

Supplemental Chapter 4 Vignette

Literature Review with Mendeley and Survey Tools

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Conducting a collaborative literature review with a research team with members communicating from both U.S. coasts (Washington State to Connecticut), can be a daunting organizational task. When we began a review of the literacy-related educational research we needed tools that would allow us to store and share large numbers of PDFs, as well as the summaries, codes and impressions of each article as the review progressed.

We used Mendeley, a free web-based program, to organize and share PDF files within the research team. The online format of Mendeley allowed researchers to access PDFs related to the study from any computing device. Additionally, we were able to export citations and bibliographies in Microsoft Word as a means to keep track of the articles being used in the literature review.

In Mendeley, we created a folder, added PDFs of all files identified for review, and invited members of the research team to read and leave sharable notes and highlights within each PDF. This constituted our collaborative preliminary review, during which we developed a list of characteristics and codes to use during closer readings of the articles.

In that we oriented to the literature review as a type of survey, we created an online survey to collect and store identifying information (e.g. title, author, date, key words), summaries and impressions of each article. We used Survey Monkey, a free online survey tool, to create a survey, collect “responses” from each researcher about each article they read, and create a searchable database of review information. See Figure 1.

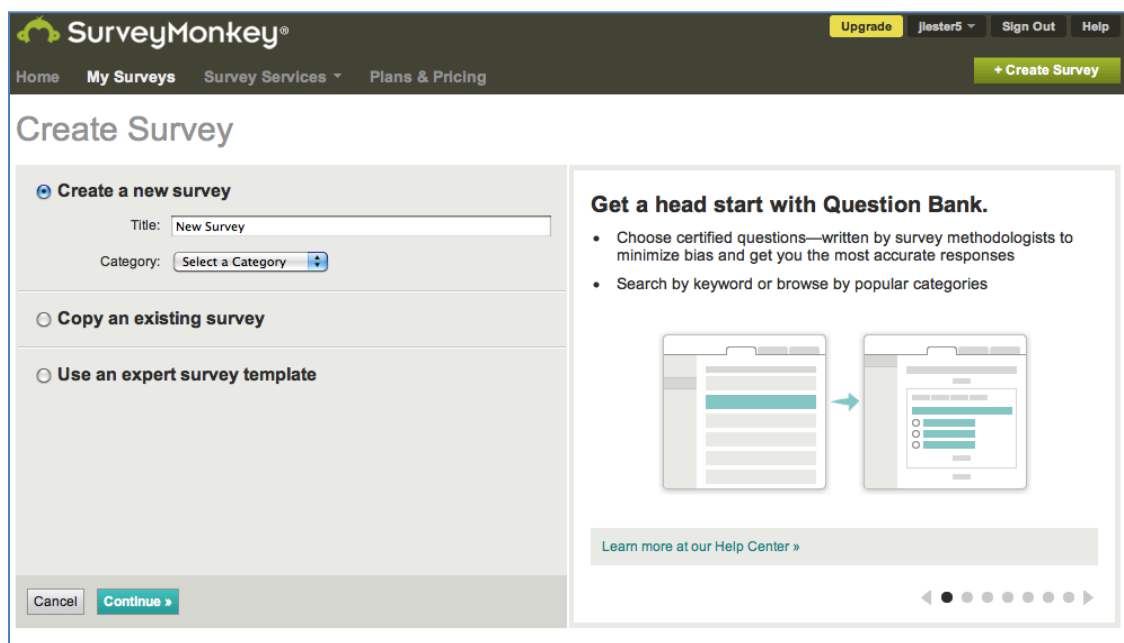


Figure 1. Creating a new survey in SurveyMonkey

We were then able to use Survey Monkey’s embedded analytical tools (e.g. graph, count and table functions) to visualize trends in the characteristics of articles we were most interested in. See Figure 2.

