

# How will Britain vote in 2015? Looking beyond the day-to-day horserace

*Three experts on UK elections and political polling outline the data which will help make sense of the 2015 general election.*

## Anthony Wells, research director, Social and Political YouGov plc

During the election campaign, YouGov will be conducting voting intention polling in the UK, plus bespoke polling in London, Scotland and Wales. Across the five weeks leading up to the campaign, we'll be interviewing at least 75,000 people about how they'll vote in the general election.

Our main work will be for the Sun, the Sunday Times and the Times, which will be carrying our daily polls (we poll every weekday during peacetime, but will be polling seven days a week come the campaign itself), political trackers and topical questions. There will also be work for other broadcast and media clients as well as for charities, pressure groups and PR agencies. As the campaign progresses, more non-political clients tend to approach us with political questions – lifestyle and trade magazines which wouldn't normally have any political content looking for a general election story about their sector,

or PR companies looking for an election-related hook for an otherwise non-political press release.

The voting intention figures inevitably get most of the attention during the election campaign, especially in what seems like such a close run race. The day-to-day horserace of who is in front will get, frankly, far too much attention, with large amounts of social media excitement generated by small moves that are no more than random sample variation. The huge amount of voting intention data generated these days allows us to use the information far more intelligently through aggregation and averages across the pollsters but it also means that there are far more data points for people to take out of context.

A lot of attention will also get paid to rather simple polls reacting to policy announcements, events and gaffes. The polls that often get the least attention are

the underlying trackers – which party is trusted on big issues, how people rate the leaders, how competent or in touch the parties are seen to be. These are worth keeping an eye on, as they are the drivers that actually move those headline voting figures.

And as for the result? A majority for either party looks unlikely; public opinion has been moving away from Labour but the Conservatives would need an unfeasibly large lead to secure a majority. I would expect the Conservative advantage on economic competence and leadership to leave them with the higher share of the vote come the election, but the pattern of turnout, constituency boundaries and vote distribution mean that this will not necessarily leave the Conservatives the largest party in seats.



## Professor Roger Mortimore, director of political analysis, Ipsos MORI



Modern general elections are a bit of a no-win situation for serious opinion pollsters. We have little choice but to join in the game of vying to make the best final pre-election prediction, a contest likely to be decided by margins far narrower than the level of accuracy any survey can hope to deliver, and therefore very largely a matter of luck. (Not that we won't feel very smug if we win, you understand!) The outcome of that contest is almost the only thing that most people will remember about the polls, and provided we are not all miles out, as in 1992, they won't even remember if we all did well or all did badly, only who did 'best'.

Which is really rather missing the point of opinion polls, which can report much more useful and interesting information about what the voters think, and why they intend to vote the way they do. The heavyweight political journalists – who most of us are lucky enough to work with as our main media clients during the election – are usually interested in at least some analytical polling on elements of the campaign. Ipsos MORI will hope to get some coverage of who is voting for which party, who is switching and how they think the campaign is affecting them. We always

try to focus part of our election polling on the 'political triangle' – the important issues, the leaders and what the voters think of the parties – each of which can have their effect on people's vote but which are inextricably linked and need to be considered together. No doubt, if they happen, we will also be polling on the leaders' debates.

But inevitably, what gets the most coverage and the biggest headlines is the 'horseshoe'. And this time around, since the relation between national vote share and seats is more unpredictable in this election than in any for decades, that may give a very misleading impression of the outcome, especially if that ends up being settled in private coalition negotiations long after the last votes have been counted.

I'm certainly not going to attempt to predict at this stage the result of the least predictable election of my lifetime. But one prediction I can make, sadly, is that during this election, at least one polling company will end up being blamed for inaccurate reporting or misinterpretation of the implications of otherwise and reliable data, entirely outside its control.

## Professor Jane Green, co-investigator, British Election Study, University of Manchester



Opinion polls are useful indicators of public opinion but are not designed to analyse why people make the choices they do and answer the bigger questions about electoral democracy. The British Election Study (BES) makes this possible.

The BES has analysed every general election since 1964 with academics collecting in-depth data on political attitudes, evaluations and voting decisions. The 2014-2017 study is run by the Universities of Manchester, Oxford and Nottingham and is particularly ambitious. It involves a 30,000-person internet panel with the same respondents surveyed eight times over the course of the project. This is important given the flux in voting intentions. The panel allows us to explain and understand changes in voting intention over time, and the evolution of how people make up their minds, and on what basis. We also link data from other sources and studies, so we can understand, for example, the effect of local constituency context, as well as the social and economic context in which voters make their decisions about voting.

We shall also collect two main further sources of data. There will be a post-election face-to-face survey with 3,000

people across 300 constituencies. This will allow us to compare our data with similar data collected at every general election since 1964. We will also collect daily online data during the campaign as part of our panel study. Those data, for the first time, will be analysed alongside a study of the campaign on Twitter. This campaign will be particularly interesting, with five parties competing seriously for votes in England, and six parties in Scotland and Wales.

What about the outcome? Neither major party is likely to win an outright majority. The two main parties are likely to win the vast majority of seats which could look like a continuation of the status quo, albeit without a clear outcome on election night about what configuration our government will take. I expect the underlying vote shares will show voter support fragmenting across a wider number of parties, with many voters choosing to support parties more likely to rock the boat than to form part of a government.

We've made available a tool for anyone to analyse the BES data themselves. For more insights into the 2015 general election, go to the BES Data Playground via [www.britishelectionstudy.com](http://www.britishelectionstudy.com).

# Social research skills in the digital age

SRA chair, *Patten Smith*, asks whether digital methods could degrade the quality of social research.



Leading industry figures repeatedly tell us we live in a digital age and many also actively try to live this claim in their behaviour: they confidently predict that online research and digital

data collection will continue inexorably, and they tell us this through tweets, blogs and other digital channels. In itself, the above statement is unremarkable: what they tell us is probably true and how they tell us has indeed changed. So why bring it up? I do so to suggest that these moves to digital data collection methods and to digital means of dissemination may have important and undesirable consequences: that they may result in the overall quality of social research becoming unintentionally degraded.

Digital methods can deliver data of as high (or possibly higher) quality than other methods, but only when they adhere fully to canons of good research practice. However, they rarely do this. Digital methods are popular mainly because they are cheap and not because they are good. And usually this cheapness comes at the price of significant reductions in data quality. In the light of this, it is unsurprising that the strongest advocates for digital data collection tend to

**Digital methods are popular mainly because they are cheap and not because they are good**

be individuals who do not have backgrounds in mainstream quality social research. Unfortunately, many of these advocates have positions of considerable influence in government, academe, research agencies and major research funding bodies.

