Overcoming Survey Research Problems

Stephen R. Porter
EDITOR
CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTES
Stephen R. Porter

1. Raising Response Rates: What Works?
Stephen R. Porter
This chapter discusses the theoretical literature on why people choose to respond to a survey and then reviews the latest empirical research on how survey administration and characteristics of a survey affect response rates.

2. Web Surveys: Best Practices
Paul D. Umbach
Research professionals are beginning to recognize the benefits of conducting their surveys over the Web, but they often have not considered the best method for soliciting responses. This chapter summarizes the most recent literature on the best practices of Web survey implementation and offers practical advice for researchers.

3. Conducting Surveys on Sensitive Topics
John H. Pryor
Many institutions are surveying students about sensitive topics such as alcohol and drug use, sexual behavior, and academic dishonesty. Yet these can be some of the most difficult surveys to administer successfully, given reluctance on the part of respondents both to participate and to provide truthful answers. An experienced practitioner of surveys on these topics describes the literature in this area and his own experience in conducting these surveys.

4. Understanding the Effect of Prizes on Response Rates
Stephen R. Porter, Michael E. Whitcomb
Offering a prize for survey participation is a common method to raise response rates in student surveys. This chapter describes the results of a study that the authors conducted to test the impact of prizes on response rates in a survey of high school students.

5. Multiple Surveys of Students and Survey Fatigue
Stephen R. Porter, Michael E. Whitcomb, William H. Weitzer
As the use of student surveys grows in assessment and institutional research, institutional researchers must deal with the impact of multiple surveys on response rates. This chapter reviews the literature on survey fatigue and summarizes a research project that indicates that administering multiple surveys in one academic year can significantly suppress response rates in later surveys.
6. Conducting Longitudinal Studies
Karen W. Bauer
Longitudinal studies have become more common in higher education because of an increased emphasis on assessment. Multiple contacts with students require different survey administration techniques than those used for simple one-shot surveys. Experienced practitioners of longitudinal surveys will relate the literature and their own experience in conducting successful longitudinal surveys.

7. Pros and Cons of Paper and Electronic Surveys
Stephen R. Porter
As new survey technologies emerge, researchers can be quick to adopt them without understanding the consequences. This chapter describes the different types of paper and electronic surveys currently available and their costs and benefits in terms of equipment and printing costs, demands on staff time, and ease of use.

INDEX