

# Making Surveys Paperless

Creating surveys and analyzing the outcome is often considered as an unavoidable research practice which should be adopted in any research related to communication. Meeting the audience in person and getting their response entered in a printed survey form is no longer a practical approach for conducting surveys. Often, the scope of these surveys are limited by time and location constraints. Since it involves the use of paper, it is not a very eco-friendly practice as well. Evaluation of the survey results is also a tedious process as it involves data-entry and/or making manual inferences. Online surveys are often considered as a solution for overcoming these hurdles. The tools used for creating and managing online surveys are generally referred to as Computer Assisted Survey Information Collection (CASIC) tools. Creating a fool-proof survey tool from scratch may not be financially feasible for every researcher. The form feature of Google Drive becomes a handy tool for researchers in these circumstances.

## Google Docs / Drive

Google Docs was initially a web-based office suite from Google. It allowed the users to create and edit documents online and also allowed real-time collaboration with other users. Now Google Docs is a part of Google Drive, a file storage and synchronization service offered by Google. In other words, Google Drive is where all the documents are stored. To start using Google Drive, visit [<https://drive.google.com/>]. Start by logging in using your Google Account credentials and we are all set to create our online survey form.

## Creating a Form

Once we are logged into the Google Drive using the Google Account, we will reach the My Drive page where all our documents and folders will be listed. If the account is using Google Drive for

## Drive

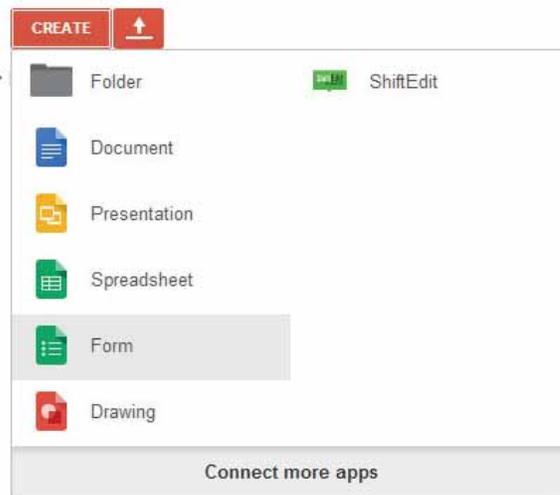


Fig. 2: Create > Form

the first time, then there will be no files / folders listed. Let's start creating a sample survey form by hitting the **CREATE** button and then choosing **Form** from the drop-down menu (Fig. 2). Another window / tab will be opened in the browser showing the form edit options.

We will be prompted to choose a title and theme for the newly added form. On confirmation, we will reach the form edit page (Fig. 3) where we can start creating the form.

