Customizing and Implementing the Survey

Step 1 Assess the Landscape

In order to deploy the survey instrument on your campus, there are several steps you will need to take. This document offers ways you might want to customize the survey instrument as well as some tips for implementing the survey on your campus. A sample survey questionnaire is available at http://sr.ithaka.org/research-publications/sustainability-implementation-toolkit/sample-survey.

Determine whom you will be surveying, that is, whether you will be sending the survey instrument to a specific handful of departments or to all of the faculty members at your institution. If you are inclined to reach out to a smaller group, you will want to think about whether you wish to survey the departments with the greatest amount of digital humanities activity, which will likely not be representative of all faculty engagement on campus, or a random set of departments, which may not yield a lot of information. It may be ideal to survey faculty in all humanities departments, which would offer the fullest picture of digital humanities activity. In this case, just be aware of institutional policies concerning sharing of email addresses and any IRB requirements that may be in place.

Customize the survey instrument for your campus in three ways:

- Decide whether the responses will be anonymous, i.e., whether you will send universal or individualized invitations to complete the survey instrument. Engagement with digital humanities can be viewed negatively by some in academia, so protecting the privacy of faculty members could help to ensure a higher response rate and greater honesty; but it will also mean that, if respondents do not share their personal information at the end of the instrument, you will not know to whom to reach out, should you wish to hold follow-up interviews to learn more from specific respondents. In an effort to find a balance between protecting privacy and gathering relevant information to assist with data analysis, you may wish to send individualized invitations so that you can match responses with any relevant demographic data, while only inviting to an interview those respondents who indicate in question 26 that they are comfortable with being contacted.

- Adjust the types of digital resources listed in questions 2-4 to your information needs. If you are especially interested in learning about the extent of faculty members' engagement with digital resources, you may wish to refine this list so that it prompts respondents to share more about the nature of their work with digital platforms, tools, and other resources. If, however, the issues of greatest concern to you are the potential sustainability risks that the projects being developed could encounter, you may wish to be sure that the types of resources included in the list run from less complex (e.g., content collections pulling assets from a repository and using a template website) to more complex (e.g., digital platforms with unique content, permissions controls, and customized tools).

- Tailor questions (8, 13-18) with the actual names of support units on your campus so that there is minimal chance of confusion about the units listed as providing support for the digital resources developed by faculty. Currently, there are generic names, such as "library digital collections center" and "central IT unit" that can be reassigned to be recognizable for your respondents; additionally, your campus may have a humanities center or a digital humanities lab that might work with faculty and that you might want to add to the list. You may also wish to consult with others on campus to find out whether there are any units they might recommend including.

Write the survey invitation. If possible, each invitation should be addressed to the specific faculty member contacted so as to make a personal appeal, and it should make a strong case for the purpose of the survey, indicate whether their responses will be anonymous, and state how the information you gather will be used. The culture of your institution will likely determine under whose name the survey will be deployed—depending, for example, on whether faculty members will be most responsive to requests from their individual department chairs or from a senior administrator.

Enter the survey instrument into an online survey platform, such as Zoomerang or SurveyMonkey.

Decide how to deploy the instrument.

- Gather the email addresses of the faculty members you will be surveying, if you wish to send a blind invitation. But if you prefer to send an invitation that addresses each faculty member personally and includes an individualized link (allowing the faculty member to leave and return to the survey as he or she wishes), be sure to gather the faculty members' names, as well. How this is done will vary from campus to campus, but it may require you to work with central IT or an Institutional Research office and to get permission from your direct supervisor.
- Decide when to deploy the instrument. The best time will depend on the culture of your campus. Our experience has demonstrated that response rates are better in late morning on a Tuesday or Wednesday. The survey should then be left open for at least three weeks. It is a good idea to send a reminder email about ten days before the survey closes and again about four days before it closes, to get a higher rate of response. Remember that if you also wish for these reminders to be sent under the name of the person to whom the initial survey invitation was addressed, you will want to ask for their approval.

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