What Are You Asking?!
An Introduction to Survey Item Development

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Agenda

• Introductions & overview
• Item development presentation
• Questions
• Pairs edit survey (yours or sample)
• Group reflection
Research Process

- Research question
- Literature review
- Study design
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Reporting
Topics Not Being Covered

• Deciding whether to use surveys as a data collection method
• Sampling
• Overall survey design
• Survey format and administration
• Survey testing
• Analyzing survey data
2009 Visitor Survey

Why did you decide to come to the Museum?

What topics are of interest to you? (check all that apply)
- Art history
- Wildlife
- History
- Nature & Conservation
- Other

Please rate your knowledge of the following:
- Art: Novice, 1, 2, 3, 4, Expert
- Wildlife: Novice, 1, 2, 3, 4, Expert
- History: Novice, 1, 2, 3, 4, Expert

Which galleries did you find most engaging? Why?

Were you satisfied with the way the information was presented?
- Yes
- No

If not, why?

Were you satisfied with the wall labels? Were they the right length? Were they easy to read?

Please evaluate your comfort moving through the galleries:
- Did you ever get lost or find the layout disorienting?
- Are more directional signs needed?
- Were the galleries comfortable for you (temperature, seating, etc.)?
- How could we improve these features?

Did your experiences meet your expectations?

What was surprising or unexpected?

What questions are you left with?

How did you hear about the museum?
- Internet Site
- Newspaper
- Travel guide
- Word of mouth
- eNews
- Other

Thank you for helping us improve the visitor experience in our galleries!
Types of Items

• Open-Ended Items
  – Please describe how it felt to use the microscope.
  – What do you think is most important to know about recycling?
  – What, if anything, else would you like to mention about the exhibition?

• Closed-Ended Items
  – How interested are you in viewing Italian Renaissance art?
    Not at all interested    Somewhat interested    Quite interested    Very interested
  – As a result of this workshop, do you feel that you know how to make a functioning paper airplane?  ____yes  ____no
  – About how frequently do you visit a zoo, in an average year?
    A. More than 4 times per year
    B. 1-4 times per year
    C. Less than once per year
Open-ended vs. Closed-Ended

- Are more qualitative in nature
- Allow participants to respond in their own words
- Can provide broader insight into the experience
- May reveal unanticipated findings
- Take longer to input and analyze

- Are more quantitative in nature
- Have more consistency in responses
- May be limiting in the information they provide
- Can be used more easily in larger samples
- Are simpler and faster to input and analyze
- May require statistical knowledge to properly analyze
SURVEY ITEMS:
CONTENT
• Research Questions:
  – What topics related to Heritage Museum & Gardens do visitors want to know more about?
  – Do different types of visitors have different topic preferences?

• Possible Survey Items:
  – Rank the following topics from most to least interesting to you. (then list topics)
  – What, if anything, about gardens are you curious about?
  – Have you ever visited Heritage Museum & Gardens before? Yes/No
Ask One Question at a Time

Avoid double-barreled items (asking two questions within one)

– Double-barreled:

Did you purchase something in the gift shop or restaurant?

– Better:

Did you purchase something in the gift shop?
Did you purchase something in the restaurant?
Limit Complexity

• Avoid complex sentences

• Avoid blanks in the middle of items
  – *Avoid:* I spent ________ of my time in the exhibit reading labels.
    None A little Some Quite a bit All
  – *Better:* How much of your time in the exhibit did you spend reading labels?
    None A little Some Quite a bit All

• Avoid cognitively taxing items like computations or long-term memories
  – *Complex:* In the last year, how many hours did you spend on the Internet?
  – *Better:* In an average day, how many hours do you spend on the Internet?
Increase Clarity

• Highlight important terms using **bold** or underline

• Ensure the visitor has enough information to respond

• Consider what you really need to know
Survey Items: Wording
**Watch Your Words**

- Use conversational structure
- Avoid jargon, technical language, and acronyms
- Avoid loaded or emotional language that might bias responses
- Balance questions/provide counterarguments
  - Emphasizes one side of the issue: *Do you support offering iPads in the galleries?*  
    ______ Yes  ______ No
  - More balanced: *Would you prefer:*  
    ______ iPads not be offered in the galleries  
    ______ iPads be offered in the galleries
Avoid Assumptions

Do not assume that visitors engaged in all aspects of an exhibit or program:

– What in the exhibit was fun for you?
– Did you enjoy the video?

Better:

– What, if anything, in the exhibit was fun for you?
– Did you watch the video? If so, did you enjoy it?
Be Specific

Include a time frame or conditions where relevant

– *Vague*: Do you think you will visit again?

– *Specific time*: Do you think you will visit again during the next year?

– *Specific condition*: Do you think you will visit for the next family day?
Survey Items: Responses
Closed-Ended Responses

- Options
  - Multiple choice (select one or select all that apply)
  - Dichotomous (yes/no, agree/disagree)
  - Ratings
  - Rankings
  - Vignettes/Projective Items
  - Visual analog 🥰😊🙂😉😆😢😭

- Consider primacy effect – when reading, people remember the first thing they saw more than the rest
Closed-Ended Responses: Ratings

• Best suited to measure attitudes

• Use 5–7 response anchors for unipolar concepts

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Do Not Slightly Somewhat Strongly Completely

Agree Agree Agree Agree Agree

• Use 5–9 response anchors for bipolar concepts

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Neither Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly

Disagree Disagree nor Disagree Agree Agree
Closed-Ended Responses: Ratings

• Label all response anchors - don’t just number
  – *Avoid:* Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5
  – *Better:* Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

• Spell out all response anchors - don’t abbreviate
  – *Avoid:* SD D N A SA
  – *Better:* Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

• Consider anchoring effects: The high and low ends of a scale determine how a respondent thinks of all anchors. 
Demographic Items

• Often closed-ended

• Put at end of survey

• Use ranges for potentially sensitive personal information like ages or incomes
  – Too Personal: *What is your annual household income?*
  
  _________

  – Better: *Which range includes your annual household income?*
    
    $0–29,999
    $30,000–49,999
    $50,000–69,999 (etc)
QUESTIONS?
Try It Out!

• With a partner, edit the items on a survey you brought or on our example survey

• Keep in mind the research question/s. The example survey’s research questions are:
  
  – What topics related to Heritage Museum & Gardens do visitors want to know more about?
  
  – Do different types of visitors have different topic preferences?

• Feel free to refer to the Tips Sheet as you work
Please share any takeaways from the experience
THANK YOU!

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