Digital Data Research during Lockdown

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, many students hoping to collect primary data may be rethinking their research design. If you are a student with a research project for a dissertation module, you may be considering digital methods for data collection. There are several platforms that can provide you with a variety of methods to conduct online research. As researchers across the world turn to the internet to adapt their research projects for digital data, numerous resources are emerging to guide and inform on the practicalities of using online technology and the challenges you may encounter. Below is a set of guidelines to help navigate the choices of online methods and available platforms. A list of websites, blogs and useful references are included to provide further information. The content in these guidelines are not exhaustive and it is advisable to do your own research before deciding on your choice of method.

Choosing a Method

Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
• **Data Mining** 　　1. **Twitter** 　　2. **Facebook** • **Surveys & Questionnaires** 　　1. **Email** 　　2. **Web-based** • **Secondary Data Sources** 　　1. **Survey data** 　　2. **Government websites** 　　3. **Journals, newspapers etc**	• **Online interviews** 　　1. **Synchronous** 　　2. **Non-synchronous** • **Online Focus Groups** • **Message Boards** • **Observational Studies** • **Virtual Ethnography** • **Netnography** • **Social Network Analysis** • **Visual Methods**

Online methods can offer an inexpensive and convenient way to conduct research. Participants may have free time and flexibility due to the lockdown, and the opportunity to take part in research from the comfort of their own home may help you with recruitment. Using the internet to collect digital data can be useful for both quantitative and qualitative studies and there is potential to access a diverse and wide-ranging pool of data and research participants. **It is important to check with your lecturer or the ethics committee from your school if you will need authorisation for certain types of data collection.**

Benefits:	Challenges:
Flexible and convenient	Connection issues
Inexpensive	Technical skills may be necessary
Diversity of participants and data	Access to internet and devices
No need for transcripts	Lack of personal rapport
Choice of platforms	

There are several choices of internet applications that can facilitate data collection. Each will have its own terms and conditions for conducting research. It is important to consult these to ensure any research you embark on is legal and ethical. Setting up specific research accounts to collect data may be helpful. You will need to consider issues of informed consent, sensitive content, privacy, confidentiality, data storage, GDPR, and anonymization of data.

Twitter - Facebook – Instagram – Snapchat – Tumblr – Pinterest – Amazon – YouTube - Discussion forums – Message boards – Reviews – Blogs – Websites – News sites – Dating sites - Google trends – LinkedIn – Tik Tok – WeChat – Qzone – Myspace – Flickr – Viber – Meetup – Badoo – Tagged - Bebo

Online Interviews and Focus Groups

Skype	Teams	Zoom
Record audio & video	**Record audio & video**	**Record audio & video**
Everyone is in shot	**Everyone is in shot**	**(Laptop/PC needed for host recording)**
Desktop/mobile/tablet	**Desktop/mobile/tablet**	**Everyone is in shot (gallery)**
Cloud storage for 30 days	**Cloud storage**	**Desktop/mobile/tablet**
Free	**Free to QUB students**	**Cloud storage and MP4**
Easy to use	**Easy to use**	**Free**
		Easy to use

It is possible that you will experience technical difficulties and you should have a contingency plan in place for disconnections. Check with participants if they have the skills and equipment for your choice of platform and what time of the day/evening will suit them best. Participants may prefer to use audio instead of video. Other helpful measures of preparation to consider include; sending a how-to guide to participants and trialling a test run so everyone is comfortable with the software.

Other platforms

- Google hangouts
- Facetime
- TapeAcall
- Call recorder
- Google voice
- Adobe audition

Top tips

- Make a back-up recording
- Read out your consent and info forms
- Initiate the call to participants
- Allow extra time to answer questions
- Consider all locations to minimise distractions
- Have a contingency plan for tech failure

Online Resources

Blogs

https://www.boingboing.org.uk/my-moves-to-becoming-a-digital-odds-changer/

https://dipexcharity.org/2020/03/25/how-to-do-a-focus-group-remotely-online-chat/

https://anujacabraal.com/2013/07/03/keep-a-research-journal-it-is-important/

Web Resources

Deborah Lupton offers a comprehensive overview of resources for most types of digital research. It is available in a google doc called 'Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic', available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1clGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B6P0NvMgVuiHZCl8/preview>

Paul Pacheco – Vega writes about 'Fieldwork in the Times of COVID-19: Doing Ethnography During a Pandemic', available at his website: http://www.raulpacheco.org/2020/03/fieldworkin-the-times-of-covid-19-doing-ethnography-during-a-pandemic/

LSE have comprised a list of resources for 'Digital Ethnography' available at: https://zoeglatt.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LSE-Digital-Ethnography-CollectiveReading-List-March-2020.pdf

SAGE Ocean provide several resources on navigating social media research, available at: https://ocean.sagepub.com/blog/social-media-data-in-research-a-review-of-the-currentlandscape?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=SAGE_social&utm_content=sageoceantweet s&utm_term=409ff8d9-7521-4c25-9842-156eb17e4b3f

Cambridge University Press has made 1700 e-books available to all students. Access is through your School's librarian. More information and the list of titles is available here: https://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/covid-19-resources-and-information

Kortext is providing a free textbook programme for UK students to access their e-books, available at: https://www.kortext.com/

Free classical e-books are available for students through Loeb at: https://www.loebclassics.com/

MIT Press has a free online trial until May 2020. Access at: https://direct.mit.edu/books

Metropolitan Opera is providing free streaming every day with a schedule of Live in HD available at: https://www.metopera.org/about/press-releases/met-launches-nightly-metopera-streams-a-free-series-of-encore-live-in-hd-presentations-streamed-on-the-companywebsite-during-the-coronavirus-closure/

OVID Health Library has a free online trial until May 2020. Access at: https://lwwhealthlibrary.com/umbrella-index.aspx

SAGE Publishing are offering a number of resources to students at:
https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/resources-to-help-you-teach-online-uk?priorityCode=0B1090A&utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_content=0B1090A&utm_campaign=not+tracked&utm_term=&em=68bf04696a13ca5aed00a98a6416298ebd4fd91849a3dd513d9d7d957e8ca623

New York Public Library have 300'000 e-books available at:
https://www.timeout.com/newyork/news/you-can-now-download-over-300-000-books-from-the-nypl-for-free-031820

Harvard University Press e-books are available until June 30th through:

@ProQuest @EBSCO @JSTOR

Additional resources for free e-books:

https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4604-free-quarantine-ebooks

https://www.haymarketbooks.org/blogs/112-ten-free-ebooks-from-haymarket-books?mc_cid=5e56869069&mc_eid=b83c6f926f

https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/03/19/jhu-press-free-access-project-muse/

https://worldbook.kitaboo.com/reader/worldbook/index.html#!/

https://about.jstor.org/oa-and-free/