

Issue 5: June 2008

Qb conference report:

'Survey Measurement: Assessing the Reliability Validity of Contemporary Questionnaire Items'

On the 10th April 2008, the Qb held it's first one day conference at the Royal Statistical Society in London. The event was a huge success and we would like to thank all of you who attended for making it such an interesting day. Below is a report of the day, the slides and further information can still be viewed at: <http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk/qbworkshop.html>

Conference Report by Graham Hughes

Having received a very positive response to the event publicity, the Qb team decided to change the booking to accommodate more people in the larger meeting room at the RSS. On the day 109 people joined the 4 speakers and the 4 members of the Qb team to discuss "Survey Measurement: Assessing the Reliability and Validity of Contemporary Questionnaire Items".



After a brief introduction by Prof. Martin Bulmer, the first session of the morning was presented by Dr Janet Harkness of University of Nebraska Lincoln and Gesis-ZUMA who looked at issues of question translation. A strong case was made for considering the language and cultural problems inherent in a survey at an early stage in the design process, whenever multilingual versions are known to be important, rather than relying on translation at a late stage.

Professor Patrick Sturgis, lately of University of Surrey and now at Southampton University, then presented some examples of research into question effects using split ballot and other field experiments that have been conducted through the BMRB Omnibus Survey. These involved attempts to identify when

respondents guess the answers to political knowledge questions, a subject which led to some lively discussions.

It was something of a squeeze getting so many people into the basement room for a sandwich lunch and, with a tight schedule to be kept, there was not much time to linger over the choices on the buffet tables before we were shepherding delegates back up the stairs.

Dr Edith de Leeuw of University of Utrecht opened the afternoon session with an examination of the issues around the use of mixed modes in research. Once again it was emphasised that consideration is needed in the design phase of issues that may arise when different modes are introduced to boost response rates in the data collection phase. We were warned of problems in longitudinal studies where time effects and mode effects can be difficult to separate. Her Hiawatha adapted poem was an additional delight!

Finally Dr Pamela Campanelli provided a wide-reaching review of question testing methods that can be used during questionnaire development. The hand-outs that were provided with this session may prove valuable for a long time to come as a source of ideas for alternative ways to trial survey instruments.

With so many survey practitioners and data users present it was a pity that a subsequent booking of the room imposed a severe restriction on the time remaining for general discussion. The lack of a roving microphone further reduced the effectiveness of this element for some, and the Qb team would like to apologise to those affected. However we were pleased to note that the main presentations had all been very interesting and were well-received. The amount of interest generated by this day appears to be an indication that there is widespread interest in improving survey instruments.

Future of the Question Bank: Survey Resources Network

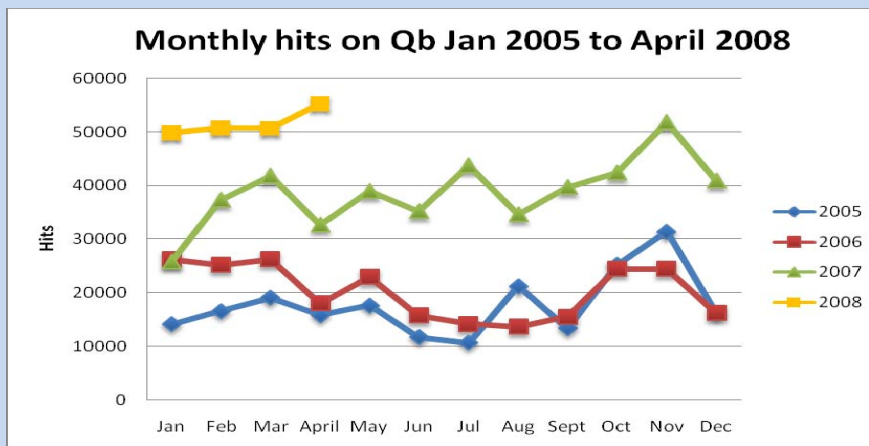
As some of our readers may be aware, there are changes coming for the Question Bank. The current ESRC grant which funds the Qb team, based at the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey, will end on 31st October 2008 after a two month extension period which was awarded recently to mesh with its successor. The ESRC Research Resources Board decided to consolidate a range of existing research resources, including the Qb, into one project. This will be known as the **Survey Resources Network (SRN)** and will also involve other activities including the successor to the ESRC Survey Link Scheme run from Surrey from 2002 to 2007. Bids for the SRN are currently being considered in open competition and the result will be announced at the end of August 2008. At the last minute the University of Surrey was not in a position to make a bid, therefore the current Qb team will be dissolved on 31st October 2008.