Turning now to dissemination methods, digital communication channels (Twitter, blogs, and so on) in themselves are unquestionably good for social research. They enable us to rapidly and comprehensively share data, ideas and methods in previously unimaginable ways and this benefits our research hugely. So where are the risks?

I believe there are two. First, the professionalisation of organisations' digital PR functions creates a pressure to generate research findings that are eye-catching rather than methodologically defensible. Secondly, and more importantly, we see subtle changes in organisational priorities: as organisations' communications functions grow, all too often do their headcounts in research methods specialisms stagnate or even shrink.

I believe that this relative lack of concern with methodological excellence can be seen in numerous places: in the persistent promotion of digital methods by key academic grant giving bodies and government departments despite the overwhelming evidence that these

can result in enormous decrements to data quality; in declining methodological standards for many UK surveys, including some very high-profile ones; and of course in the seemingly never-ending dissemination of 'interesting' research findings that fail to stand up to even a modicum of critical scrutiny.

As an industry, we can very easily remedy this by taking more pride in those skills that uniquely define us as social researchers. If we don't do this, I fear we shall end up blogging and tweeting more and more about less and less.

## Professional Doctorate in Policy Research and Practice

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## New SRA journal: call for contributions

We're very pleased that Social Research Practice, the new and much-heralded e-journal of the SRA, is now open for business – starting with a loud call for contributions! We very much hope that members will write for the journal, with practical, useful articles to benefit researchers and research users.

The journal's focus is on methodological issues but that doesn't exclude presentation of findings where these have a wider interest; accounts of case studies are welcome, from any research field. We'd like to hear about the impact a piece of research has had on practice

and/or policy; and about your experiences with innovative techniques as well as traditional methods. Your audience will want to know what did and didn't work – both aspects being useful.

You can find out more at [www.the-sra.org.uk](http://www.the-sra.org.uk).

[www.the-sra.org.uk](http://www.the-sra.org.uk). Read the guidelines for authors (and reviewers), and download the template for an article. And if you have an idea for an article but are not sure if it's suitable, just drop us a line for the editor, Richard Bartholomew: [admin@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:admin@the-sra.org.uk).

Thank you!

## SRA conference: Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences

8 May, London

Places are still available for this SRA conference at the British Library. There are 24 workshop presentations to choose from, and full details are on the website. Discounted rates for SRA members: [www.the-sra.org.uk/events](http://www.the-sra.org.uk/events)

## Contribute to SRA Research Matters

We are always pleased to discuss contributions to Research Matters. We consider articles on any topic as long as they are about research findings or research practice, and we particularly welcome contributions that show how research can make a difference. Whether you would be interested in writing a short piece (330 words) or a full page article (670 words), do email us at [admin@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:admin@the-sra.org.uk)

Keep up to date with latest news online at [www.the-sra.org.uk](http://www.the-sra.org.uk)

# The British Library: Living Knowledge

BRITISH LIBRARY

By *Jude England*, head of research engagement at the British Library



It's a year since my last piece for SRA Research Matters on the potential of the British Library to support researchers, especially those who cannot access an academic library. I stressed the great strength of the British Library to provide resources for anyone who is doing research and just how easy it is to become a reader. The library isn't the fortress it appears to be!

Our new strategy, Living Knowledge launched in January, setting out our plans for development towards our 50th anniversary in 2023. Since 1973 there have been profound changes, in the funding environment, in technology, research and information services. This spring, for example, we have the first anniversary of our ability to collect born-digital UK content, including the web. Astonishingly, the first web harvest collected the equivalent of almost 39 million e-books – an extraordinarily rich dataset for research. The library was selected as the location for the headquarters of the Alan Turing Institute, a major new research centre for data science backed by £42million of public investment.

In 2014 there were two key developments in reading rooms. In April, our newest reading room in St Pancras – The Newsroom – opened. This provides a single access point to print and digital news collections, including an extraordinary and growing amount of television and radio news. In May, the refurbished reading room in Boston Spa reopened, providing a much-needed resource for readers based outside the south east.

Of course, it isn't always possible to visit the library, so don't forget our online services to free content. For example, [www.socialwelfare.bl.uk](http://www.socialwelfare.bl.uk) provides a single point of access to resources on all aspects of social welfare in the UK. A related portal [www.mbs-portal.bl.uk](http://www.mbs-portal.bl.uk) provides access to research on management and business studies, including reports on marketing, research methods and organisational psychology. And EthOS ([www.ethos.bl.uk](http://www.ethos.bl.uk)), aims to provide access to the UK's doctoral research theses.

For more information on Living Knowledge see [www.bl.uk/projects/living-knowledge-the-british-library-2015-2023](http://www.bl.uk/projects/living-knowledge-the-british-library-2015-2023); on using the British Library visit [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk).

## Save the date: SRA Summer Event

9 July at the LGA in Westminster. A post-election review of research about how the UK has changed in recent years.

# Core ethical principles and SRA ethical guidelines

By *Helen Kara*, SRA trustee



I have been reporting periodically on an Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS) project to develop generic ethical principles for social science research. The project is led by a working group of four individual AcSS members, two of whom, Ron Iphofen and

Janet Lewis, are also members of the SRA. This group has organised various events, including three symposiums in 2013 and a conference in 2014, and has worked hard in between those events to draft some common principles for social science research ethics.

In November, I chaired a meeting of representatives of the SRA, and of some other AcSS learned society members, to discuss and refine these principles. We had some very useful discussions and were able to finalise the wording of the principles as follows:

- ▶ Social science is fundamental to a democratic society and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods and perspectives
- ▶ All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values, and dignity of individuals, groups and communities
- ▶ All social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose
- ▶ All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research
- ▶ All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm

All those at the meeting felt able to sign up to this wording. Different learned societies will use the principles in different ways. Some will endorse them, or make a statement demonstrating where they are complementary with the learned society's own principles. Others, such as the SRA, will adopt or incorporate the principles in full.

I am delighted that we have reached this point because now I can start work on reviewing the SRA's ethical guidelines. These were published in 2003 and they badly need updating to include topics such as research using social media, big data, and the ethical implications of innovative methods. There is also scope for some refocusing. In particular, the updated guidelines should emphasise the importance of ethical thinking by researchers, and the need to take ethical considerations into account at all stages of the research process.

