Library Surveys for Success

Colleen Eggett
Utah State Library
ceggett@utah.gov
Today’s Goals

• Understand why and how to conduct a survey

• Steps to running a survey
• Elements of an effective survey
• 5 main question types
How surveys impact our lives

Associated Press photo by Byron Rollins.
Why a survey?

- Make informed or “good” decisions
- The results might surprise you
- Fast & easy to administer
- Meeting peoples’ needs = success
Surveys are great for:

- Short answers
- Identifying issues
- Evaluating programs
- Input from many people
- Decisions based on numbers (quantitative data)
Surveys are poorer for:

- Knowing why
- Complex issues
- Input from few people
- Knowing “how good” not “how much” (qualitative)
How to run a survey

A. Steps to running a survey
B. Elements of an effective survey
C. Five 5 main question types
Steps in running a survey
1. Clearly define your goal
• Why are we conducting this survey?
• What do we want to know?
• How will we use this info?
• Keep your goal focused and specific.

• EX: “The goal of this survey is to understand the needs of our customers in the next two years- 2014-16.”
2. Decide whom to survey
3. Prepare questions that match the goals
4. Decide: online vs. paper, or both
Advantage: computerized surveys summarize for you

5. To what extent are you being mentored by others in your organization?

- **None**: 40 (23%)
- **Seldom**: 71 (40%)
- **Frequently**: 46 (26%)
- **Not applicable**: 14 (8%)
- **No answer**: 5 (3%)

Comments: **23 responses**

[view this question] [view all questions]
Free online survey tools

www.questionpro.com

docs.google.com/forms

www.surveymonkey.com
5. Pre-test your survey

• Ask 5-10 people to take the survey

• Was anything difficult or confusing?

• Look at how people responded—Did the right questions get asked?
  Did people answer consistently with what was asked?
  (If you expected an apple did you get one?)
Make improvements based on the pre-test
6. Get the survey out

- Listservs
- Your website
- Facebook
- Utility bill
- Paper copy

By March 31
2014
Publicize the survey

Be sure your target audience knows about the survey.
Elements of an effective survey
Effective library surveys have clear questions & answers
Clear, straightforward language that is easy for everyone to understand

- No trade talk (EX: library acronyms)

- No highfalutin words
Divide questions into 3 groups:

1. Must know
2. Useful to know
3. Nice to know

Focus on #1 and get rid of the rest
Clearly outline what info you need
Logical flow to the questions
Use demographics

- Age in roughly equal ranges
- Gender
- Library use
- Other things that may impact the results
Avoid biased questions

- EX: Do you think it is unfair for training to only be offered when mothers are at home during the day?

- Better: When do you think training should be offered at the library?
Avoid words that may not mean the same thing to everyone

Usually  Often
Sometimes  Seldom
Rarely  Many  Several

EX: I use the library
   Often
   Sometimes
   Seldom
Avoid questions with negatives

- EX: Are you against having computer training for seniors?

- Better: Would you like computer training for seniors?
Effective Answers:

- Have mutually exclusive options – A or B, not both (unless they can check all that apply)

- If using multiple choice, list all possible responses

- Give “other” option and let them write in their answer, if appropriate
Which answer set is better?

Poor – Average – Above Average – Excellent – Superior

Poor – Below Avg. – Average — Above Avg. – Excellent
Distinct answers

Your Advocacy Goal

* Your individual advocacy skills. Now let's focus on your individual advocacy skills. How would you rate your advocacy skills as of today? Choose one of the following answers:

- Novice advocate
- Beginning advocate
- Average advocate
- Advanced advocate
- Expert advocate
Standardize the arrangement of responses

EX: high to low in all
Add a comments section

- People can write in things not asked elsewhere
- Adds stories & interest to the results
- You’ll get lots of positive feedback
End the survey with a positive tone
5 types of survey questions

- Multiple choice
- Ordinal
- Interval
- Ratio
- Open ended
Multiple choice

- Choose from options

[Diagram showing a checklist with options A, B, and C. Option C is checked.]
Use an “Other” option
Please rank the following from 1-5 in order of importance, 1 for the least important and 5 for the most important.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>Hours open</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Computers available</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>Books/ materials I want</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>Children’s homework help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interval

- Most commonly used—scales of agreement, satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility / Service</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The Library is a comfortable, clean, well-lit place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) The Library has sufficient evening and weekend hours of service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Library resources are well arranged, with clear directions on finding them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) The Library provides adequate training on resources and databases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ratio

- EX: Income, hours, age
Open ended

1. Cannot be answered with simple "yes" or "no"
2. Begin with words and phrases such as:
   - Who?
   - What?
   - When?
   - Where?
   - Why?
   - How?
   - Tell me about…
   - Explain to me…
Use a combination of question styles

- Mostly checklists, with one or two open-ended questions.
- Get hard facts & supporting beliefs and feelings.
Improving your response rates

- The shorter your survey the better the response rate
- Make the questions relevant to your audience
- Third party endorsement
Incentives
Use the results to

* Evaluate
* Improve
* Advocate

*Save the galaxy*
We can do this!

- Colleen Eggett, Training Coordinator
  Utah State Library
  - ceggett@utah.gov
  - 801-715-6776