

Survey Instruments in Information Systems

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Abstract

Due to the popularity of survey research in information systems we have launched a compilation of survey instruments and related information. This work started in 1988, as the disk-based Calgary Surveys Query System, and has now been extended to the world wide web via a contribution of "living scholarship" to MISQ Discovery. This work includes actual IS survey instruments—either in full text or via links to the appropriate citations—as well as introductory information to help get researchers started with the survey methodology.

Keywords: Survey research, research methodology, questionnaire development

ISRL Categories: AI01, AI04

The Usefulness of Surveys

Surveys are among the more popular methods used by the information systems research community. They are popular because they:

- are easy to administer and are simple to score and code,
- allow the researcher to determine the values and relations of variables and constructs,
- provide responses that can be generalized to other members of the population studied and often to other similar populations,
- can be reused easily and provide an objective way of comparing responses over different groups, times, and places,
- can be used to predict behavior,
- permit theoretical propositions to be tested in an objective fashion, and
- help confirm and quantify the findings of qualitative research.

In 1988, we launched a project whose goal was to compile information about commonly used IS survey instruments, constructs measured by such instruments, their validity and reliability statistics, and other related data. We were motivated in part by our familiarity with Buros (1978) compendium of instruments in psychology that has provided a broad collection of survey instrument information for researchers in psychology for many years. Information systems researchers, we thought, should have access to something similar, but in a more convenient format.

This initial project led to the development of the Calgary Surveys Query System (CSQS), which comprised a database of survey information, together with a query mechanism for "slicing and dicing" the data. CSQS successfully identified and codified a significant number of research constructs measured by existing surveys. It also provided information about survey sources—although it did not attempt to incorporate actual surveys. For a few years we distributed CSQS for a small fee via mailed

diskettes to anyone interested in IS survey research.

Development of a Website of Survey Instruments as "Living Scholarship"

From our experience developing CSQS we saw several ways that we could further facilitate high-quality survey research in information systems. In particular, rather than data about survey instruments, the instruments themselves should be compiled and made available to other researchers. Furthermore, an accessible repository of basic "how to" information regarding survey research, particularly as it applies to research in IS, was also needed. We then began to conceptualize, design, and create a web site (www.ucalgary.ca/~newsted/surveys.html) to serve as a central repository for a wide variety of information about both surveys and survey instruments. Our objective is to provide IS researchers and students with a number of instruments (subject to copyright considerations), as well as enough introductory information to familiarize researchers with the survey methodology. Links to a variety of related sites are also included.

As with Michael Myers' *MISQ Discovery* contribution, dedicated to compiling and presenting

information on qualitative research (www.auckland.ac.nz/msis/isworld/), the survey research site is intended as "living scholarship"—a continually evolving and dynamic repository of useful information on IS survey research.

For their encouragement, suggestions, and thoughtful criticisms, we owe a special debt of gratitude to Blake Ives and three anonymous *MISQ Discovery* reviewers. Their ideas, suggestions, and general encouragement were key to helping us improve and extend the quality of the site to its current level. However, consistent with the concept of living scholarship, we see the further development of this site as neverending. We hope not to do all the work ourselves! We invite others in the IS research community to assist us in extending and improving the surveys site. We welcome and encourage contributors to this cause.

The "Surveys in Information Systems" repository is available at <http://www.misq.org/discovery/surveys98/surveys.html>.

Reference

- Buros, O.K. (ed.). *The Eighth Mental Measurements Yearbook: Volume II*, The Gryphon Press, Highland Park, NJ, 1978.