

ACRL STS Hot Topics

Sunday, June 24, 10:30 am - noon
ALA Annual, Washington DC, Capital Hilton Federal Room

REASONS FOR USING TOOLS LIKE [SURVEYMONKEY](#)

Reasons for creating a web-based survey using an “enterprise management feedback” system (EMF) include flexibility of question/survey design, convenience of distribution, convenient options for data collection and analysis. It useful to note that EMFs are primarily business-to-business products. The academic market is a very small piece of their action, especially academics that actually pay and not just use the free service.

Four types of projects for which I have used SurveyMonkey:

1. Very brief, immediate follow-up evaluations of one-time events. In-library events forums on ETDs, copyright, institutional repositories. Five quick questions, including “Indicate your level of knowledge of this topic BEFORE the forum” and “Indicate your level of knowledge of this topic AFTER the forum.” Caveat: Too frequent use of this may be annoying to respondents.....

2. A simple straightforward election for our library school alumni association. Works well. Caveat: To preserve the integrity of your election (to be sure no one votes more than once) you will need to develop an approach on your own that overcomes the EMF’s penchant for anonymity.

3. Survey of faculty research needs, distributed to my liaison departments

4. Large surveys for research articles:

[RUSA MARS User Access to Services Committee](#), to support article examining the relationship between Reference/Info Services and Systems/IT. Survey sent to heads of reference and heads of Systems/IT in 300 academic libraries. Article published in [RUSA Q](#), Vol. 46, No. 4, Summer 2007, pp. 37-51.

[ACRL STS Subject & Bibliographic Access to Science Materials Survey](#) on ETDs in institutional repositories and OPACs -- American and British perspectives. Survey to close shortly after Annual. Article will be submitted to *ISTL*.

A WORD ABOUT BRANCHING (skip logic) and PIPING

Branching is what SurveyMonkey offers as “skip logic.” For ex., if you are surveying both tenured and tenure-track faculty you will have a number of questions in common, but at some point wish to ask questions separately and differently of the two groups. “Skip logic” allows you to provide a cleaner, less-cumbersome survey for you respondents without sacrificing the advantage of having your data collected in one spot.

Text **pipng** permits the movement from text from one question to another based on the response that is selected. If an answer is selected, the specified text will be “piped” to the question that is asked next. This creates a stronger connection with your respondent and allows more targeted querying. Here’s a simple example:

Question #1: Which search engine do you use most frequently?

- a. Google b. Google Scholar c. Scirus d. Yahoo

If respondent answers “**Google Scholar**” the next question will then read:

Question #2: Tell us what you most like about [Google Scholar](#):

What I like about SurveyMonkey:

- No advertising -- supported by customers, so ads do not appear on your survey
- No software to install
- Numbering of questions -- can override automatic numbering when needed
- Can create Pop-ups
- Can do branching (skip logic)
- Filtering of responses to aid in analysis
- Can download to Excel
- Printing is greatly improved -- this is an issue when IRBs are involved and when you are submitting to a print journal and want to use the survey questions as an appendix.
- Technical support is fairly good and email response to questions not covered in FAQs is prompt but it is email only -- you cannot find a phone number or address
- Handles HTML
- Spell-checking has been recently added
- Can move questions around fairly easily
- Responses can be conveniently shared with others without giving access to your account
- Price -- \$19.95 per month or \$200 per year, can cancel at any time

What I do not like about SurveyMonkey:

- No piping possible
- Survey Monkey's "look" and feel is fairly clunky (note: latest upgrade in June 2007 has helped with this -- BC)
- That so much HTML is needed, when you want to configure a question outside of the options provided, or want to change the 'look and feel' beyond what is offered
- Browser compatibility was a serious issue -- latest upgrade supposedly has remedied but be aware of this

OTHER OPTIONS BESIDES SURVEY MONKEY (SM)

There are a seemingly infinite number of EMFs -- [Zoomerang](#), [InstantSurvey](#), [EZQuestionaire](#), [SurveyAnalytics](#), etc. Currently Zoomerang (with a cleaner look than SM) is probably the closest competitor of SM for lower-end academic use, due to cost, ease of use, etc. The high end is represented by products such as Perseus ([Vovici](#)).

An important word about high-end products like [PERSEUS](#) (Vovici):

As science librarians you serve a clientele that (with the possible exception of public health) do not use surveys as a major tool for their research. Social scientists do, however, and the chances are very good that a high-end web survey product is already available on your campus, unbeknownst to you. The high-end tools will have all the features of SurveyMonkey, plus a good bit more (text piping, good management of participant lists, export to SPSS as well as Excel, etc.)

PERSEUS, for example includes among its campus clients Arizona State, Brown, Cornell, Duke, Florida International, Gallaudet, Harvard Divinity, James Madison, Mercer, MIT, Stanford, UCLA, several U of California branches, U of Georgia, U of Michigan, U of New Hampshire, U of Tennessee, Western Michigan, among others.

SO DO CHECK with your social science colleagues, search your university's web site, or contact your institutional review board overseeing the use of human subjects to see whether you already have access to a web survey tool..