At the time of writing in early Summer 2008, we do not know what plans for the next phase in the life of the Qb have been put forward in the tendered bids, and so we cannot give any indication of what form the service may take in the future. We are sure that the ESRC wishes the service to continue in some form because of the way it has been included in the SRN. Had we been in a position to make a bid we would have been looking at exploiting new technology and software possibilities to improve the availability of metadata and to explore better ways of representing CAPI programmed questionnaires, so we hope that others will find a way of taking up that challenge.



In the meantime we would like to pay tribute to Professor Martin Bulmer who has been integral to the Qb since its inception in 1995, and has been leading the team at Surrey for over 7 years since it moved here from NatCen in 2000. The Qb website receives over 50,000 hits per month and is well known in the professional survey agencies as well as in academia. Martin has had a key role in ensuring that survey knowledge and expertise is available to all students and researchers. As he retires from full-time academic life in October 2008 we thank Martin for his considerable contribution to the survey field. We also look forward in anticipation to the future development of the Question Bank wherever it goes next as part of the new Survey Resources Network.

Qb website statistics



In the first quarter of 2008, the highest month for page hits was April with 55,240 hits recorded, this exceeds the statistics from the same time last year (32,775 hits) by over 68%.

The most popular survey page hits for this quarter were British Social Attitudes 2005, and Health Survey for England 2004, closely followed by National Survey of Culture, Leisure & Sport 2005 and Families and Children Study 2006. The factsheets in the Survey Methods section are proving to be popular; the Questions and Answers in Surveys factsheet got some 3,510 hits this quarter with the Data Collection factsheet followed behind with 2,080 hits. The newly added "what are you looking for" page is also proving to be popular with some 3,954 hits.

Qb website updates

Breadth and Depth

The expansion of materials available to users of the Question Bank website has continued since our last Newsletter. In the period between October 2007 and June 2008 we have added 27 sets of questionnaires (bringing the total to over 290) including 6 survey series not previously shown on the Qb (so we now cover 74 different surveys).

The wholly new surveys added were:

National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport (2005)
Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey (2001, 2005/6)
Active People Survey (2005/6)
Growing Up in Scotland Study (2005/6)
Attitudes to Pensions Survey (2006)
England Leisure Visits Survey (1998, 2002, 2005)

We have also added an overview page for the Wealth and Assets Survey for which we hope to include questionnaires in the near future.

The survey series to which we have added recent editions were:

International Passenger Survey (2006)
Labour Force Survey (2006)
Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys (2001/3, 2004)
Expenditure and Food Survey (2005)
Millennium Cohort Study (2003/5)
National Child Development Study (2004)
Offending Crime and Justice Survey (2005)
Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (2002/5 – cohort 11)
Northern Ireland House Condition Survey (2004)
Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey (2003, 2004, 2006)
Survey of Public Attitudes and Behaviours towards the Environment (2007)
Health Survey for England (2005, 2006)
Family Resources Survey (2005/6)
Citizenship Survey (2007)

The range of topics indicated by the titles of these surveys provides an indication of the tremendous variety of data collected in recent years relating to the lives of citizens in Britain. What is not so apparent is the range of modes of data collection used which here includes face to face computer assisted interviews, face to face paper and pencil interviews, telephone interviews, paper self-completion questionnaires, computer self-completion questionnaires, diaries, and observations.

Conference attendance

Julie Gibbs attended two conferences in May. At the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Julie presented two poster sessions, one on the Qb resource and the other on CAPI and problems of documentation. At the annual meeting of the International Association of Social Science Information Technologists (IASSIST) conference Julie presented a paper on the redesign of the Qb site and a poster on the resource. Both of these conferences were in America and serve to broaden our dissemination to key survey professionals.