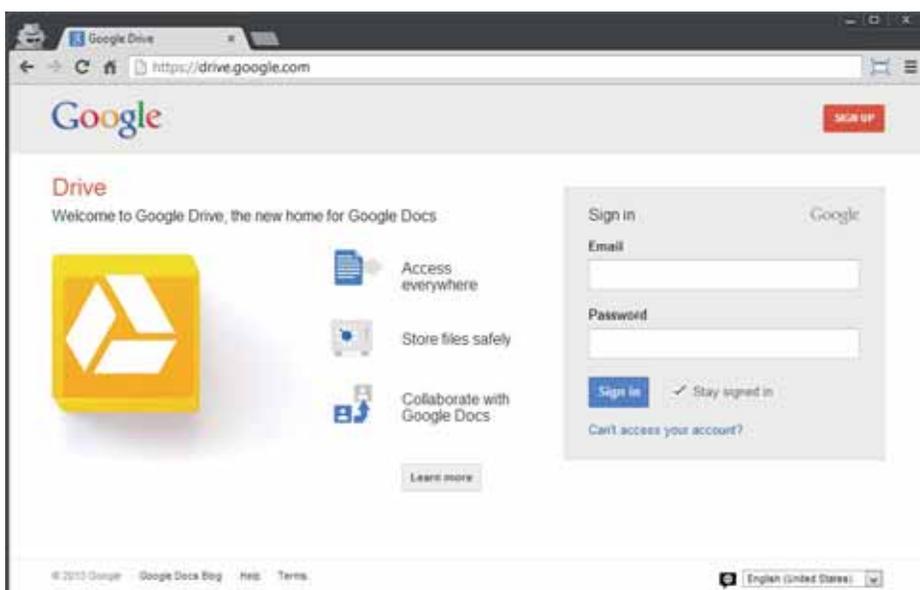


Fig. 1: Google Drive homepage. URL: <https://drive.google.com/>

## Question Types

The form feature in Google Drive support various query types (Fig. 4) which are required to create useful surveys. As of now it supports basic query types such as Text, Paragraph text, Multiple choice (*Radio button*), Checkboxes and Choose from a list. Scale, Grid, Date and Time comes under the advanced category. For layouting purposes items such as Section header, Page break and Image can be used. For all fields there is an option available to make it a compulsory field or to make it an optional query. Use the **[Add Item]** button menu or the Insert menu to get the list of question types and add the necessary item. It is also possible to change the question type after adding them using the Edit option.

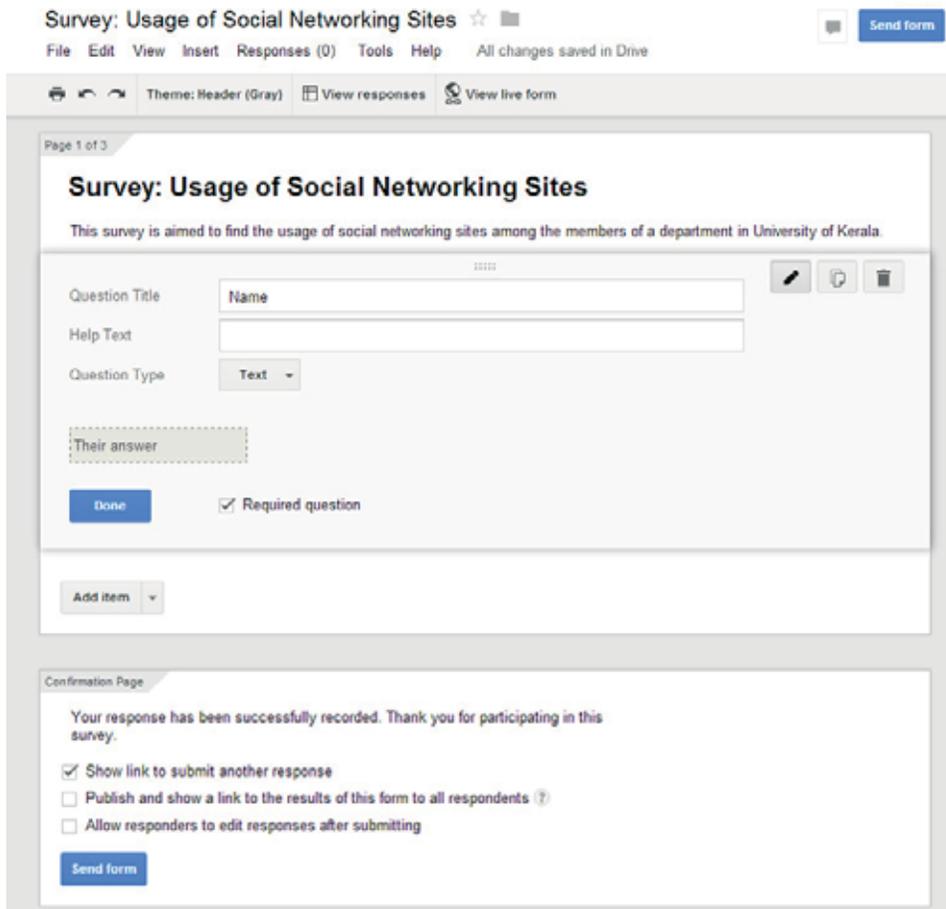


Fig. 3: Edit form page.

### Paginate and Navigate

The queries can be grouped into different sections or distribute across pages using the Section header and Page break elements. Limited options are available to control the navigation based on the choice entered in a multiple choice query box. Here in this example (Fig. 5); if the user selects Yes for the query 'Do you use social networking sites regularly?', s/he will be taken to the next page and if the answer is No, s/he will be taken to the last page (i.e. page 3).

### General Features

The form application also allow users to customize the form to some extent by choosing different themes available. By clicking the **[Send form]** button (*top-right corner*), a window showing options for sharing the form can be made available. The link can be shared in social media services such as Google+, Facebook or Twitter directly from here. The form can be embedded in other webpages and publish in a different domain. This option becomes very useful when we want into incorporate a survey in our own website. Go to **File > Embed...** to get the necessary HTML to embed the form in another web page. 'Confirmation Page' section provide necessary options to a custom confirmation message

which will be displayed when a user submit the form and complete the process successfully. We may also opt to publish the response summary along with the confirmation message, allowing users to view the summary of responses made till that point of time. Users may be also allowed to edit the already entered responses.

Before we start to use the form for receiving responses we need to choose a destination for storing the responses. It can be the form document itself but for more detailed analysis we need to move it to a spreadsheet. Use the **'Choose response destination'** option from the top-bar to get the options window (Fig. 7). A summary of the responses can be viewed by selecting **Responses > Summary of responses** and by clicking **'View responses'**, the linked spreadsheet can be opened.

### Analyzing the Responses

The linked spreadsheet can be viewed in Normal mode or as a List. The difference between these two modes is clear from Fig. 8. The required mode can be selected from the **View** menu of the spreadsheet.

In the List mode, it is also possible to view the entered data based on specific values or

filter responses based on the values entered. For example, it is possible to list the females who uses Facebook alone by selecting appropriate row values (Fig. 9).

### Viewing Summary of Responses

Often making a summary of responses received in the survey is a time consuming process. The form facility in Google Drive allows the user to generate the summary, that too in easily recognizable

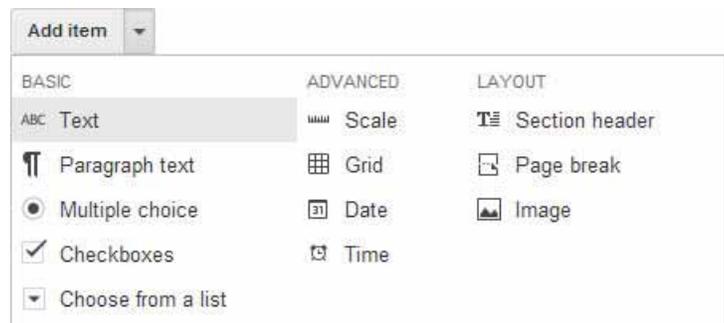


Fig. 4: Question types supported in a form.



Fig. 5: Option to navigate to a page based on answer.

graphical formats, with the click of a button. It is also possible to remove unwanted or spam entries by deleting corresponding rows. Once the cleaning up is complete, select **Form > Show summary of responses**. Summary of two queries in the given sample survey is given in Fig. 10. Just by looking at the graphs, one can conclude that the majority of participants use Facebook and most of them

use the social networking sites for reading content.

Once the survey is over, we may disable the form by opening it and unchecking the **Responses > Accepting responses** option. You may delete the form like any other document stored in Drive or clear all responses by clicking **Responses > Delete all responses**.

We may conclude that the form app in Google Drive provides most of the features required for creating a simple, straightforward and effective online survey. At the same time, it lacks some of the useful features like user authentication options, advanced customization and use of higher level conditional statements. One may consider other options available as well as Google Drive is not the only option currently available. The users need to pay an amount for using some of these survey tools and in case of some other tools the service can be used with out charge only up to a limited number of responses. The advantage of using the Google service is that it can be used for free without any limitations. A comprehensive list of all CASIC software is available here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_survey\\_software](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_survey_software) ■