We will publish the updated guidelines electronically, with signposts to existing resources, as there is no point duplicating existing work. So, as a first stage, I am collating online resources on research ethics. For example, the last version of the SRA guidelines, quite rightly, covered researchers' obligations to their funders. Now we can link to funders' own perspectives of ethical research, such as the Framework for Research Ethics produced by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The ESRC has built on its framework to produce a comprehensive website to support researchers in working through the ethical aspects of funded research. You can find the website at [www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk](http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk). Thanks to fellow board member, David Johnson, for bringing this to my attention.

The SRA's original ethical guidelines made no mention of the internet and only a passing mention of technology. It seems hard to remember that in 2003, not everyone had email, the BlackBerry was only just being released, and smartphones with touchscreens hadn't even been invented. Our updated guidelines will need to cover the ethical aspects of research using technology, including internet-based research. But, again, much of the work has been done for us. The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) produced a report in 2002, and another in 2012, making recommendations about ethical decision-making in internet research. The AoIR also hosts a 'wiki', or collaborative website that anyone can edit, with a wealth of resources for ethical decision-making in internet-related research including their own reports:

[http://ethics.aoir.org/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](http://ethics.aoir.org/index.php?title=Main_Page)

If there are any online research ethics resources you think we should include, please let us know at [admin@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:admin@the-sra.org.uk). I'll keep you posted on the progress of the updated guidelines; our aim is to have them finished before the end of 2015.



# Behind the research curtain

By **Richard Bartholomew**, previously chief research officer at the Department for Education and currently editor of *Social Research Practice*, the new SRA journal



As the May general election approaches, civil servants will increasingly be heard talking about 'entering into purdah'. But what does this quaint Sir Humphrey-ism mean and what are its consequences for social research commissioned by government departments?

The literal meaning of purdah or pardah in Persian and Urdu is a curtain screening off women from the sight of men or strangers. In the arcane language of the civil service, it signifies the period between the dissolution of parliament (30 March for this election) and the outcome of the poll. During this campaign period, civil servants are required to withdraw from public engagement for all but essential and routine tasks. This is to ensure they are seen to be neutral and impartial and, equally, to ensure that ministers cannot use government officials and resources for party political purposes.

The operation and interpretation of the purdah rules are, however, often a source of confusion and some anxiety for civil servants and for agencies and academics conducting research for government. The key guiding principle is that social research should be conducted 'in accordance with the Government Social Research Code, taking great care, in each case, to avoid competition with parliamentary candidates for the attention of the public'.

It is not the case that all social research and statistical data gathering must stop. The Cabinet Office guidelines recognise

the need to allow regular, continuous and on-going censuses and surveys to continue if they provide data for, or directly support, continuing statistical series. Some social research surveys and studies may fit this definition but the guidelines also say that 'ad hoc surveys that may give rise to controversy or related to an election issue should be postponed or abandoned'. Much social research funded by government is likely to fall within this broad definition. Party manifestos cover a very wide range of issues. Who would dare to predict which of these will or will not become controversial during the roller-coaster politics of an election campaign?

The requirement on departments not to undertake activities which might 'be seen to compete with the election campaign for the public's attention' also means that ad hoc surveys and other research involving door-stepping, phoning, mailing or emailing ordinary members of the public are particularly vulnerable. For these reasons,

the decision is usually made to err on the side of caution and to avoid conducting fieldwork during the campaign period. This removes the possibility of confusion with political opinion polling funded by the political parties or by the media. Fieldwork involving organisations, or when individuals are clearly being interviewed in their professional capacity, is more likely to be allowed to continue.

Government researchers and agencies conducting government research have learned to try to avoid scheduling

fieldwork in the run-up to an election but, in the past, this involved a good deal of guesswork about when that might be. The move to fixed-term parliaments has removed much of this immediate pre-election uncertainty but potentially larger post-election uncertainties remain.

If a different party or coalition of parties comes to power it may well choose to review all the commitments made by its predecessors. This includes research commitments, especially research to develop or evaluate policies very different to its own. This can take some time to resolve post-election. The apparent advent of no overall majority politics, formal coalitions and tactical alliances makes it likely that such post-election decision making could be even more protracted than in the past. We may live in (politically) interesting times but they could also prove to be more than a little frustrating.

The guidelines for May 2015 will be issued after parliament is dissolved. The Cabinet Office 2010 General Election Guidelines are in the National Archives at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100421074139/http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/354815/2010electionguidance.pdf>

**...the purdah rules are... often a source of confusion and some anxiety for civil servants and for agencies and academics conducting research for government**

# Getting scientific about implementation

By *Jane Lewis*, director of implementation support, Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation



## IMPLEMENTATION MATTERS IF WE WANT TO GET RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Over the last decade there has been a sustained focus on stimulating the supply and use of evidence about 'what works' in improving services. Yet, in most areas of human services, there remains what we might politely call a 'gap', and more accurately a 'gaping chasm', between what we know is effective and implementation on the ground.

Initiatives to increase the 'push' and 'pull' of research are important, but even the best proven practice will not achieve its potential if it is not implemented well. This was well demonstrated recently when a meta-analysis of over 500 studies

of youth justice interventions found that 'a well-implemented intervention of an inherently less efficacious type can outperform a more efficacious one that is poorly implemented.'<sup>1</sup> This is not an argument for using less efficacious practices, but a strong argument for getting scientific about implementation!

**There is a fast-developing international science about effective strategies for designing, adopting and delivering services**

## THE DEVELOPING SCIENCE OF EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

There is a fast-developing international science about effective strategies for designing, adopting and delivering services. Central to these are implementation contexts, particularly the 'inner' setting of the delivery organisation (structural characteristics, culture, networks, absorptive capacity for change, administrative processes) and the 'outer' setting of systems, markets, partnerships, communities, policies and funding.<sup>2</sup> Newer thinking about

implementation particularly emphasises the dynamic relationship between context and interventions or service delivery models. Rather than focusing narrowly on highly-specified fidelity criteria, we are investigating how proven approaches need to be adapted to context for sustained improvement.<sup>3</sup> Evidence about effective implementation also emphasises that early stages of activity provide essential scaffolding to later implementation effort, and we are learning more about the activity required at each stage.<sup>4</sup>

For a recent example of how these ideas have been used in a UK service evaluation, see the evaluation of My Baby's Brain<sup>5</sup> by

the Colebrooke Centre – the first centre in the UK dedicated to developing and using implementation science in child and family services.

## NEW MODELS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP

Implementation science is multi-method using administrative data, action research, workshop and group facilitation methods, qualitative research, experimental and quasi-experimental designs. It requires researchers, practitioners, programme developers and social innovators to give up fixed professional identities, be willing to occupy each other's space, and find new forms of partnership to co-produce lasting improvement.

## THE UK IMPLEMENTATION NETWORK

We need to make better use of the international evidence, but we also need to develop a UK perspective and evidence base on implementation that reflects our own particular systems, services and social contexts. The UK Implementation Network (UK-IN) was recently set up with this intention. UK-IN connects researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and funders working in implementation, with the aim of building UK capacity for implementation

science and practice. An independent non-profit membership organisation, UK-IN's activities include knowledge exchange events; developing knowledge resources for a shared understanding of implementation science and practice; and keeping members up to date on news in UK and international implementation. If you are interested in contributing to building UK implementation capacity, join UK-IN at [www.uk-in.org.uk](http://www.uk-in.org.uk) and follow us on [@UK\\_ImpNet](https://twitter.com/UK_ImpNet).

<sup>1</sup> Lipsey M (2009) 'The primary factors that characterise effective interventions with juvenile offenders: a meta-analytic overview' *Victims and Offenders* 4: 124:147

<sup>2</sup> See for example Damschroder L, Aron D, Keith R, Kirsh S, Alexander J and Lowery J (2009) 'Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: a consolidated framework for advancing implementation science' *Implementation Science* 4:50

<sup>3</sup> See for example Chambers D, Glasgow R and Stange K (2013) 'The dynamic sustainability framework: addressing the paradox of sustainment amid ongoing change' *Implementation Science* 8:117

<sup>4</sup> See for example Meyers D, Durlak J and Wandersman A (2012) 'The Quality Implementation Framework: a synthesis of critical steps in the implementation process' *American Journal of Community Psychology* 50: 562-480

<sup>5</sup> Ghate D, Coe C and Lewis J (2014) *My Baby's Brain in Hertfordshire: the independent evaluation of phase two* [http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/My\\_Baby's\\_Brain\\_final\\_report\\_February\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/My_Baby's_Brain_final_report_February_2014.pdf)

# Working across the sight loss sector for research with impact

By *Sally McManus*, NatCen Social Research; *Catherine Dennison*, Thomas Pocklington Trust; *John Slade* and *Fay Sadro*, RNIB



## THE SITUATION

To raise public awareness and funding, the third sector is increasingly expected to use evidence to demonstrate need. However, being literate about evidence can be a challenge for third sector organisations as they may lack research skills, while research organisations may lack the policy and



practice knowledge to put research into practice. The call to demonstrate the impact of research has almost become a cliché; yet achieving this is still patchy and perhaps lacks ambition.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has invested in bridge building between researchers and those working in policy and practice.

## WHAT WE DID

Our ESRC-funded programme – the Knowledge Exchange Network for the Sight Loss Sector (fondly known as ‘Ken’) – brought people from various local and national sight loss organisations together with a research organisation. The project was jointly ‘owned’ by all of these groups and, over the course of a year, we provided:

- Day-long workshops with people working in local and regional sight loss organisations to share findings from secondary analysis, new data tools, and advice about evaluation

- Five days of social research training for two cohorts of professionals working in national sight loss organisations
- Development of an online policy and research knowledge hub and sustainable network including both an online forum and ongoing face-to-face events

## IMPACT

Many of the ideas and tools presented during the sessions were new to both local and national charities. There was an appetite to better understand where to source research and how to use it in a meaningful way in advocacy work. In our qualitative-led evaluation of the knowledge exchange workshops we found that organisations across the board were practically applying learning from the workshop sessions, whether through internal evaluation or sourcing local and national statistics.

*‘If we want to be taken seriously, and continue to be able to influence, we must understand the wider context of sight loss and engage with key national statistics.’ Local society*

*‘I’ve realised it’s important to gather evidence of your intervention as you go along, build your aims into the service design at the beginning – so I’ve redesigned evaluation forms to reflect this and we’ve designed a beneficiary survey to do at the beginning and the end of the programme. This evidence will feed into an outcomes report we are obliged to deliver to commissioners. Before [the KEN workshop], there really wasn’t any way we were looking at outcomes or impacts.’ Local society*

*‘Proper evidence is letting us prove there is a need for a service and strengthens our case to continue with ongoing work. That’s why it’s important it’s the best evidence we can get.’ Local society*

## WHAT WE LEARNED

The charitable sector can be fragmented, with different organisations representing differently defined groups, and sometimes competing for the same limited pots of sympathy and resource. The strength of the sight loss sector, as developed and supported by this project, was the collaboration between different third sector organisations.

This knowledge exchange project built on infrastructure already in place at Thomas Pocklington Trust and RNIB, such as using their staff, website, and links to the sector. The great value of this is that rather than setting up something separate and additional, the outputs have been affordable and much more sustainable.

Research organisations need to recognise that the third sector presents a huge resource of substantive knowledge and the very connections needed if research is to have impact. Full engagement from the start of a project is needed for research to be meaningful, especially at local level.

Our activities aimed at national charities centred on London but our regional events were even more popular. Not only did it make taking part easier for people with limited time and budgets, but it also helped bring together people working in the same area and helped to create ongoing local networks. Getting out of London was key to Ken’s success.

# Qualitative vs quantitative? Bringing 'small-n' and 'large-n' research together

By *Chris Perry* and *Isabella Pereira*, Ipsos MORI Qualitative Social Research Unit



Few practising social researchers could fail to be aware of the conventional wisdom that quantitative research is generally considered more credible and authoritative than qualitative research – with statistics being seen as 'higher prestige' or 'more policy relevant'.<sup>1</sup>

This assumption is played out regularly in discussions with research commissioners, and even with fellow researchers who remain fixated on the small numbers of participants typically involved in qualitative studies and its lack of representativeness. Such an attitude may be unlikely to disappear soon as we move into an era of public data<sup>2</sup> and increasingly commonplace use of statistical analysis.

## BUT WHERE DID THIS 'WISDOM' COME FROM? AND WHY IS IT SO PERSISTENT – AND PERVERSIVE?

Arguably two assumptions – and we would argue, misunderstandings – are at the root of this. They also happen to be the first of ten standard objections<sup>3</sup> to the qualitative research interviews:

- ▶ They are not scientific, but only common sense
- ▶ They are not objective, but subjective

This binary division, in which qualitative is perceived as the poor relation to quantitative work, has been perpetuated and compounded

by the language of market and social research professionals. While quantitative researchers can take refuge in the cult of significance,<sup>4</sup> qualitative work is often sold – and evaluated – on being 'innovative' 'creative', and, worst of all, 'funky' rather than being high quality.

We are therefore presented with two apparently quite different approaches to research, and as far as many are concerned, two separate, distinct cultures.

## SO HOW CAN THESE ENTRENCHED ASSUMPTIONS BEST BE COUNTERED?

As noted recently on the LSE Impact Blog,<sup>5</sup> sociological sage Howard Becker has made two helpful observations in starting to respond to this problem.

First, both 'cultures' are, in fact, united in their quest to advance knowledge. Indeed, some<sup>6,7</sup> would make the more specific claim that qualitative and quantitative research – or 'small-n' and 'large-n' research – are able to address common questions as well as adopt a single logic of inference.

Second, qualitative research produces a different type of data which survey methods cannot emulate. This data is characterised by accuracy (producing close, detailed observations), precision (generating new information on emergent issues), and breadth (creating knowledge on diverse issues related

to the research question).<sup>8</sup> Becker also reminds us that surveys, too, face interpretive problems when gathering subjective data – and they do so at further remove from their subjects than qualitative research.

How then can the cultures be brought together? Given that the two traditions elicit different data, proposing mixed methods seems like the easy answer – but there are tensions to address in doing this. For example, consideration of the difference between the *outcome* of using mixed methods (such as claims to triangulation) and the *process* by which datasets are brought together.<sup>9</sup> We may need to ask if we want to *combine* methods – where different types of data collection are conducted separately, at different stages – or *integrate* them, perhaps by fusing methods at the data collection stage. Choices here also have implications for analysis.

The array of options means that we need to think harder about how the different traditions can work together and their respective strengths and weaknesses. Quality guidelines for qualitative research *do* exist<sup>10</sup> and the industry is taking steps to develop this further through researcher accreditation.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, it seems likely that an improved understanding of both traditions will be critical to bring methods together effectively, and creating better research – but making this case may take

time. To give Becker the last word, 'when we ignore 'common sense,' 'conventional wisdom,' or 'the wisdom of the ages,' we will surely run into opposition from the people who take those definitions as self-evident. That's our dilemma and there is no easy solution'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://eth.sagepub.com/content/10/1/5.abstract>

<sup>2</sup> <http://andrewgelman.com/2014/03/01/moving-era-private-data-public-analyses-one-public-data-private-analyses-just-learned-cautious-data-missing-may-cautious/>

<sup>3</sup> [www.sfu.ca/~palys/Kvale-TenStandardObjectionsToQualInterviews.pdf](http://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Kvale-TenStandardObjectionsToQualInterviews.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.press.umich.edu/186351/cult\\_of\\_statistical\\_significance](http://www.press.umich.edu/186351/cult_of_statistical_significance)

<sup>5</sup> <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/12/12/qualitative-quantitative-fundamentally-distinct-vidal/>

<sup>6</sup> King, G., R.O. Keohane, and S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press

<sup>7</sup> *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, ed. David Collier and Henry E Brady. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>8</sup> <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/12/12/qualitative-quantitative-fundamentally-distinct-vidal/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://qrj.sagepub.com/content/6/1/45.abstract>

<sup>10</sup> [www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/a\\_quality\\_framework\\_tcm6-38740.pdf](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/a_quality_framework_tcm6-38740.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [www.aqr.org.uk/a/20140408-accreditation](http://www.aqr.org.uk/a/20140408-accreditation)

<sup>12</sup> <http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/articles/mozart.html>

# Measuring impact in social impact bonds

*Phil Messere, funding manager at Big Lottery Fund, and James Ronicle, senior research manager at Ecorys UK, discuss the opportunities and challenges of evaluating social impact bonds.*

## PHIL MESSERE

Social impact bonds (SIBs) are an innovative concept, developed from payment by results (PbR) contracts. In a SIB, the providers do not use their own money to fund their services until they get paid. Instead, money is raised from so-called 'social investors' who get a return if the outcomes are achieved. This means any risk of loss from not achieving the results is borne by the investor.

The Big Lottery Fund has played a central role in growing the SIB market. SIBs reflect our mission to enable more people, most in need, to lead fulfilling lives, in enriching places, as part of successful communities. We co-commissioned the first ever SIB in Peterborough prison in 2010; and provided social finance with a grant to develop six further SIBs, including Essex Edge of Care. Our latest SIB venture is the £40m 'commissioning better outcomes' (CBO) fund, which will support the development of more PbR and SIB models. We expect it will fund around 30 projects.

Each of the SIBs we have funded has been evaluated, and evaluation plans are being



built into each CBO award. In 2014, we commissioned Ecorys UK and ATQ Consultants to review the evaluations of different SIBs to enable us to compare and contrast different SIB models, and understand, in which of the 15 social policy sectors funded through this scheme, SIBs are most appropriate. We are already using initial evaluation work to help us make more informed decisions about how we can best support their growth.

Applicants developing proposal evaluation and dissemination strategies are drawing on scoping work [at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)] which Ecorys and ATQ have undertaken. Case studies have pin-pointed issues that we are sharing widely through programme Q&As, supplementing learning we have taken from direct interaction with applicants. Initial learning from the programme evaluation is reinforcing our own qualitative judgements. This is helping us to revise messaging to potential applicants, commissioners, intermediaries and investors.

**...new concepts bring new findings, and this is always exciting**

## JAMES RONICLE

Evaluating a programme of this type brings with it a unique set of challenges:

- ▶ We are evaluating a means to an end, rather than the end itself. This means the key focus is not necessarily the impact of the intervention, but rather the additionality brought about by funding the intervention through a SIB. At times this additionality could be very subtle and difficult to capture
- ▶ SIBs bring a new stakeholder to the social policy table – the social investor. Consequently, they also bring a new member of the evaluation audience, whose interests will be very different to policymakers or providers. We will need to tailor evaluation outputs to meet these new interests
- ▶ We are not just comparing apples and pears, but the whole fruit basket. The pipeline of applications suggests we could be evaluating interventions in the areas of health, employment, children's outcomes and crime, commissioned by local authorities, Clinical Commissioning



Groups, central government departments and police force areas. When comparing projects, attributing differences in delivery and effectiveness to the SIB model, rather than to the different policy areas or commissioning bodies, will be challenging.

However, new concepts bring new findings, and this is always exciting. Our scoping study [at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)] has already generated much debate about some of the key benefits and challenges of SIBs, including that they:

- ▶ Bring in additional investment
  - ▶ Align social and financial returns for investors
  - ▶ Improve contract management
  - ▶ Support innovation
  - ▶ Embed a more outcomes-focused culture in service providers
  - ▶ Are complex, especially when agreeing contracts
  - ▶ Are hindered by a limited understanding of investors and intermediaries
  - ▶ Need to be large-scale to justify the resources
- We will be further testing these findings throughout the evaluation.

