

Surveys in practice and theory: How to get useful data from surveys

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ABSTRACT

Surveys: they sound so easy to do well, but so often end up being disappointing. How often have you been asked to respond to a survey, but felt that it failed to get your real opinion about the topic?

Caroline Jarrett, the forms expert, wants to find out about what you are doing in practice. What works for you, what doesn't? What are your ideas for making your surveys more useful to your organization?

In return, she'll share her insights from practice – and from theory. What do the survey methodologists tell us to do, and do we think that will work for us in practice?

Author Keywords

Survey, questionnaire, methods, practical

ACM Classification Keywords

H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

INTRODUCTION

Surveys are widely used as a research method in HCI. User experience practitioners often use questionnaires as an adjunct to other methods. This tutorial explores:

- the differences between the use of surveys by academics and practitioners, and
- the differences between the way HCI academics use surveys and the recommendations of the survey methodologists.

WHO SHOULD COME

This tutorial is for you if:

- You have organized, run and analyzed at least one survey
- You have permission to share the insights you have gained about surveys from your work.
- You want to compare what you do in practice, successes and failures, with what works, and what doesn't, for other people.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

You will learn:

- Why surveys are hard to do well
- What the theory tells us about an ideal process for developing your survey, and what happens in practice.
- The importance of different types of error in surveys: sampling, non-response, and measurement
- Tips from the survey methodologists on improving your survey

WHAT THIS WORKSHOP WILL BE LIKE

There will be PowerPoint slides, but please come to this tutorial expecting to join in, and to share your experiences and ideas about creating better surveys.

There is a detailed outline on the next page.

THE TUTORIAL LEADER

The tutorial leader is Caroline Jarrett. She is co-author (with Gerry Gaffney) of "Forms that work: Designing web forms for usability".

"If your web site includes forms, you need this book. It's that simple". Ginny Redish

Caroline specializes in usability of forms and work processes involving forms. She enjoys working on any type of form or questionnaire and says "Government forms are my favourites" How often do you hear that?

Her current practice is about one-third forms design, on paper and on the web, and about two-thirds helping clients with content-rich web sites. This may include improving the information architecture, using search logs to examine patterns of usage, teaching editing skills, actually doing the editing of key pages, and user research about how users explore and use large web sites.

She is also co-author of "User Interface Design and Evaluation" (Morgan Kaufmann, 2005).

Caroline holds an MA and MBA, and is a Chartered Engineer.

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DETAILED OUTLINE

- 9:00 Introduction: your interest in surveys
- 9:15 Comparing processes: how we go about surveys
What is our ideal process? A group exercise
- 10:00 How does that compare with processes described by the survey methodologists?
Survey definitions and jargon
- 10:45 Break
- 11:15 The survey methodologists' view continued: A theoretical view of the survey process
- 11:45 Challenging the theory: we compare what we do in practice to the theoretical view. Includes two case studies of typical ways in which surveys are used by user experience professionals.
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Details of questionnaire design: open/closed questions; number of points in a response scale; grids and how to avoid them
- 2:00 The practicalities of questionnaire design: we create a draft questionnaire for a survey of students' attitudes to social media
- 2:30 Break
- 3:00 The difference between questionnaire design (the instrument) and survey design (the process and the instrument), including survey error and how to avoid it: sampling, coverage, non-response, and measurement error
- 3:30 An overview of what to look for in your survey tool; practical exercise based on creating an instrument in one of the popular tools
- 4:00 Test, test, test: why you need interviews, question tests, AND a pilot. Practical exercise where we test our draft instrument
- 4:30 Analysis and reporting: what to do with the data that you collect.
- 5:00 Close

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