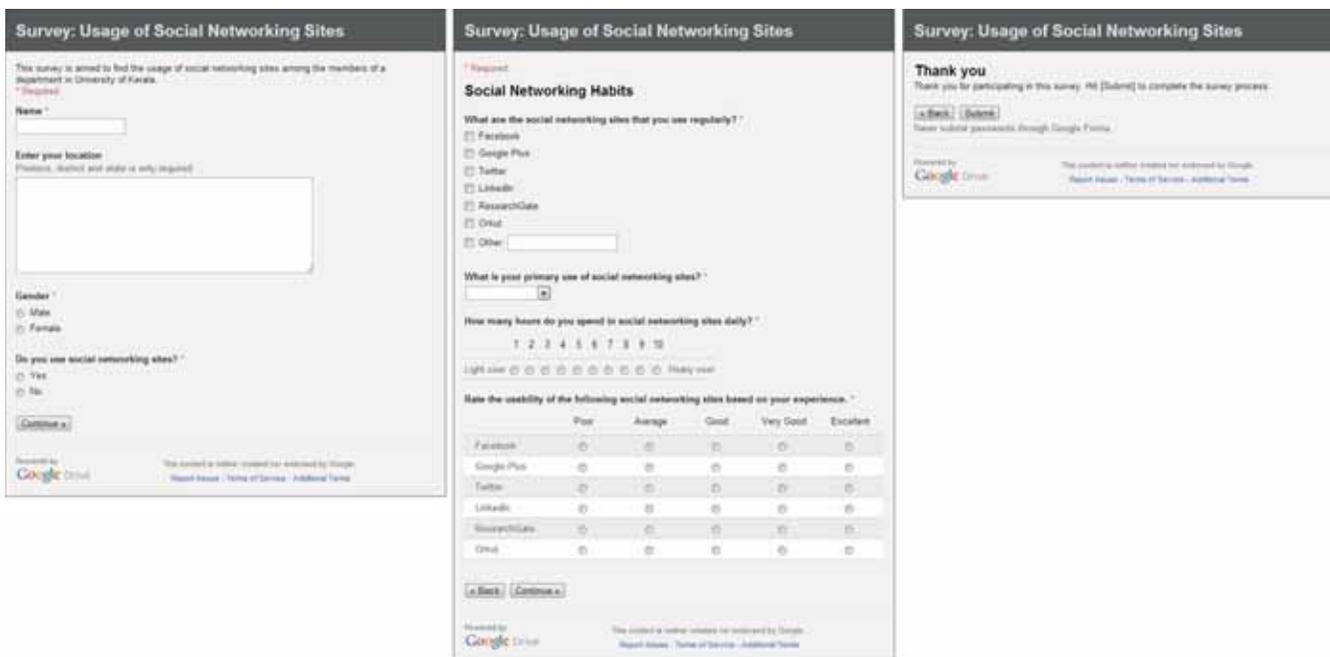


Fig. 6: The three pages of the sample survey.

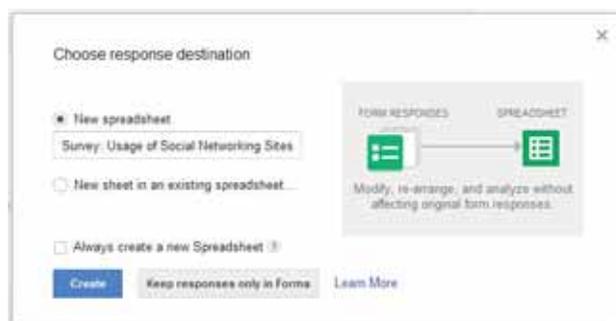


Fig. 7: Options available in the 'Choose response destination' screen.