# The path to ResearchAbility

By *Alice Yeo*, partner, ResearchAbility



Jenny Graham and I were close friends and colleagues at NatCen Social Research for more than ten years. When I left NatCen, my plan was to do some freelancing and consider my next move. When Jenny left shortly afterwards, the idea to join forces was born.

## SOUL-SEARCHING

To start with, Jenny and I thought hard about whether a partnership would work both personally and professionally. Our discussions were not always comfortable, but important to have before embarking on a business relationship. This involved an honest critical analysis of our strengths and weaknesses both individually and together. We pushed each other on our goals, future plans, ambitions, out-of-work commitments and work/life balance.

## THE BIG IDEA

Our next step was to focus on what we wanted our 'offer' to be. As well as doing qualitative research, we wanted to explore the possibility of providing supervision and skills building expertise. Having taught on NatCen Learning courses, we were aware of many PhD students and researchers in universities, local authorities and charities conducting challenging qualitative research projects. The capacity and capability in qualitative methodology was not always there to support these researchers. We both had experience of mentoring, a role we enjoyed and were keen to offer.

## ESTABLISHING THE PARAMETERS

Having identified what we wanted to do, a period of research, consideration and reflection ensued to refine our thinking and understanding about:

- ▶ What type of research and which policy areas we wanted to work in
- ▶ The evidence base for offering mentoring and supervision to qualitative researchers
- ▶ The marketplace: what does it look like? Who would our clients and competitors be?
- ▶ Our business structure: what type of partnership would suit us best?
- ▶ Financial considerations: anticipated versus required income; outgoings and initial outlay

The small business centre at the British Library is a mine of information and advice. Friends with experience of business, marketing and PR were also invaluable – and trading skills with them proved to be a cost-effective way of sharing expertise (for example they provided us with business support and we provided them with research advice). As qualitative researchers prone to probing, we went into overdrive, asking people we knew and met in business how they had gone about setting up, challenges faced, things they'd have done differently, lessons learned.

## BLUE SKY THINKING

Once we had a clear picture of what we wanted to do and our structure, the next question was what our 'brand' was going to be. This was a new process for me and once I'd got over the

word 'brand', I found it surprisingly enjoyable and creative. A friend in PR and communications helped us articulate our core ethos, values and key messages. ('What are the three things you want people to remember about ResearchAbility?') We had lots of fun with online wordclouds ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)). Finding a name was probably the hardest task, with many hours spent leafing through dictionaries, surfing the web and batting ideas back and forth. Setting up a website wove these different steps together, requiring clarity about our ethos, offer and brand.

## CRYSTAL BALL GAZING

Having been up and running for just over a year now, ResearchAbility has had a steady stream of interesting work with great clients. One advantage of coming from a large organisation is the network of contacts that generates. But of course, the challenge of finding work will continue. As, no doubt, will the late nights at the computer, but it feels very different when it's your own work!

## TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

The experience of working in partnership has been overwhelmingly positive: providing all the benefits of being flexible, responsive and autonomous without the disadvantages of working alone. From a professional point of view, having a critical friend to discuss methodological challenges with, edit proposals, reports and debrief, reflect and learn from difficulties has been invaluable. But having a colleague to chat to; share weekend and holiday stories with; go to lunch with; and to offer a friendly ear when things are hard, has been most important of all.

## Managing and sharing research data: a guide to good practice

L. Corti, V. Van den Eynden, L. Bishop, M. Woollard

London: Sage, 2014

*Reviewed by Paul Webb, research officer, Praxis Care, Belfast*

This is a guide to best practice for researchers who want to supplement existing data management skills and those who want to develop data management skills for the first time.

Written by members of the UK's Data Archive, the authors describe those skills which will be needed to ensure that data is open and reusable, and collected, stored and shared in ways which respect ethical practice and relevant legislation. The authors also make a convincing case for why data sharing is beneficial, and present counter arguments to some of the more common reasons which are given for not sharing data.

The authors introduce the reader to the research data life cycle and approaches to research data management planning as well as referring to specific skills and software which the researcher could usefully acquire. There are, for example, very clear introductions to version control systems and to the encryption of sensitive data using open source software. I particularly enjoyed the chapter about formatting and organising



data, which contains a section on how to organise data files logically. The book is written in very clear prose making the more technical topics accessible to the non-specialist. Moreover, the text is supplemented by case studies, exercises and useful references as well as a website.

The authors manage to successfully combine a discussion of abstract topics such as metadata with grounded examples of how these topics could be applied in practice. For the purposes of this review, I read the text sequentially but I think that one could usefully refer to particular chapters or sections in order to fill specific knowledge gaps. Indeed, I found myself repeatedly returning to particular sections of the text to reinforce my understanding of key concepts.

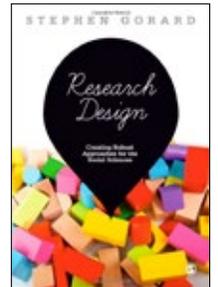
To conclude, this book fills a gap in the market and will, I'm sure, be read by researchers in any discipline where data management skills are needed. I would recommend this book without hesitation. Well written, informative and, with its commitment to transparency and data sharing, commendable.

## Research design: creating robust approaches for the social sciences

Stephen Gorard

London: SAGE 2013

*Reviewed by Catherine Owens, evidence and evaluation adviser, College of Policing*



This book begins with chapters covering what is meant by design and its scope, such as researchable questions, and the nature of causal claims. It moves on to sampling, comparative claims and controlled interventions for anyone considering the nuts and bolts of design. It ends with chapters on validity, ethics and interpreting more advanced designs for evaluation. It is refreshing to find a book that focuses solely on design, rather than a particular approach, method, or topic area. This means that design issues can be explored, and for the reader, the real questions that need to be addressed in research can be considered before the method. This helps establish a clear need for researchers to set out their research as if it was an argument, linking what they are setting out to test to the designs for causal claims, and to show a logical train of thought when considering conclusions. I think this element of the book pushes it further than a methods book, an ethical prompt, or a basic design book. The arguments are presented persuasively, compelling the reader to take heed.

