



Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science

By Barbara M. Wildemuth

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For many practitioners, best practices are often developed through significant amounts of direct experience. However, they can also be developed through the examination and application of research findings. By critically assessing existing studies within library and information science, both aspiring and experienced professionals can acquire a deeper understanding of available methods, as well as design more effective studies. In what is surely the first of its kind for librarians, Barbara Wildemuth has created a book that mirrors the process of conducting a research study; at the same time, she exposes the reader to a wealth of competing and complementary techniques. Each chapter introduces a particular research method, points out its relative strengths and weaknesses, and provides a critique of two or more exemplary studies. An invaluable guide for librarians, educators and students alike.

Section One considers those research questions most often asked in the field of information and library science, and explains how they can arise from practice and direct observation or from existing theories. Section Two covers a variety of research designs, as well as the sampling issues associated with those designs: case studies, naturalistic research, longitudinal studies, Delphi studies, and quasi-experimental and experimental designs. Section Three moves on to methods for collecting data: surveys, various types of interviews, historical and documentary studies, transaction log analysis, diaries, and participant observation. It concludes with a chapter discussing the ways in which any of these methods might be combined for use in a particular study.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Aimed at social scientists and library science professionals, this guide to research methodologies evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each type of research design. Wildemuth (information and library science, U. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) reviews the most common research questions asked in the fields of library and information sciences and analyzes sampling issues from case studies, naturalistic research, longitudinal studies, Delphi studies and experimental designs. Data collection methods are also reviewed, including surveys, interviews, historical studies, transaction log analysis and participant observation." -

Reference & Research Book News

"This is a valuable addition to any professional or library science collection where a need exists for a basic yet thorough introduction to the area of research methods and methodology." - **ARBA**

"In this earnest, encyclopedic, energetic and easily accessible book, Barbara Wildemuth has produced a landmark text that will be of great use to information and library science master and doctoral students, as well as to professors and professionals in library and allied fields. . . . This book will easily achieve its stated goal of aiding its readers in designing and publishing research projects that will eventually improve professional practice." - **College & Research Libraries**

"Fills an important gap, connecting the dots between social science research methods and real-world applications in Library and Information Science research. It is very strongly recommended for use in graduate school Library and Information Science courses that teach research methods from the context of social science. This text serves as an excellent reference for any librarian who conducts research, for example, academic librarians who are faculty members." - **Catholic Library World**

About the Author

BARBARA M. WILDEMUTH is a professor in the School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to her 15+ year career at UNC, she was the associate director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation.

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