Martin Bulmer, Julie Gibbs and Graham Hughes will be presenting at the 3MC (Internal Conference on Survey Methods in Multinational, Multiregional, and Multicultural Contexts) festival in Berlin, Germany from 25-29th June. They will present a paper on the theme of developing a European Question Bank type resource.

In July they are presenting and attending the ESRC Research Methods Festival at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, taking part in the Online Resources session.

To find out more or to request copies of these posters / papers please e-mail qb@surrey.ac.uk

QB Staff: Suzanne Barbalet

Suzanne Barbalet has joined the Question bank team on a part time basis from January 2008 and is currently compiling the Qb website bibliography and updating the weblinks .

Suzanne is an Associate of the Australian Library and Information Association). She holds a first class honours degree in sociology from the Australian National University and is currently enrolled in a part-time PhD. Her topic is The Sociological Significance of William James.

Suzanne is the author of the VTS online tutorial "Internet Sociologist" (www.vts.intute.ac.uk)

Internet Sociologist

WELCOME TO INTERNET SOCIOLOGIST

Would you like to learn how to use the Internet for Sociology?
Use this free, interactive tutorial to improve your Internet research skills:

Tour... Discover.. Judge... Success...

Let our experts guide you to the best of the Web

This is one of a national series of tutorials written by qualified tutors, lecturers and librarians from across the UK. It is part of the Intute: Virtual Training Suite, funded by JISC

Your guide is...
• Suzanne Barbalet, Intute Sociology Editor, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

What's On?

ESRC Research Methods Festival

The festival runs from 30 June to 3 July 2008 and will be held at St Catherine's College, Oxford. Its programme includes choices from 69 sessions that cover all aspects of developments in social science research methods. The intended audience is social science researchers from all disciplines, all career stages, and all sectors. All sessions currently still have spaces available, but some are filling up quite quickly and bookings for these sessions will be closed when they reach capacity. The registration fees are very reasonable: £50/day including lunch (£30/day for UK-based PhD students). For more information and to book please see the NCRM website <http://www.ncrm.ac.uk>

British Educational Research Association Annual Conference 2008

The British Educational Research Association Annual Conference will take place at Herriot Watt University from the 3rd – 6th September 2008.

30th Anniversary of the SRA

This year is the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Social Research Association. Reaching this important milestone shows that the SRA continues to play a valuable role helping social researchers and raising the profile and standards of social research. To mark the anniversary, a number of events this year will celebrate social research and the contribution of the SRA. The SRA Annual Conference on December 11th has as its title 'Trends: looking back, moving forward - 30 Years of the SRA'

Surrey Day Courses In Social Research

The Surrey Day Courses will begin again in the Autumn. To book a place, see the full list of courses and get further information please see the web pages: <http://www.shs.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/daycourses/>

Wednesday 1st October 2008 - Introduction to Focus Groups, 10.00am - 5.00pm

Wednesday 5th November 2008 - Introduction to Qualitative Interviewing, 9:30am - 5.00pm

Wednesday 26th November 2008 - MAXqda "2007" Introductory 1 day hands-on workshop, 10.00am - 4.30pm/5.00pm

Wednesday 3rd December 2008 - Managing Data with SPSS for Windows, 10.00am - 5.00pm

Thursday 4th December 2008 - Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis, 10.00am - 5.00pm

Wednesday, 10th December 2008 - NVivo8 Introductory 1 day hands-on workshop, 10.00am - 4.30pm/5.00pm

Upcoming ESDS Events

17 June 2008: Managing and sharing research data, Edinburgh

Location: University of Edinburgh

18 June 2008: National Child Development Study (NCDS) and 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70): a workshop for potential users

Location: University of Stirling

19 June 2008: Introduction to the Expenditure and Food Survey

Location: University of Manchester

8 July 2008: Health surveys user meeting

Location: Royal Statistical Society, London



© Question Bank May 2008

[Department of Sociology](http://www.surrey.ac.uk), University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XH

E-mail: qb@surrey.ac.uk | Telephone: 01483 682788 / 683762 |

Web: <http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk>