

# What kind of animal is Survey Monkey?

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- freeonlinesurveys.com
- instantsurvey.com
- kwiksurveys.com
- surveymonkey.com
- surveypopups.com
- zoomerang.com

**T**o run a well-used library, you need to keep your finger on the pulse of your patrons' needs. You need to find out what your clientele wants and what they think about the library-based activities you have been running. Analysing differences between the genders when it comes to reading tastes and habits and collecting some information on popular authors to beef up the collection might also keep you more in tune with patrons' needs. But who has the time to survey?

There is a selection of web-based questionnaire builders available which make the survey process quick and painless. Zoomerang.com, instantsurvey.com, freeonlinesurveys.com, surveypopups.com and kwiksurveys.com are examples. SurveyMonkey.com, which has been around since 1999, is free and offers video tutorials to guide you through the basics of creating surveys with up to 10 questions and 100 responses. A sample survey allows you to see the array of 15 question and answer form choices including multiple-choice, dropdown menus, rating scales, short answer and yes/no. Templates provide convenient starting points, although you can customize fonts, colour and sizes, and brand your survey with your library's logo. The survey link can be pasted into your library webpage and data can be collected via a weblink or by email. The company claims to keep your data as secure as possible. One handy function is the ability to customize the language to access a specific population, ELL parents for example.

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of SurveyMonkey is that you can watch the graphs and charts develop as your data is collected in real time. It is also possible to observe individual responses or select a summary format for deeper analysis. Digital surveys can be printed and used in the ubiquitous Excel format.

Web-based questionnaires like SurveyMonkey can be very useful for ballot collections such as Forest of Reading® activities and other votes. Like setting exams, more complex surveys require careful planning. The most demanding and time-consuming portion of producing a meaningful survey remains identifying the kind of information you seek and designing the questions which will elicit useful answers! ■