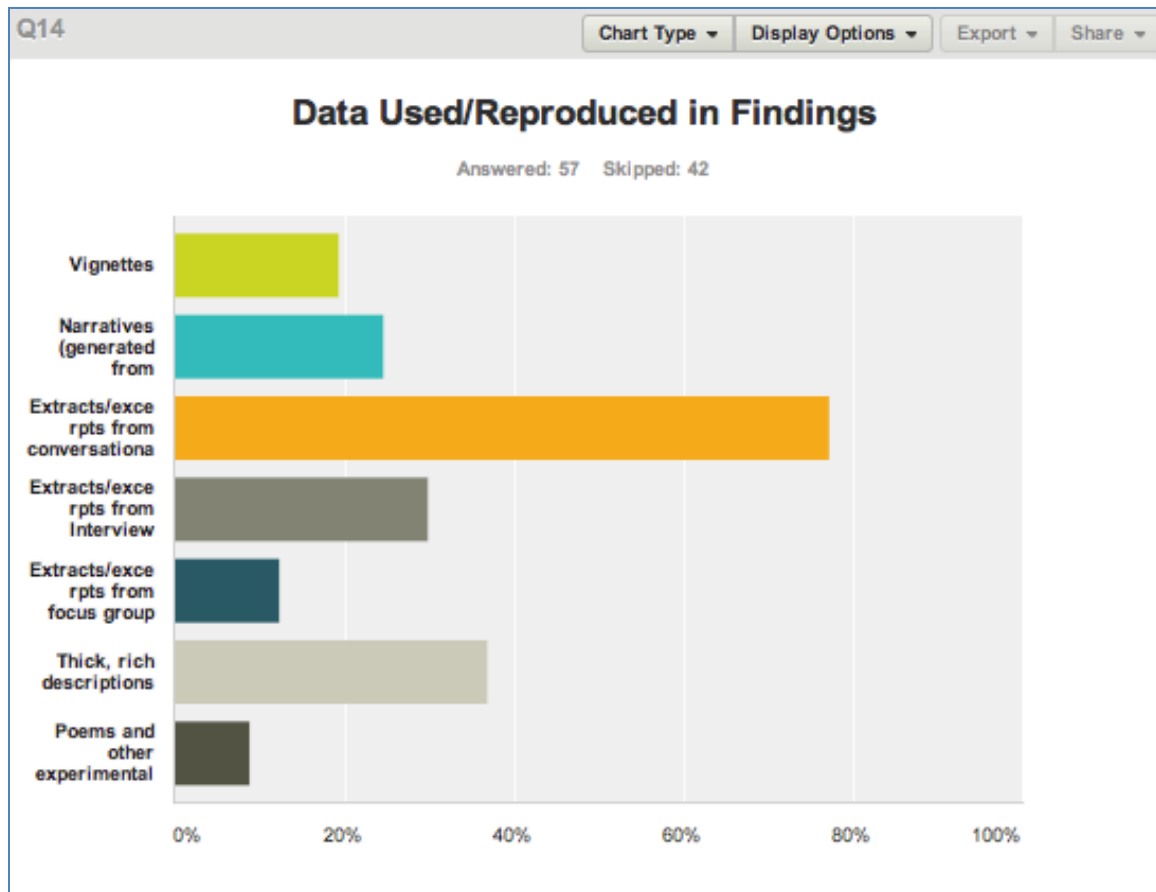


Figure 2: Visualization data in SurveyMonkey

One drawback to the free version of Survey Monkey is that it limits the amount of responses to 100 and places restrictions on the analytical tools available. However, the “basic features plus” option is comparably cost efficient and can be used for more than one project enabling unlimited responses, use of analytical tools, and the capability of using a survey link.

Collaborating across the country created the necessity for a program that provided access to add and view entries from any location. A key feature of Survey Monkey is that it permits users to create a survey link that can be used multiple times to access and input data from any place with an internet connection. See Figure 3.

