

Application for ACS Summer Technology Fellowship (summer, 2004)

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SurveyStop: An Online Facility for Easing Students' Survey Completion

1) Background

In psychology and related disciplines (e.g., organizational behavior, human resources, political science, exercise science), measures of individual differences are prominent topics of discussion. For example, in my Introduction to Psychology course, coverage of such topics as self-esteem, depression, locus of control, and attitudes are frequently facilitated by students' completion of survey materials. This provides students first-hand knowledge of how these concepts are measured. However, completion and scoring of the surveys can take valuable class time (e.g., 10-15 minutes out of a 50-minute class meeting for survey completion and scoring, sometimes with complicated reverse-scoring procedures). Personally, I have had the experience of wanting students to complete a measure prior to class discussion, but when I pass it out in class, it seems to take a big chunk of class time. Also, sending the survey home with students to complete prior to the next class is fine. But then, you still have to take time to score the measure.

2. Description

With the advent of survey methodologies on the Internet, these surveys can be posted on the WWW for completion and tabulation prior to a class meeting. I propose the development of an online storehouse (called SurveyStop) for individual differences measures common to psychology and related fields. This would be a place for instructors to send their students prior to a class meeting to complete an assigned measure. Then, the instructor can access the data prior to the class meeting, tabulate individual's scores on the data (with scoring algorithms available from the website), and present the results in class. Students can find out their individual scores (procedures for protecting anonymity while providing personal feedback will be discussed), be familiar enough with the survey instruments to talk about the survey items (also, printable handouts will be available from the website), and valuable class time did not have to be spent with students completing the measures.

At SurveyStop, surveys will be arranged categorically, including (but not limited to):

- Psychological constructs (e.g., measures of self-esteem, measures of depression, measures of social attitudes)
- Political constructs (e.g., measures of political cynacism, measures of governmental attitudes)
- Management-related constructs (e.g., work-family conflict, job satisfaction, etc.)

The general procedure would go as follows. An instructor would register a class on the Website (at least initially, the site will be open only to ACS faculty). When entering a Website, a student would enter an assigned password so that survey results collected from a particular class could be stored together. At a later time, the instructor can then return to SurveyStop, download the data and scoring procedure, and quickly prepare the results to present in the next

class meeting. Data will be downloadable in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or text format (format to be decided) and programming needed for tabulation will be made available for both Microsoft Excel and SPSS. For example, the syntax needed for recoding, tabulating scores, and producing descriptive statistics in SPSS will be available for convenient download. This greatly eases the efforts an instructor would need for using SurveyStop for instructional purposes.

In addition to the surveys, several additional items will be available. A) For each survey, information regarding the original location of the measure and a brief description (e.g., purpose, relevant validity or reliability information) will be available. B) Several suggested exercises will be available using the surveys. For example, an exercise assessing the construct validity of anxiety measures measure will be available. C) A set of demographic questions will be standard for each survey. This allows faculty to breakdown results for relevant measures. Also, only surveys free for academic use will be included, with necessary copyright information provided.

3. Timeline

The website would be completed by early August of 2004 with notification going out to relevant ACS faculty at that time. This allows time for faculty to consider using the website prior to the fall semesters.

4. Technology

There are two primary technology resources needed to implement SurveyStop. First, software necessary for constructing the surveys. In most cases, the surveys can be constructed with rudimentary HTML procedures and there are several effective survey-development tools to be used (e.g., SurveyWiz; visit http://personal.centenary.edu/~rmweeks/ACS_tech/ for a previous ACS technology project covering such tools). I have developed Web-based surveys with these tools in the past.

The second technology requirement involves the server-side requirements. Programming is needed to a) allow instructors to register; b) keep data for a particular instructor together; c) keep data for the different surveys together. Development tools for such server-side programming is readily available and can be implemented with little difficulty.

5. Other support

The only foreseeable additional support involves server space for housing the surveys and data. This space will be provided by Centenary College. To conserve space, data files will be regularly purged from the server, though instructor accounts will remain active. Also, I have already made arrangements for any server-side technical maintenance to be supplied by the Centenary College Information Technology department.

6. Learning Outcomes

SurveyStop has two primary functions: 1) Easing class instruction by facilitating time-consuming, but *important* tasks outside the classroom, and 2) provide instructors a resource for assessing a variety of social constructs for class discussion. I have found this procedure very useful in my own classes. SurveyStop is designed to improve efficiency for instructors, providing the benefit of students's survey completion while easing the burdon on the instructor to do so.

7. Curriculum

SurveyStop could be incorporated in curriculums in two primary fashions. First, it will give instructors a variety of individual differences measures incorporate into their courses. A variety of categories will be provided (see above) for use in a variety of courses. Again, the goal is efficiency. Second, this would be a useful tool for research methods courses. For example, after taking a survey, students might analyze its psychometric properties (e.g., construct validity, reliability, factor structure). In fact, given the ease of survey completion, different groups could be assigned different surveys.

Ultimately, I see this as a flexible tool for instructors. Part of SurveyStop will be suggestions for incorporating the surveys into research methodology courses.

8. Assessment

As the Website's coordinator, I will have access to the a) number of instructors registered and b) the number of students completing surveys at the site. Also, as part of the registration process, instructors will provide their email addresses for contact purposes. Using these addresses, instructors will be contacted twice; in the middle of the fall semester and again at the end of the fall semester. They will be asked to assess the usefulness of the site, offer suggestions for improving the feasibility of the site, and offer additional surveys or survey categories that might find useful.

9. Dissemination

Dissemination will take place primarily through email notification and ideally, mention in *Transformations* (the ACS technology magazine). Instructors will register at the website and after gaining approval (access will be allowed only from ACS schools), an instructor will have an account for using the site. From there, they can set up surveys as needed for their courses. Additional communication will take place via email.