Writing Surveys that don’t Stink

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LiveBinder resources at http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=1051691
The rules:

• Think, THEN do
• Ask the right people
• Ask the right questions

AND....
KISS!

Keep It Short & Sweet
SURVEY FATIGUE
Think, THEN do
Photo made available on Flickr under an Attribution 2.0 Generic license by Mathew Cerasoli.  
http://www.flickr.com/photos/mcerasoli/6261957970/
Survey uses

• Collecting data that cannot be directly observed
• Collecting quantifiable data
• Providing objective information
• Can track changes over time
Check existing sources first
Intent

• Promotion and marketing
• Objective information for stakeholders
• **Internal planning and decision-making**
Please tell us why the library is important to you:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Are you age 18 or older?  Yes ________  No ________
Please note: Your comments may be used in print, audio and video materials published in both physical format and on the Internet.
If we may use your name, please provide it here (age 18+ only): __________________________
Staying Connected in South Dakota

All South Dakotans have access to a comprehensive collection of in-depth and reliable online resources, provided to local libraries by the South Dakota State Library. Many libraries supplement this core collection with additional resources of special interest to their local residents.

Using these 38 online resources, South Dakota library users discovered 1.8 million full-text articles and graphics during FY2012. At an average commercial rate ($15 per article) this represents a value of over $27 million.

#1 place to access the internet: Public Libraries

Quotable Facts about America’s Libraries:
ALA Office for Research & Statistics
All facts compiled in 2010.

South Dakota’s Public Libraries saved SD citizens over $14 million in 2011

Library computers were used 1.2 million times in 2011

job searching, video games, school studies, genealogy, work research or simply browsing...

*Commercial rates at $12.00 per hour
Decision-making

• Are patrons satisfied with some aspect of library service?
• Is there a way to better serve certain groups in the community?
• Are there better ways to allocate resources, including space?
• Is there voter support for additional funding for operations or facilities?
From Awareness to Funding
A study of library support in America

A Report to the OCLC Membership

http://www.oclc.org/reports/funding.en.html
Reality check

Surveys collect what the people you ask are willing to say on the survey tool you use.
Some 219 million Americans feel the public library improves the quality of life in their community.

2010 Harris Interactive Poll
Source: American Library Association
Photo by Amy C. Evans made available by Southern Foodways Alliance on Flickr under an Attribution 2.0 Generic license
Before you start:

• **What will you do with this information?**
• What do you **need** to know
• How will you process the results?
What are you going to do with this information?
Want to know vs NEED to know
So what?
You currently have an UNLIMITED plan, which we no longer offer to new customers. Learn how to keep your plan or switch to a new one.

**BASIC**
Free

- 10 questions per survey
- 100 responses per survey
- Easy-to-use web-based survey tool
- Collect data via weblink, email, Facebook, or embed on your site or blog
- Real-time results
- 24x7 email customer support

**SELECT**
$17 per month*
(Billed $204 annually)

- Unlimited questions
- Unlimited responses
- Custom survey design & URLs
- Enhanced security (SSL/HTTPS) included
- Skip-logic & other advanced features
- Excel export & printable PDF

**GOLD**
$25 per month*
(Billed $300 annually)

- Unlimited questions
- Unlimited responses
- Custom redirect after survey is completed
- Advanced logic features:
  - Random assignment for A/B testing
  - Question & answer piping
  - Question randomization or flipping
- Text analysis for open responses
- SPSS integration

**PLATINUM**
$65 per month*
(Billed $780 annually)

- Unlimited questions
- Unlimited responses
- Complete brand control with Research.net
  - Your own research.net survey URLs
  - You control how your survey looks including adding your logo & brand colors
  - You decide where your respondents go after they complete your survey
- Expert phone support to answer any of your questions

[See all features...](#)
Ask the right people
Your survey audience

- Patrons?
- Non-patrons?
- Underserved populations?
- Likely voters?
Sampling methods

- Random sample
- Stratified random sample
- Systematic sample
- Sample of convenience
Ask the right questions
Some question types

• Multiple choice – 1 answer (radio button)
• Multiple choice – more than 1 answer (checkboxes)
• Ranking/rating scales
• Numeric
• Text/comments
Good survey questions

• Simple language
• Clear choices
• Cover all the bases
• Ask only one thing per question
• Balanced
• Unbiased
A survey that STINKS

Lead much?

How much do you love your library? (all that apply)

☐ Much
☐ Even more than much
☐ Lots and lots and lots and LOTS
☐ My life would be meaningless without it
George W. Bush:

Great president?

OR

The greatest president?

photo by: Martin Crook
made available by Comedy Central
Balanced Likert Scale

Please rate your overall satisfaction level with the library

- [ ] Highly satisfied
- [ ] Satisfied
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Dissatisfied
- [ ] Highly dissatisfied

Prev  Next
A survey that STINKS

Missing options

What fiction genres do you like to read?