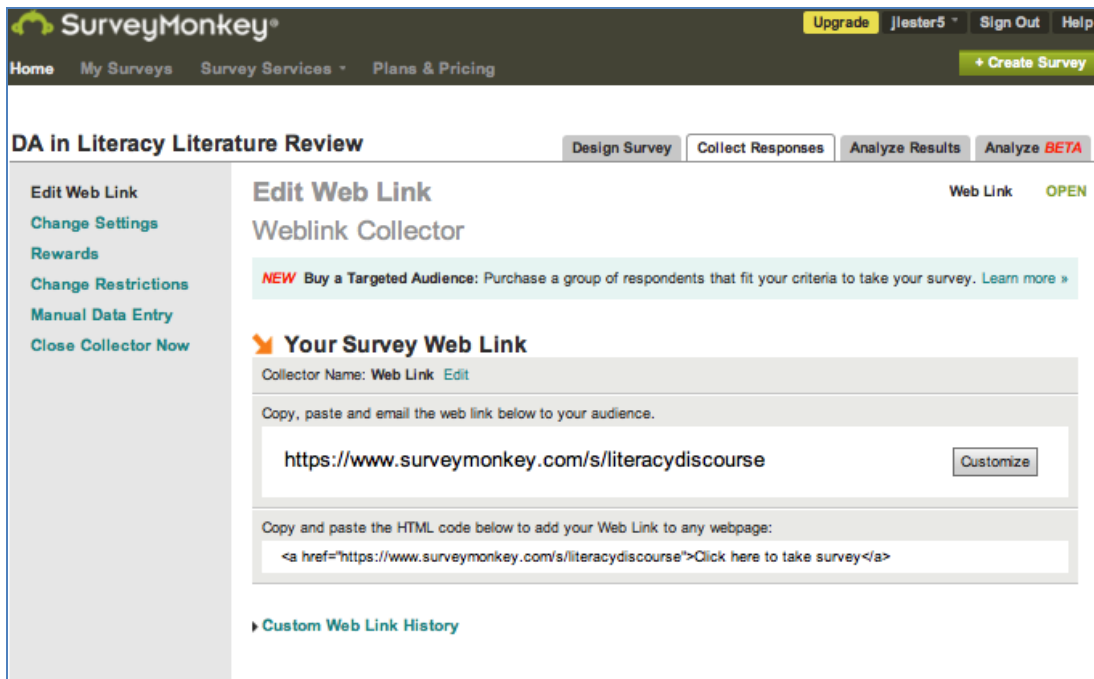


Figure 3: Web Survey link

Since the searchable database of notes and codes for each article was stored online, we were able to engage in the analysis process without mailing or emailing large files back and forth.

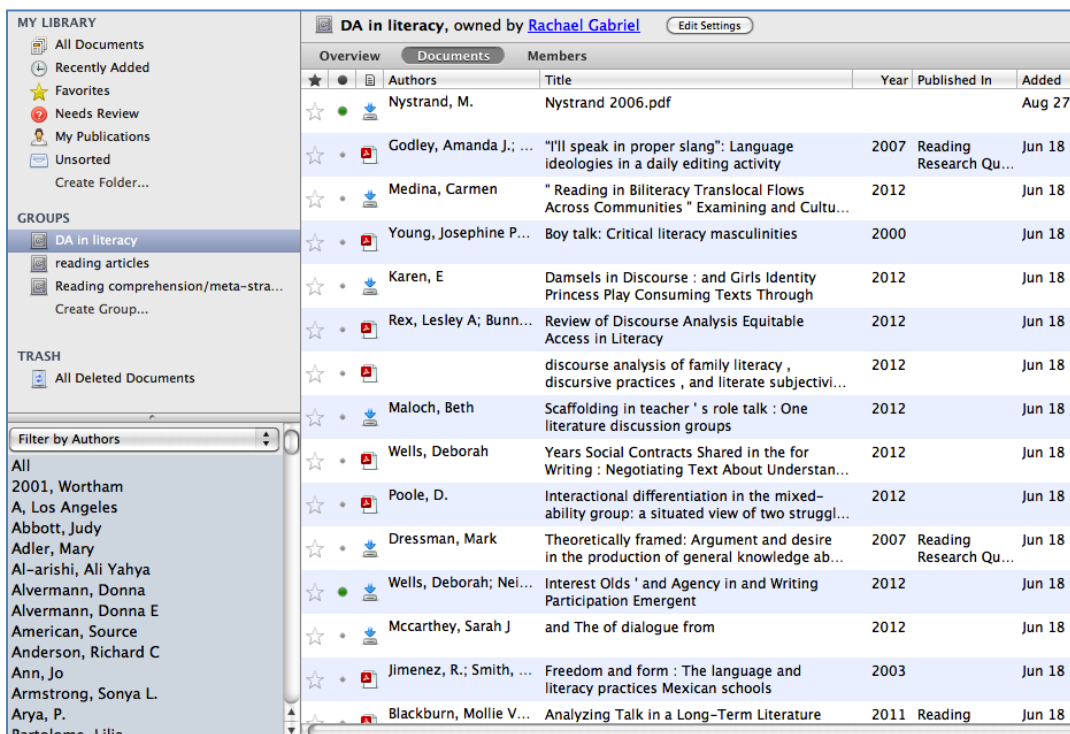


Figure 4: Library database in Mendeley

Using Mendeley and Survey Monkey, we were able to organize over 100 articles into a working literature review. These programs allowed us to share and view “real time” updates within the survey database and to access the entire file of PDFs (rather than only our own assigned readings and entries) anytime, anywhere.