notes

THINK ALOUD

The ABC Library Association wants to gather input to inform an upcoming online library conference. They plan to conduct a survey and have developed a set of survey questions. Now they need to conduct think-aloud testing with library staff who have recently attended an online conference or training.

1. Work with a partner to practice think-aloud testing using the ABC Library Association survey questions.
2. One person should download the Participant 1 Instructions. The other person should download the Participant 2 Instructions.
3. Follow the instructions you download.

THINK ALOUD

- Consider your experience:
 - What did it feel like to “think out loud”?
 - What did you learn about the survey by listening to your partner “think out loud”?
 - What questions do you have about think-aloud testing?

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Method for gathering and aggregating standardized data from a large group
- Important to be intentional about the survey development process
- Maximize data quality by following evidence-based best practices to:
 - Develop survey questions and overall instrument
 - Conduct think-aloud testing and use results to re-write and re-design

IMAGES LICENSED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS

Black boy screaming in room by Keira Burton

Clipboards by Abbey Hendrickson

Bullseye #2 by Zach Bulick

Close open by Kaarina Dillabough

Glasses collection 5 by Jase Lam

Think by magro_kr

Laptop on wooden table by I Day Review



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