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A Flexible, Low Cost Approach
to Conduct Online Surveys Using Open Source Software

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TUTORIAL SYNOPSIS

Comparing to traditional survey methods, online survey is much more efficient and cost effective due to the following reasons: zero printing, zero postage, automated data collection, and instant responses. However, successfully launching and administering an online survey also demands additional technical skills and software / hardware resources. In this tutorial, we will provide an overview of key issues with online surveys. Further, we will explain how the Open Source Software (OSS) process works and why we choose OSS as our preferred platform to conduct online surveys. Through a detailed, step-by-step case study, we will share tips and pitfalls we have learned from designing, developing and deploying our research instruments using OSS platforms. In particular, we will discuss how OSS technologies such as Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP (LAMP) provided us with a flexible, reliable, scalable and low-cost solution to gather data using survey instruments. We will further discuss the process of collecting de-identified responses. Code of Federal Regulations[1] often requires that data be collected in a de-identifiable manner. We will also describe the process of obtaining all relevant pieces of software involved in building such applications, including sharing part of source code of our own application. At the end, a less technical alternative of launching online surveys using PHP Easy Survey Package will be presented and demonstrated. *Participants: If possible, please bring a laptop with Wi-Fi capability.*

Keywords

Online Survey, LAMP, Open Source, de-identification

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[1] Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45: Public Welfare, Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects