Gathering Data: An easy alternative
Mary Fetherston, Associate Director

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A quick presentation of the benefits and pitfalls of using Google Drive to create an easy web form to contact and elicit data from students, faculty, staff or the community.

I am not going to address issues of privacy or reliability or validity of instruments, just going to show you a quick and easy way to gather information. Please remember that Pitfall #1 with Google Drive is that it is not considered to be a safe repository of private data--do not use it with data that could violate FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).

Benefit #1 to using Google to gather data is ease of use! All you need to get started is a gmail account.

The second thing you will need is the email addresses of the people you want to survey. These addresses need not be google/gmail because you are sending them a link to an online form--not something they need to log into--the google form requires only a computer and a browser on the respondents’ end.

The third step is to open Google drive and start the survey. Open your Google Drive. See the big red button at the top of the left column, where it says CREATE? Click on that and scroll down to the green form icon.

The first time you use the Google form, you will see a window telling you about the four step process. The next window will offer you a choice of templates for your form. The templates add a background to your form; generally I choose the very simple Gray Header.

Forms always start with a sample question that you can edit.

Here we will use the simple question, how many pets do you have?

If your respondents need any guidance, use the Help Text box to type that in. When you are finished authoring/editing your question, clock DONE

Use the ADD ITEM button at the bottom to add additional questions--let’s try a TEXT question

How about Name?

Choose Text Box as the question type

Question Title: Name
Help Text: Please use your First name, and last initial

CLICK REQUIRED QUESTION and then DONE
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**NAME should be the first question.**

**Question order can be changed using Drag & Drop.** Just hoever your mouse over the top of the question and a double arrow will appear that will allow you to move the question.

Next let’s build a multiple choice question again: *Don’t forget to always delete the Untitled Question text before typing in your text.*

**Question Title:** Do you have any fish for pets?
**Help Text:** Please count both aquarium and outdoor pond fish you might have.

- Choices:
  - Goldfish, Koi, Cichlids, Clownfish. Coconut Crusted Tilapia, Do starfish count?
  - I have no fish, Other kind of fish

*While you can shift question order using Drag & Drop options*

Use the **GO TO PAGE BASED ON ANSWER** feature when a particular option should continue or end the survey for the respondent.

Once you have finished editing your form, pull down the RESPONSES menu and CHOOSE RESPONSE DESTINATION. In most cases, you will want to choose a spreadsheet as the home for your data. So click the button next to NEW SPREADSHEET. BY default, the title will be "Survey Name Chosen (Responses)."

At this point, you should also look at your form design on the web. Above the survey, you will see a link for VIEW LIVE FORM. You can reconnect to the edit version of the form by clicking EDIT THIS FORM in the upper right of your browser window.

The next step is to edit the Confirmation Page. This option is below the Survey itself in the EDIT view. There is a text block for personalizing the confirmation message that your respondents see when they have completed the survey.

Below that are three choices for the level of access that you can select for your respondents.

**SHOW LINK TO SUBMIT ANOTHER RESPONSE** should be used when respondents can submit the survey multiple times. If you want just one answer from each respondent, do not check this box!

**PUBLISH AND SHOW A LINK TO THE RESULTS OF THIS FORM** should be used when you want to share the data results with your respondents.
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ALLOW RESPONDERS TO EDIT RESPONSES AFTER SUBMITTING allows users to access their previous answers to the form--it does not allow them to submit more than one set of answers.

Once you click on SEND FORM, a new window will open. This will have a web link to the form that you can share via email by copying and pasting it into your own email client. SEND FORM VIA EMAIL sends the survey to your respondents using your gmail/Google mail account.

In this window, there is also a link to add collaborators to help you edit your form.

Click DONE.

Once you have sent your form, you will see a link VIEW RESPONSES under the Google pull-down menus. Use this to view your data or use the newly created "Survey Name Chosen (Responses)" spreadsheet in your google drive.