Survey: Usage of Social Networking Sites (Responses) ☆

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Form Help Last edit was 33 minutes ago

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Timestamp	Name	Enter your location	Gender	Do you use
2	3/25/2013 11:33:05	Karthika	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	No
3	3/25/2013 11:34:49	Navya	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	Yes
4	3/25/2013 11:37:35	Remya	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	Yes
5	3/25/2013 12:01:32	Silpa Bhaskaran		Female	No
6	3/25/2013 12:13:18	Nishitha	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	Yes
7	3/25/2013 12:15:14	Arya K.R.	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	Yes
8	3/25/2013 12:31:45	Lincy	Dubai	Female	No
9	3/25/2013 14:04:38	Akhil Janardhanan	Ernakulam, Keralam	Male	Yes

Survey: Usage of Social Networking Sites (Responses) : Form Responses

[Go to spreadsheet view](#) - [Hide colors](#)

Row ▲	Timestamp	Name	Enter your location	Gender
<a href="#">+ Add</a>	(All)	(All)	(All)	(All)
1	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 11:33:05	Karthika	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
2	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 11:34:49	Navya	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
3	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 11:37:35	Remya	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
4	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 12:01:32	Silpa Bhaskaran		Female
5	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 12:13:18	Nishitha	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
6	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 12:15:14	Arya K.R.	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
7	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 12:31:45	Lincy	Dubai	Female
8	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 14:04:38	Akhil Janardhanan	Ernakulam, Keralam	Male
9	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 14:15:24	Umesh	University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram	Male
10	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 14:19:20	Sunitha P.	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
11	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 16:47:39	Shidhi	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
12	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 16:57:17	Binithamol K.	Angamaly, Ernakulam	Female
13	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 19:27:23	Greeshma G.	Attingal, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female
14	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 22:59:30	Sugeeth S.	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Male

Fig. 8: The summary of responses saved in a spreadsheet can be viewed in Normal or in List view.

Survey: Usage of Social Networking Sites (Responses) : Form Responses

[Go to spreadsheet view](#) - [Hide colors](#) 1-3

Row ▲	Timestamp	Name	Enter your location	Gender	Do you use social networking sites regularly?	What are the social networking sites that you use regularly?	What is your primary use of social networking sites?
<a href="#">+ Add</a>	(All)	(All)	(All)	Female	(All)	Facebook	(All)
1	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/25/2013 11:34:49	Navya	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	Yes	Facebook	Photo sharing
2	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/26/2013 10:01:54	Priya Das	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Female	Yes	Facebook	Reading
3	<a href="#">Edit</a> 3/26/2013 16:10:38	Mala S.	Kottiyam, Kollam, Kerala	Female	Yes	Facebook	Messaging

Fig. 9: The table is generated based on the highlighted column values. It is easy to conclude that there are only 3 females who use Facebook alone.

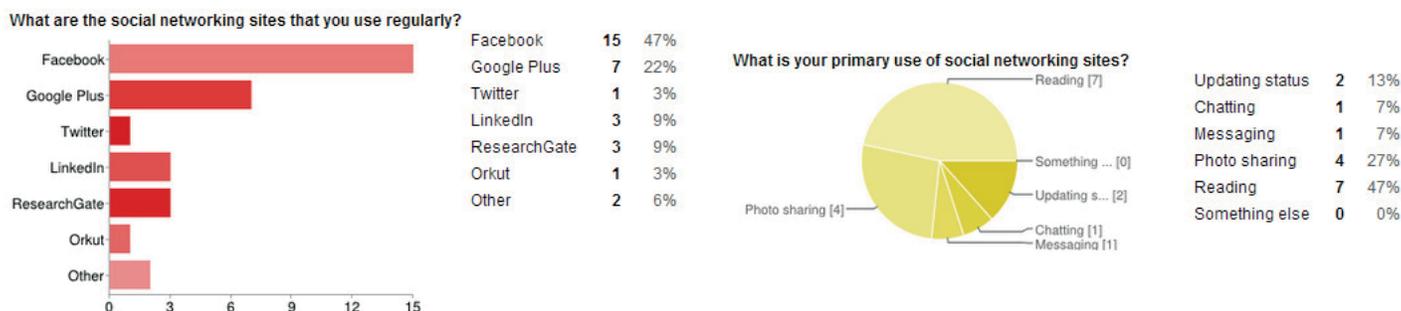


Fig. 10: The graphical summary gives a very clear idea of the outcome.