☐ Mystery
☐ Romance
12. If your libraries' use of interlibrary loan has increased, please give the reason(s). (Check all that apply)

☐ Interlibrary loan fees decreasing
☐ More libraries willing to loan needed materials
☐ Increased patron demand
☐ Decreased ability to provide resources locally
☐ Patron-initiated ILL process easy
☐ Increased spending on interlibrary loan
☐ Library actively promoting service to patrons
☐ Staff knowledge, skills and abilities increased
☐ Patrons prefer interlibrary loan over electronic resources
☐ Other (please specify)

13. If your libraries' use of interlibrary loan has decreased, please give the reason(s). (Check all that apply)

☐ Interlibrary loan fees increasing
☐ Fewer libraries willing to loan needed materials
☐ Decreased patron demand
☐ Increased ability to provide resources locally
☐ Patron-initiated ILL process difficult
☐ Decreased spending on interlibrary loan
☐ Library not actively promoting service to patrons
☐ Staff knowledge, skills and abilities decreased
☐ Patrons prefer electronic resources over interlibrary loan
☐ Other (please specify)
A survey that STINKS

Which do you want me to answer?

Are you satisfied with the library’s hours and service?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
Please rate your satisfaction with the library’s:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

[Input field]
A survey that STINKS
No overlaps

What is your age?

- 18-25
- 25-65
- 65+
A survey that STINKS

When?

Have you visited the library recently?

- Yes
- No

When was your most recent visit to the library?

- Within the last week
- Within the last month
- Within the last year
- Longer than one year ago
- Never
A survey that STINKS

Vague*

What suggestions do you have for improving children’s library services?

*Vague can be OK if you are wanting to get general comments.
Say NO to jargon
The survey form
Complaint form

Write your complaint in the box below.

Please print clearly
Online surveys

• SurveyMonkey (WSL has account)
• SurveyGizmo
• Google Forms
• More from alternativeTo at
  http://alternativeto.net/software/surveymonkey/
A survey that STINKS

OW! This color hurts my eyes!

1. Which would you prefer to do?
   - Stab yourself in the eye with a pencil
   - View this screen

Powered by SurveyMonkey
Check out our sample surveys and create your own now!
### A survey that STINKS

**Don't get lost in the matrix**

#### When is the last time you visited the library for the following programs and services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Yesterday</th>
<th>This week</th>
<th>This month</th>
<th>Last three months</th>
<th>Last six months</th>
<th>Last year</th>
<th>Last two years</th>
<th>Last three years</th>
<th>Last five years</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check out fiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Check out nonfiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check out audiobooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use library computers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use library wifi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend genealogy workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request readers' advisory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask a reference question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend baby lapsit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend children's storytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend teen program</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend book group</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Flirt with the librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brush teeth in the library bathrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleep in the stacks</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question**

Have you visited the library recently?

**Skip Logic**

To add skip logic to one or more answer choice, choose the destination page and question under “Skip to.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If answer is</th>
<th>Skip to</th>
<th>Clear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PAGE 2: Missing options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top of page</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>PAGE 14: Thank you</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top of page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Check both sets of settings

A survey that STINKS

Edit Web Link
Change Settings
Rewards
Change Restrictions
Manual Data Entry
Close Collector Now

New Link Edit

Collector Settings

Allow Multiple Responses?
- No, allow only one response per computer.
- Yes, allow multiple responses per computer — Recommended for kiosks or computer labs.

Allow Responses to be Edited?
- No, once a page in the survey is submitted, respondents cannot go back and change existing responses.
- Yes, respondents can go back to previous pages in the survey and update existing responses until the survey is finished or until they have exited the survey. After the survey is finished, the respondent will not be able to re-enter the survey.
- Yes, respondents can re-enter the survey at any time to update their responses.

Display a “Thank You” Page?
- No, do not display a thank you page. After finishing the survey, respondents will proceed directly to the completion option you specify below.
- Yes, display a thank you page after finishing the survey.
5. Thou shalt not force respondents to answer

http://www.qualtrics.com/blog/good-survey-questions/
A survey that STINKS

Don't make me answer that ...

⚠ This question requires an answer.

* Question 1
   - Yes
   - No

⚠ This question requires an answer.

* Question 2
   - Yes
   - No

⚠ This question requires an answer.

* Question 3
   - Yes
   - No
A survey that STINKS

Don't make me answer that ...

* A question I do not care about, but you're going to demand that I answer.
  - Option 1
  - Option 2

* No, really. None of the options apply to me. Do I have to answer this?
  - Yes
  - Yes

* Could you at least give me an "other" field?
  - No
  - No
  - Nope
*OK then, I'm going to:

- Make things up
- Quit
Before you release it

Have someone

- Proof it
- Pre-test it
- Time it
Call us!

We’re happy to help!

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