

Introduction to the book

Welcome to this 4th edition of *Doing Research in the Real World* which I very much hope you will enjoy and use productively. As in the previous editions, the emphasis in this 4th edition is on how you as a researcher are going to plan and implement your own research projects in real field settings, whether this be in the health or educational sectors, in businesses, or in communities including virtual or online communities. Some research, of course, is purely conceptual, striving to develop and push the boundaries of academic theory. This is important and will certainly be addressed in the book. However, you may be like me and really get a buzz out of launching a survey, conducting interviews or focus groups or liaising with stakeholders who are interested in commissioning a research study.

Whatever your research focus, this book will help because it addresses a broad and comprehensive range of research methodologies. Part A: Principles and Planning for Research looks at theoretical perspectives and research methodologies, shows you how to select and plan research proposals and search for and critically review the literature. An important chapter in this section is on research ethics, since most institutions these days have active and diligent institutional review boards (ethics committees) that will need to review any study that involves data collection with human subjects.

Part B: Research Methodology, looks at quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research designs and different approaches to collecting data including surveys, case studies, evaluations and action research. An important chapter here is on sampling design since this is often a subject that is dealt with too briefly or skipped over in many of the research proposals that I read.

Part C: Collection Methods shows you how to design questionnaires, and how to conduct interviews and observations. There is a chapter in this section on the design and conduct of focus groups which are increasingly used by researchers. Two new chapters for this 4th edition are *Digital Research Methods* which explores how to use the Internet to disseminate data gathering instruments such as questionnaires and *Visual Research Methods* which shows, for example, how to conduct research through taking and analysing photographs.

Part D: Analysis and Report Writing looks at both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis and includes the use of analytical programs such as SPSS for quantitative methods and (a new chapter for this 4th edition), NVivo for qualitative research. The book concludes by providing guidance on how to write up the research and how to prepare for presentations and vivas.

Hopefully, as you can see, this is a fully comprehensive text that also offers plentiful case studies and examples of research in the real world.