

# Preface

In August, 2003, two of us (De Leeuw and Dillman) met in Berlin at the International Statistical Institute meetings to teach a short course on survey design. The audience consisted of surveyors from most continents of the world. Our first impressions were how different the data collection and analysis problems were that people faced, for example doing face-to-face interviews in rural villages of Uganda and web surveys of the general population in The Netherlands and Denmark. Our second, and more lasting impression, was how much all of the participants had in common. Regardless of country, all of the surveyors in the room had to deal with sample designs, writing questions, turning those questions into meaningful questionnaires, locating sample units, processing data, and analyzing the results.

Procedures we originally thought to be of interest only to those from certain countries, such as visual design for mail and web questionnaires, turned out to be of equal interest to those from developing countries who were concerned with more effective visual layouts for interviewer questionnaires and instructions. The idea for this *International Handbook of Survey Methodology* originated from this experience of two fascinating days with this diverse audience with many common needs and interests.

Our experience there was bolstered further by observations of the difficulties being faced in mounting surveys across national borders, and increased concern that they have to be done. For example, expansion of the European Union from 6 countries in 1957 to 15 countries in 1995 (with 9 candidate-members in 2006), has increased interest in collecting cross-national statistical information, including information from sample surveys. We have also observed with much interest emergent efforts to regularly conduct polls and surveys across continents. These surveys aim to facilitate comparisons of responses across countries widely separated in space, as well as technological development, and economic well-being. All this survey effort has resulted in greater concern about how survey methods unique to one country compare to those used in other countries, and how well questionnaire formats and items translate across cultures. It is also difficult to maintain using the same survey mode in all countries.

Within many countries we have noticed the trend towards mixed-mode surveys that is now occurring. Concerns about coverage and nonresponse in telephone surveys, rising costs for conducting face-to-face interviews, and the emergence of web survey capabilities that only some households have, are all encouraging surveyors to mix modes

We are entering a new era in survey design, in which surveyors throughout the world must think about the fundamentals of survey data collection and methods of turning answers to questions into meaningful results. Increasingly it is a mixed-mode world. Whereas at one time it was possible to learn a single survey mode, e.g., face-to-face interviewing or telephone interviewing, and apply it to all survey situations, doing that is no longer possible. It is now imperative for students and practitioners of surveying to

learn the procedures associated with multiple modes of collecting sample survey information and apply the method or combination of methods that fit their specific situation.

This handbook provides expert guidance from acknowledged survey methodologists and statisticians around the world, who bring their experiences to bear on issues faced in their own and other countries. It serves as an excellent text for courses and seminars on survey methodology at the masters and graduate level. It is a key reference for survey researchers and practitioners around the world. The book is also very useful for everyone who regularly collects or uses survey data, such as researchers in psychology, sociology, economics, education, epidemiology, and health studies and professionals in market and public opinion research.

The book consists of five parts: foundations, design, implementation, data analysis, and quality issues. The book begins by focusing on the foundations of all sample surveys, ranging from sources of survey error to ethical issues of design and implementation. It is followed by a design section, which gives building blocks for good survey design, from coverage and sampling to writing and testing questions for multiple survey modes. The third section focuses on five modes of data collection, from the oldest, face-to-face interviews, to the newest, interactive voice response, ending with the special challenges involved in mixing these modes within one survey. The fourth section turns to analyzing survey data, dealing with simple as well as complex surveys, and procedures for nonresponse adjustment through imputation and other means. The fifth and final section focuses on special issues of maintaining quality and of documenting the survey process for future reference. The first chapter of the book, *The cornerstones of survey research*, ends with a more detailed description of the structure and contents of this book. There is a companion website <http://www.xs4all.nl/~edithl/surveyhandbook>.

As we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, surveys will become inherently more international in scope and in practice. It is our hope that this book will prove helpful for those who are learning the craft of surveying, which like other life skills, will increasingly be applied beyond one's country of origin.

We thank our colleagues across the world for many lively and stimulating discussions about survey methodology. We also thank our students who inspired us and especially the master class in survey methodology 2006 who enthusiastically and critically discussed the drafts. The final book has profited from close reading and copy-editing by Mallory McBride, Sophie van der Zee, Evert-Jan van Doorn, and Amaranta de Haan. We thank Allison O'Neill for her creative cover design. We also thank Emily Wilkinson and Debra Riegert of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates for their patience and careful prodding in getting this book done.

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