

---

## Book review

---

# Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method

---

*K.K.Y. Poon, M.Sc. (Candidate), Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada*

---

**Authors:** Don A. Dillman, Jolene D. Smyth, Leah Melani Christian

**Publisher:** John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**Publication date:** 2009

**Number of pages:** 499

**Format:** Hardcover

**Price:** \$96.00

**ISBN:** 978-0-471-69868-5

---

Written in collaboration with Jolene D. Smyth and Leah Melani Christian, *Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (2009) is the third edition of Don A. Dillman's seminal work on survey development and administration. The first edition of this text, published in 1978, targeted the opportunities and challenges of mail and telephone surveys, and raised the credibility of these survey methods at a time when face-to-face interviews were considered the gold standard. Since then, his work has been a go-to reference for countless researchers and survey developers. In 2000, Dillman published a second edition to respond to changes in the technological and social climate of surveying. This was followed by an update in 2007.

Compared to the updated second edition, there are three main features that make this third edition a worthwhile read. First, while the second edition had a brief section devoted to Internet survey methods, this edition incorporates Web-relevant considerations into each chapter. Second, in addition to a chapter dedicated to mixed-mode surveys, the utility of hybrid survey methods is emphasized throughout the text. Finally, the importance of visual design is highlighted and considered in detail. In a time when respondents are being approached with increased frequency, this text provides insight on how researchers can obtain high-quality responses using non-traditional survey modes and current technology.

The authors' goal was to create a complete guide to planning and conducting surveys using the Internet, mail, telephone and/or a mixture of modes. Clear introductions, distinct subsections and summarized guidelines help readers access detailed information in each chapter.

Chapter 1 starts off with a vivid description of the evolution of survey development and administration. From a time when mail surveys were considered inferior to telephone and in-person interviews, to the prominence of electronic mail surveys today, the authors describe the social and technological variables that have contributed to these changes.

Chapter 2 presents the psychology behind survey responses and describes the different types of survey errors, building the foundation for first-time survey developers. Using a perspective of positive social exchange, the authors describe how one can increase the benefits of participation while decreasing the costs. The language used is simple and the explanations are easy to grasp, making this an excellent introductory chapter. However, for a more thorough understanding of these concepts, supplementary texts would be needed.

Chapter 3 describes the fundamental concepts of survey coverage and sampling. Using straightforward definitions and descriptive examples, the authors highlight differences

between Internet, mail and telephone modes within the context of coverage and sampling.

Chapter 4 presents the basics of crafting high-quality survey questions. The authors underscore the importance of visual presentation with helpful examples and figures.

Chapter 5 provides guidelines for constructing open and close-ended questions. The authors explore numerical, item-list and description responses to open-ended questions, and nominal scale and ordinal scale responses for close-ended questions. Extensive guidelines are provided for each response type.

Chapter 6 outlines how researchers can transition from a list of questions to a respondent-friendly questionnaire while maximizing response and minimizing measurement error. In describing this process, the authors elaborate on question order, technological considerations and the importance of visual design.

Chapter 7 discusses strategies for implementing population-based surveys on the Internet and through mail. In presenting guidelines for these two modes, the authors use a consistent format to highlight fundamental principles, such as the importance of simple language.

---

Chapter 8 describes the utility of mixed modal surveys with guidelines to help readers select the most effective combination of survey modes. The authors provide a useful chart to describe the motivations and limitations of four identified types of mixed modal surveys.

Chapter 9 discusses longitudinal and Internet panel surveys. These surveys involve the use of multiple questionnaires, which present unique challenges common to both survey types. The authors explore important methodological concerns such as loss to follow-up and respondent conditioning.

Chapter 10 focuses on developing surveys to collect customer feedback. The authors discuss sampling methods and measurement issues. In particular, interactive voice response technology, diaries and group administration are presented as unique delivery methods to improve the accuracy of customer responses.

Chapter 11 explores the legal considerations of data collection. The authors point out that interpretations of privacy laws can often conflict with best practices for survey administration. They also discuss the effects of sponsorship with an emphasis on research ethics.

Chapter 12 elaborates on the opportunities and challenges of surveying businesses and establishments. The authors provide a useful list of questions for researchers to consider and present to establishments in order to optimize a survey's success.

Chapter 13 postulates on the future of Internet, mail and telephone surveying. Particularly, the potential for increased use of Internet surveys is discussed along with the continued relevance of mail and paper surveys.

Overall, the authors succeeded in creating a comprehensive guide to survey development and administration. From fundamental survey principles to the unique challenges of multiple questionnaires, this text covers an excellent range of survey considerations. In particular, it serves as a useful reference for students and researchers looking to expand their survey methodology to obtain high quality responses in today's technologically centered society.