

Introduction

The *Encyclopedia of Research Design* is a collection of entries written by scholars in the field of research design, the discipline of how to plan and conduct empirical research, including the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. A simple review of the Reader's Guide shows how broad the field is, including such topics as descriptive statistics, a review of important mathematical concepts, a description and discussion of the importance of such professional organizations as the American Educational Research Association and the American Statistical Association, the role of ethics in research, important inferential procedures, and much more. Two topics are especially interesting and set this collection of volumes apart from similar works: (1) a review of important research articles that have been seminal in the field and have helped determine the direction of several ideas and (2) a review of popular tools (such as software) used to analyze results. This collection of more than 500 entries includes coverage of these topics and many more.

Process

The first step in the creation of the *Encyclopedia of Research Design* was the identification of people with the credentials and talent to perform certain tasks. The associate editors were selected on the basis of their experience and knowledge in the field of research design, and the managing editors were selected for their experience in helping manage large projects.

Once the editor selected the associate editors and managing editors, the next step was for the group to work collectively to identify and select a thorough and complete listing of the important topics in the area of research design. This was not easy because there are hundreds, if not thousands,

of topics that could be selected. We tried to select those that are the most commonly used and that readers would find most useful and important to have defined and discussed. At the same time, we had to balance this selection with the knowledge that there is never enough room to include everything. Terms were included because of a general consensus that they were essential for such a work as this.

Once the initial list of possible entries was defined in draft form, it was revised to produce the set of categories and entries that you see in the Reader's Guide at the beginning of Volume 1. We ultimately wanted topics that were sufficiently technical to enlighten the naïve but educated reader, and at the same time we wanted to avoid those topics from which only a small percentage of potential readers would benefit.

As with many other disciplines, there is a great deal of overlap in terminology within research design, as well as across related disciplines. For example, the two relatively simple entries titled Descriptive Statistics and Mean have much in common and necessarily cover some of the same content (using different words because they were written by different authors), but each entry also presents a different approach to understanding the general topic of central tendency. More advanced topics such as Analysis of Variance and Repeated Measures Design also have a significant number of conceptual ideas in common. It is impossible to avoid overlap because all disciplines contain terms and ideas that are similar, which is what gives a discipline its internal order—similar ideas and such belong together. Second, offering different language and explanations (but by no means identical words) provides a more comprehensive and varied view of important ideas. That is the strength in the diversity of the list of contributors in the

Encyclopedia of Research Design and why it is the perfect instrument for new learners, as well as experienced researchers, to learn about new topics or just brush up on new developments.

As we worked with the ongoing and revised drafts of entries, we recruited authors to write the various entries. Part of the process of asking scholars to participate included asking for their feedback as to what should be included in the entry and what related topics should be included. The contributors were given the draft entry list and were encouraged to suggest others ideas and directions to pursue. Many of their ideas and suggestions were useful, and often new entries were added to the list. Almost until the end of the entire process of writing entries, the entry list continued to be revised.

Once the list was finalized, we assigned each one a specific length of 1,000, 2,000, or 3,000 words. This decision was based on the importance of the topic and how many words we thought would be necessary to represent it adequately. For example, the entry titled Abstract was deemed to be relatively limited, whereas we encouraged the author of Reliability, an absolutely central topic to research design, to write at least 3,000 words. As with every other step in the development of the *Encyclopedia of Research Design*, we always allowed and encouraged authors to provide feedback about the entries they were writing and nearly always agreed to their requests.

The final step was to identify authors for each of the 513 entries. We used a variety of mechanisms, including asking advisory board members to identify scholars who were experts in a particular area; consulting professional journals, books, conference presentations, and other sources to identify authors familiar with a particular topic; and drawing on the personal contacts that the editorial board members have cultivated over many years of working in this field. If potential authors felt they could not participate, we asked them to suggest someone who might be interested in writing the entry.

Once authors were confirmed, they were given explicit directions and deadlines for completing and submitting their entry. As the entries were submitted, the editorial board of the encyclopedia read them and, if necessary, requested both format and substantive changes. Once a revised entry was

resubmitted, it was once again reviewed and, when acceptable, passed on to production. Notably, most entries were acceptable on initial submission.

How to Use the *Encyclopedia of Research Design*

The *Encyclopedia of Research Design* is a collection of entries intended for the naïve, but educated, consumer. It is a reference tool for users who may be interested in learning more about a particular research technique (such as “control group” or “reliability”).

Users can search the *Encyclopedia* for specific information or browse the Reader’s Guide to find topics of interest. For readers who want to pursue a topic further, each entry ends with both a list of related entries in the *Encyclopedia* and a set of further readings in the literature, often including online sources.

Acknowledgments

As editor, I have had the pleasure of working as the lead on several Sage encyclopedias. Because of the complex nature of the topics included in the *Encyclopedia of Research Design* and the associated difficulty writing about them, this was a particularly challenging project. Many of the topics are very complex and needed extra effort on the part of the editors to identify how they might be improved. Research design is a big and complex world, and it took a special effort to parse entries down to what is contained in these pages, so a great deal of thanks goes to Dr. Bruce Frey from the University of Kansas and Dr. Donald M. Dougherty from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio for their diligence, flexibility, talent, and passion for seeing this three-volume set attain a very high standard.

Our editors at Sage, Jim Brace-Thompson, senior acquisitions editor, and Rolf Janke, vice president and publisher, SAGE Reference, do what the best editors do: provide guidance and support and leave us alone to do what we do best while they keep an eye on the entire process to be sure we do not go astray.

Kristin Teasdale and Nathalie Hill-Kapturczak acted as managing editors and with great dedication and professional skill managed to find authors, see to it that documents were submitted on time,

and track progress through the use of Sage's electronic tools. It is not an understatement that this project would not have gotten done on time or run as smoothly without their assistance.

The real behind-the-scenes heroes and heroines of this entire project are the editorial and production people at Sage who made sure that all the *is* were dotted and the (Student) *ts* crossed. Among them is Carole Mauer, senior developmental editor, who has been the most gentle of supportive and constructive colleagues, always had the answers to countless questions, and guided us in the right directions. With Carole's grace and optimism, we were ready to do what was best for the project, even when the additional work made considerable demands. Other people we would like to sincerely thank are Michele Thompson, Leticia M. Gutierrez, Laura Notton, Kate Schroeder, Bonnie Freeman, Liann Lech, and Sheree Van Vreede, all of whom played a major role in seeing this set of volumes come to fruition. It is no exaggeration that what you see here would not have been possible without their hard work.

Of course this encyclopedia would not exist without the unselfish contributions of the many

authors. They understood the task at hand was to introduce educated readers such as you to this very broad field of research design. Without exception, they performed this task admirably. While reviewing submissions, we editors would often find superb explications of difficult topics, and we became ever more pleased to be a part of this important project.

And as always, we want to dedicate this encyclopedia to our loved ones—partners, spouses, and children who are always there for us and help us see the forest through the trees, the bigger picture that makes good things great.

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