There is also a very good range of content, for example stretching the reader with the use of research notation, as well as exercises

to help reinforce the learning and suggested reading after each chapter. The author also helpfully draws on his own experience throughout the book to bring points to life, and presents them in their real world context. All of this is written in plain English, a rarity in specialist texts. In addition, the rationale for approaches and content is broad enough that researchers from any field would benefit from reading it, as it makes the reader reflect on what they are setting out to achieve.

The book combines being a good read for experienced researchers who want to remind themselves of how to design good quality, rigorous, research, with being an excellent introduction for those new to the field in how to plan and execute inherently useful research for any evidence base. It also strongly emphasises the ethics of research – why we should be clear about the purpose of the research and how we will analyse the data (not just data dredging for results).

The book gives several examples of research that has been badly designed, and which could be damaging. These examples demonstrate the importance of getting it right, and the book gives the tools to do just that.

## Knowledge in policy: embodied, inscribed, enacted

Edited by Richard Freeman and Steve Sturdy

Bristol: Policy Press 2014

Reviewed by Dr Janet Bowstead, independent social researcher,  
ORCID 0000-0003-0194-7688

This book, which comes out of a European research project involving teams across eight countries, addresses the role of knowledge in policymaking. It proposes a new phenomenology of knowledge, based on the forms that knowledge may take: **embodied** in people, **inscribed** in documents, and **enacted** in particular contexts – how it moves between these three phases, and what is gained and lost in these transitions.

Most of the book comprises chapters by different authors applying the framework to empirical case studies. These cover diverse policy contexts, particularly in mental health and education, in Scotland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, England, Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany and Belgium. The chapters vary in how far they apply the embodied-inscribed-enacted typology, but all reflect on what such a theoretical framework brings to their analysis. I found this particularly successful in chapters about policy fields with which I am familiar, such as Jennifer Smith-Merry on how the

embodied knowledge of mental health service users and practitioners in Scotland did not travel well into policymaking; and Jo Maybin on how civil servants in England's Department of Health enacted embodied knowledge through face-to-face interactions. I would therefore expect that other case studies, such as on school evaluation or inclusive education, would be particularly interesting to specialists in those policy contexts.

The editors are disarmingly modest in their initial claims for this framework, which they see as a sensitising device and hope others will find useful. The final chapter emphasises that the embodied-inscribed-enacted framework is not an explanation of policymaking, but a means of seeing what is to be explained. I found it a fascinating way of thinking about knowledge. Overall, this is a very thought-provoking book for anyone involved in policymaking, and in trying to understand how and why policy is, or is not, made and implemented in different contexts.



## Books for review

We are always looking for reviewers! Write a short review for us and you get to keep the book. All books up for review are listed online at [http://the-sra.org.uk/sra\\_resources/publications/book-reviews](http://the-sra.org.uk/sra_resources/publications/book-reviews)

Here are a few of the titles on offer:



*Ethnography for the internet: embedded, embodied and everyday.*  
Christine Hine,  
Bloomsbury, 2015



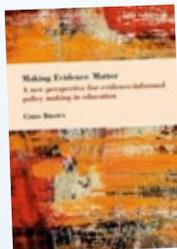
*The impact of research in education: an international perspective.*  
Ben Levin, Jie Qi, Hilary Edelstein and Jacqueline Sohn,  
Policy Press, 2013



*Sociology: an introduction.*  
Ken Roberts, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011



*Social media in social research: blogs on blurring the boundaries.*  
NatCen, 2014



*Making evidence matter: a new perspective for evidence-informed policy making in education.*  
Chris Brown, Institute of Education Press, 2013

If you are interested, please email the office ([admin@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:admin@the-sra.org.uk)) and we'll send you guidelines.

## Roger Jowell memorial lecture: John Curtice



Roger Jowell

A capacity audience heard Professor John Curtice of Strathclyde University give the second Roger Jowell Memorial Lecture at the British Library on 16 May, chaired by Professor Jane Elliott, CEO of the ESRC. Entitled 'This fractured isle; this disputed realm? The shape of British politics today' the lecture was a

brilliant exposition of the current political situation which the UK faces, covering the end of the classic two-party system we have had for a century, the emergence of multiple parties and the likelihood of continuing coalitions. Curtice examined the increasingly geographically diverse results and the drive towards more devolution, not only to Scotland and Wales, but also within England with the push to de-centralisation. Into this heady mix he also threw in the growth of Euroscepticism and the implications of a possible referendum on Europe.

Possibly the most interesting part of his talk was his discussion of class. Using data from the British Election Study and British Social Attitudes, he argued persuasively that, contrary to popular thought, class is not dead as an important signifier of political allegiance. He showed how class underlies differences in views on Europe and immigration as well as affecting party affiliation and voting intentions. Indeed, political attitude research showed that Labour had lost some traction among its former core voters because it was seen as too middle class and, not surprisingly, UKIP attracted many working class voters. May 7 seemed even more of a potential watershed by the end of the talk.

The lecture elicited very good questions - always a mark of a good talk - and was a powerful tribute to Roger and the work John and Roger had done together over many years.

**Ceridwen Roberts, Oxford University**

## SRA members tell us what they think

We recently invited members to tell us what they think about the SRA. Many thanks to those of you who completed the survey. Around 30% (200) of members took part, and their characteristics were broadly representative of the full membership.

We asked you to rank six possible new benefits for members. The top three were:

1. Online access to a range of social science journal articles
2. An online journal featuring practical and accessible research articles
3. More 'best practice' written guidance on the website

Fortunately, we are launching the journal shortly (see page 4) - and the board will consider the other two, as priority, as well as written-in suggestions.

For training, we noted the popularity of courses on evaluation and impact. We run two courses on evaluation but will look closely at expanding this area. Respondents generally preferred face-to-face courses. The main barrier to training was having the funds to pay for it.

The SRA events group will look at responses to the open question, 'what topics and issues would you like to see covered in future SRA conferences seminars and other events?' Apart from requests for specific items, the most popular choices were:

- ▶ Impact and evidence
- ▶ Policy issues
- ▶ Innovation, new methods and so on
- ▶ How to present, share and disseminate findings
- ▶ Quantitative methods, including data collection and analysis
- ▶ References to ethics

It was good to see our e-newsletter for members, and also this magazine, receive a good number of compliments.

Two-thirds of respondents were interested in the idea of 'short books' with practical research guidance. The top five topics were:

1. Policy/programme evaluation
2. Analysis of new data types
3. Consultancy skills for social researchers
4. Research ethics
5. Integrating a variety of qualitative approaches

We will explore the findings fully as this is such a useful way to understand what members would like from the SRA.



