

# Contents

Preface	xiii
1 Practical Surveys	1
Why Surveys Work	3
Who Conducts Surveys?	6
Is a Survey Appropriate for You?	7
Ethics and Accuracy in Surveys	9
Types of Surveys	10
Ten Steps for Success	11
2 Cornerstones of a Quality Survey	13
Errors That Affect Accuracy	13
When Is There “Too Much” Error?	21
Summary	23
3 Deciding What Information You Need	25
Be Specific	25
Think in Terms of Results	27
Focus Groups Can Help	29
Summary	31
4 Choosing a Survey Method	33
What to Consider	35
Mail Surveys	35
Telephone Surveys	37
Face-to-Face Surveys	40
Drop-off Surveys: A Convenient Hybrid	43
What About Response Rates?	43
Remember the Budget	44
What Does the Future Hold?	49
5 When and How to Select a Sample	53
When Is Sampling Useful?	53
How Large Should a Sample Be?	54

# HOW TO CONDUCT YOUR OWN SURVEY

	The Three Steps in Sampling	58
	Finding Good Lists	59
	Uncomplicated Sample Designs	61
	Selecting a Respondent from within a Household or Business	64
	How the Survey Method Affects Sampling Frame and Design	65
	Why Use More Complicated Designs?	69
	Summary	71
	Appendix 5.A—How Sample Characteristics Influence the Size of Sampling Error	72
	Appendix 5.B—Regional Offices of the Census Bureau	74
6	Writing Good Questions	77
	Turning Ideas into Useful Questions	77
	What Kind of Information Are You Looking for?	78
	Which Kind of Question Structure Do You Want?	79
	Deciding Which Question Structure Is Most Useful	84
	Does the Order of Response Choices Matter?	85
	Why Measuring Attitudes and Beliefs Requires Special Attention	87
	Encouraging Thoughtful Answers	90
	How to Overcome Common Wording Problems	91
	Summary	91
	Appendix 6.A—Common Wording Problems and Possible Solutions	92
7	Questionnaire Design	101
	Mail Questionnaires	102
	Telephone Questionnaires	121
	Face-to-Face Questionnaires	134
	Summary	135
8	Setting Your Survey in Motion and Getting It Done	137
	Mail Surveys	137
	Telephone Surveys	148
	Face-to-Face Surveys	158
	Drop-off Surveys	164

	Ethics, Regardless of Method	166
	Summary	167
	Appendix 8.A—Telephone Interviewer Instructions	169
	Appendix 8.B—The Basics of Proper Interviewing	170
9	From Questionnaires to Survey Results	175
	Should You Use a Computer?	175
	What About Software?	179
	Editing and Coding Survey Data	180
	Entering Data into the Computer and Double-Checking Your Work	186
	Analysis	188
	Interpretation	196
	Summary	199
10	Reporting Survey Results	201
	Written and Verbal Reports: Each Serves a Purpose	202
	Reporting the Error Structure	205
	Using Graphics to Communicate Results	206
	Summary	213
11	Advice, Resources, and Maintaining Perspective	215
	Preparing Yourself to Ask for Advice	216
	Where to Go for Help	218
	Organizations and Publications as a Source of Advice	218
	Take Stock of Your Resources and Plan Ahead	219
	Practical Surveys in a Changing Society	220
	References	223
	Index	227