Reviews / Comptes rendus

How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide

by Arlene Fink
(4th ed.; Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2009, 136 pages)

Arlene Fink's fourth edition of *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide* (2009) is a highly readable and informative resource. Starting from the position that surveys are everywhere and that everyone is doing them, Fink has developed a resource that meets the survey needs of researchers—academic and market-based—and evaluators alike. Additionally, teachers of research methods courses will discover expertise that complements textbooks and journal articles, from which their students will benefit enormously. Fink's text is one of those resources that a person will return to time and time again. In her own words, Fink's book is "long on priorities and short on theory" (p. viii). As the edition number suggests, this is an area that grows and changes, and Fink is committed to helping the reader keep up.

Fink shares her expertise in seven chapters called "Conducting Surveys: Everyone is Doing It," "The Survey Form: Questions, Scales and Appearance," "Getting it Together: Some Practical Concerns," "Sampling," "Survey Design: Environmental Control," "Analyzing and Organizing Data from Surveys," and "Presenting the Survey Results." Each chapter is similarly structured and includes appropriate and clear examples. Likewise, Fink includes what she calls *Think about This* questions/activities and *Summing Up* sections. As we know, learners and other readers benefit a great deal from such strategies as they highlight take-away concepts. Fink's approach to language is impressively clear; at no point does she use extraneous academic or scientific jargon.

In her introduction, Fink highlights the specific additions she has made to this edition relative to earlier editions. She points out how it has been necessary to incorporate content about web-based (online) surveys as well as include information about the many online programs now available to conduct statistical analysis. While the web provides a buffet of opportunities to surveyors and researchers in general, Fink emphasizes the continued need for understanding of statistical tests and analysis tools. In the author's opinion, the need for a working knowledge of statistics is something that remains steadfast despite the most sophisticated of tools now available to us in a click. Fink provides the reader with excellent explanations of key statistical concepts and tests. She furthermore discusses approaches to analysis when the data collected are qualitative in nature. This content results from the fact that, increasingly, surveys include both closed and open-ended questions. The online survey is a creator- and user-friendly tool when

Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education / Vol. 36, No. 2 fall 2010
Revue Canadienne de L'Éducation Permanente Universitaire / Vol. 36, Nº 2 automne 2010
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/cjuce-rcepu

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the goal involves collecting and sharing number-based and word-presented data. However, if surveyors do not know how to analyze qualitative data appropriately, there is a risk that these data may not be used or that the findings based on them could be inaccurate.

Fink furthermore provides a helpful discussion of internal and external validity in her section on design issues. If everyone is "doing surveys," the risks of validity threats increase, especially if surveyors do not understand these issues and how to safeguard against them. Fink also offers considerable information about Likert scales, cross-tabs, and downloading of data from online surveys, all of which is presented for readers and learners of all levels. Both novices and experts will benefit from the practical explanations and examples Fink provides. The novice has found a teacher committed to facilitating understanding; the expert a fellow expert who has prepared a valuable review tool.

Fink's book is a content-rich resource that students, teachers, researchers, and professionals will benefit from. In a time when data can be gathered, generated, and disseminated very quickly, it is important to have access to the expertise and common sense that Fink offers the reader.

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