## SRA Scotland update

Report by  
*Sophie Ellison*



SRA Scotland began 2015 by welcoming a new member to the organising committee, Lucy Setterfield from Ipsos MORI, and by holding our annual Careers in Social Research event – this year held in partnership with Edinburgh University Careers Service and attended by around 100 students with an interest in joining the profession. We also held our first planning meeting for the year in early February – keep an eye on our webpage (<http://the-sra.org.uk/home/sra-scotland/>) for details of our 2015 seminars and extended training programme. Keep in touch with the branch on LinkedIn and Twitter (@SRA\_Scotland).

Find out more at the SRA website  
[the-sra.org.uk/home/sra-scotland](http://the-sra.org.uk/home/sra-scotland)



## SRA Cymru update

Report by *Faye Gracey*



For our first event of the year, we met at the Thistle Hotel for an informal breakfast meeting. It was great to see a mix of representatives from the public (ONS, Welsh Government), private (Beaufort and Miller Research), third (WRAP) and academic sector (Cardiff University) and a couple of new faces. Several researchers mentioned to me afterwards that they enjoyed and valued the meeting – particularly for providing a ‘professional sounding board’ and ‘good coffee’!

We have lots planned for 2015 – look out for our SRA/Welsh Government Millennium Cohort Study afternoon seminar, more evening seminars and breakfast socials, and our annual event celebrating careers in social research.

Keep an eye on our Twitter feed (@sracymru), web page and LinkedIn Group (Social Research Association (SRA) Cymru) for details. Or email for more information: [sracymru@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:sracymru@the-sra.org.uk)

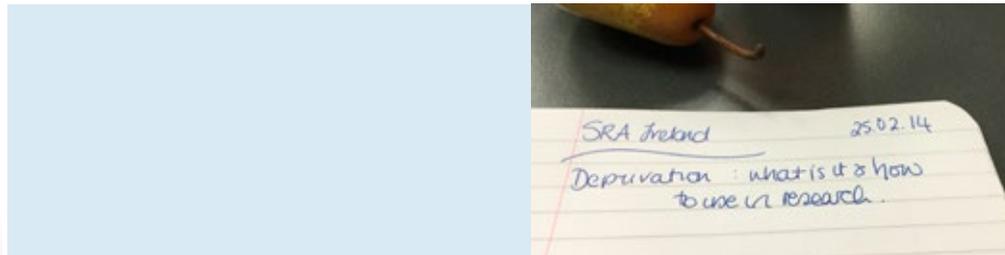
## SRA Ireland update

Report by  
*Noelle Cotter*



We hosted a free seminar in February about deprivation indexes, chaired by committee member Kieran O’Leary. We were delighted that Professor Alan Kelly and Dr Conor Teljeur agreed to give this seminar – both are experts in this area, with Dr Teljeur completing his PhD on this topic. The event was well attended in the city centre venue of Trinity College Dublin with an opportunity for members and other attendees to chat over tea and coffee afterwards. The seminar covered the concept of deprivation – what it is, where it comes from and how it is measured. It also discussed how deprivation indexes can be used in research and the limitations of deprivation measures.

Contact: [sra.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:sra.ireland@gmail.com). We are also on Twitter: follow us for information about new research, funding opportunities, international vacancies and events across the UK and Ireland: @SRAIreland



## Expert in online qualitative research to provide training and seminars for the SRA in May

*We are very pleased that Janet Salmons, the US-based expert in online qualitative research, is visiting the UK in May and running two training courses and two seminars for the SRA.*

The one-day training course is ‘Digital methods for qualitative research’ and, at the time of writing, there are still some places in Edinburgh (6 May) and London (11 May).

The seminar ‘Getting to yes in the digital age: informing participants and verifying consent’, will consider the ethical challenges of obtaining informed consent in digital research. It will cover multiple ways to use blogs, wikis or media to inform participants, and digital methods to verify agreement online. The seminar is in Edinburgh on 7 May, and in London on 12 May (with Matt Williams of COSMOS). More information: [www.the-sra.org.uk](http://www.the-sra.org.uk)



## Tailored social research training for your staff

*The SRA's expert trainers will provide a valuable learning experience for up to 15 of your staff, with course content which can be tailored to suit.*

The training takes place at your premises, making it a cost-effective option.

Here are some recent courses we've run in-house with organisations around the UK:

- ▶ Questionnaire design
- ▶ Qualitative interviewing
- ▶ How to maximise research impact
- ▶ Project management for researchers
- ▶ Focus groups

**For an informal chat please contact the SRA office: [admin@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:admin@the-sra.org.uk) or 0207 998 0304**

# SRA training *25% discount for SRA members*

## QUALITATIVE COURSES

6 May	Designing a qualitative study	Edinburgh
7 May	In-depth Interviewing	Edinburgh
8 May	Conducting focus groups	Edinburgh
11 May	Analysis of qualitative data	Edinburgh
12 May	Interpreting and writing up your qualitative findings	Edinburgh
12 May	Digital methods for qualitative research	London
22 May	Virtual interviewing using digital media	London
5 June	Grounded theory: a practical guide to qualitative analysis	London
19 June	Introduction to CAQDAS training: MAXQDA for applied research	London

## QUANTITATIVE COURSES

6 May	Questionnaire design and testing	London
7 May	How to implement your survey effectively	London
19 May	Understanding statistical concepts and basis tests	London
20 May	Sampling and introduction to weighting	London

## OTHER SKILLS FOR SOCIAL RESEARCHERS

23 April	A masterclass in research ethics	London
30 April	Introduction to systematic reviews	London
22 May	Writing effective research reports	Edinburgh
8 July	Advanced evaluation: new thinking and choices in impact evaluation	London
24 June	Enterprise essentials for business start-up and self-employment	London
14 July	Introduction to participative action research methods	London

The course fee per day is £260. 25% discount for SRA members (£195 per day).

Full details and booking: [www.the-sra.org.uk/training](http://www.the-sra.org.uk/training)

Information or queries: [Lindsay.Adams@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:Lindsay.Adams@the-sra.org.uk) or [admin@the-sra.org.uk](mailto:admin@the-sra.org.uk)

## SRA RESEARCH MATTERS

### EDITORIAL POLICY

SRA Research Matters will include any copy that may be of interest to its readers in the social research community. We will notify you if we are unable to include an item. Copy submitted for publication is accepted on the basis that it may be edited to ensure coherence within the publication. The views expressed by individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the SRA.

### PUBLICATION DATES

Next copy dates: **4 May** (June issue); **27 July** (September issue) and **16 October** (December issue)

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