Preface

Just like the electronic technology world, the frequency, breadth, and depth of electronic surveys and measures is expanding exponentially. Researchers and research consumers are rapidly transitioning to demands and expectations for sophisticated uses of electronic surveys and measures. There can be little question about the need to learn about electronic surveys.

The habits and opportunities for research with electronic platforms has become a completely independent area of research and advanced study. Employers are increasingly seeking individuals who can assist with designing survey tools that take advantage of developing technology and software. It is no longer enough to know just the technology or the software. Researchers, students, and consumers are increasingly sophisticated in their expectations. If we want to use electronic surveys to study people, we need to know more about how people respond to and react to electronic surveys.

One particular task the research community faces is the demand to shift and adapt the body of existing paper and pencil measurement tools onto electronic technology capabilities. It is not really much of an issue any more to observe that electronic options increase the potential and complexities for doing research. It is also not very useful to observe that some conventional research areas or measures are best done (or only validated) in traditional settings with those established tools. Research participants are less and less willing to answer and respond to older survey research practices and settings.

Developing technological abilities for electronic surveys and measurements have created a recent growth industry in online survey services. Researchers with limited programming knowledge could design and pilot test surveys in a day. The next day, the researcher could draw samples (with sophistication far beyond older practices). By the end of the week, not only can the data collection be complete, but also the statistical analyses done (again with amazing sophistication) and strategically potent presentational materials constructed (and also tested for effectiveness). Our need is rapidly moving on to how to prepare for such abilities by practically any person with any potential motive.

This handbook helps us move toward coping with and adjusting to a sophisticated world of research capabilities. There is no promise here of definitive answers. We are not even sure enough of the most relevant questions yet. Therefore, the modest goal with this volume is to help move us all along toward clarifying the central issues we need to address on electronic surveys and measurements.

The authors of the chapters in this book are representatives from some of the most innovative private and public programs that study, develop, or directly use research based on electronic surveys and measurements. Just reading the list of authors and their biographies is inspiring. The insights of their individual and their collective wisdom certainly justifies spending some time with this volume. Both novice and sophisticated researchers will find useful materials here.

The handbook is divided into three sections: usage of online surveys and measurements; survey software; and specific measurements.

In Section I: Usage of Online Surveys and Measurements, the focus is on the details of using online surveys to do research. In these chapters, the readers will encounter details (at various levels) on issues related to various types of electronic surveys and research. Some of the chapters carefully contrast electronic surveys and research with related methods. Some of the chapters here directly address ethical issues related to electronic surveys. Several of the later chapters in this section direct the reader to broader issues that should be of particular concern to researchers who use electronic-based communication platforms.

In Section II: Survey Software**,** the focus is on software services and programs that should be of strong value to those who do research with, on, or about electronic-based communication platforms. While readers will know about one or two survey software programs, most readers will be well impressed with the variety of software and programming options covered in the second section of the book.

In Section III: Instrument Profiles of Interest to Survey Researchers, the focus is on specific measurements or measurement processes related to or of value for survey research on or about the use of electronic-based communication platforms. The intention with the chapters in this section is to provide short and efficient introductions to particular measurement options. Readers should find resources here so central to their own research efforts that they will want to keep the entire volume well within a quick reach. Several of the authors for this volume hope to find an economically viable option for offering a database with downloadable versions of the measures profiled here. We also hope to add to that database of downloadable files on a regular basis.

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