

**How to Create an Effective Survey**  
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The three A’s of a successful survey are:

- Assessment
- Analysis
- Action

These guidelines cover Assessment: Creating an Effective Survey

**1. Set Objectives**

- What do you hope to gain from your survey questions?
- What changes will you make using the results?
- Be detailed and specific when identifying your survey goals

**2. Prepare**

- Solicit input from colleagues to ensure your library is evenly represented
- Choose a survey instrument (SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang, etc.)
- Determine the type of patrons to survey (i.e., students or faculty)
- Determine the number of patrons to survey
  - Entire population
  - random sample
- Gather e-mail addresses
  - Determine source (university or library patron database)
  - Check for any restrictions
- Contact your university’s Institutional Review Board
- Select a date for the survey launch
  - Consider when patrons are more likely to respond
  - Coordinate with other offices that may have survey plans
- Select the length of time the survey will run
- Select the dates on which you will send reminders
- Incentives
  - Select prizes you will offer (if any)
  - Consider how you will ensure anonymity
    - You need to collect entries separately from the actual survey, so that entries are not tied to survey responses
    - The easiest way to do this is to create a 2<sup>nd</sup> survey (asking only for name and email address) that respondents are directed to after they complete the satisfaction survey

- Create a survey FAQ that answers commonly-asked questions
  - Example: <http://www.law.edu/library/library-information/surveyfaq.cfm>
  - The FAQ link should be sent in your email invitation and also posted on your website

### 3. Create the Survey

The survey should:

- Contain a brief introduction which:
  - States the purpose of the survey
  - Explains the benefits of completing the survey and how important it is that certain patrons (e.g., graduating students) complete the survey
  - Assures anonymity
- Be divided into sections
  - For example: services, resources, facility, equipment
- Include room for comments
  - Consider placing comment boxes after specific questions and as the last question on the survey
  - Comments can be difficult to analyze, but are extremely useful
- Conclude with a thank you page

Types of questions to ask:

- Demographic questions
  - Example: year in law school, day/evening student
  - Demographic questions are useful for cross-tabulating results
- Benchmark questions
  - Examples: how often do you use the library, why do you use the library
  - Benchmark questions are useful for tracking trends year to year
- Questions about satisfaction with current resources and services
  - Ask for input from other departments when formulating these questions
- Questions that promote existing services (especially those you feel are underused)
- Questions about possible new services

Be sure to:

- Ask only those questions that support your survey objectives
- Avoid survey fatigue
  - Aim for 15-20 questions
  - If you have over 20 questions, consider eliminating benchmark questions, or questions that aren't crucial to your overall objective
  - Aim for a completion time of 10-15 minutes
  - Questions should be short, simply-phrased, and easy to understand and answer
- Avoid library jargon
  - Example: Please rate your satisfaction with the Library's discovery service.
- Avoid leading questions
  - Example: The library recently completed a successful redesign of its website, making it more user-friendly. Please rate your satisfaction with the new and improved website.

- Avoid unnecessary questions
  - Questions should support your survey objectives
- Avoid questions that ask two things
  - Example: Please rate your satisfaction with the library's print and electronic resources
- Avoid implying something that cannot be delivered
  - Example: Don't ask if students would patronize a library coffee cart if you know a coffee cart will never be installed.
- Pre-test the survey on library staff

#### **4. Promote the Survey**

- Email, web page, posters, flyers

#### **5. Communicate Results**

Let patrons know that the survey results and their comments are valuable and will be used to assess services and make changes.

- Post the preliminary survey results within a few days of the survey's completion
- Set and post a timeline for analysis to be completed and action to be taken