Why Polling?
Polling is an active learning technique that can be used in library instruction in public, school, academic, and special libraries. It involves the use of technology that allows a presenter to create poll questions that can be broadcast to participants. Responses are submitted—via the web, text message, Twitter, a clicker device, or some other mechanism—and then results are broadcast. Research indicates that polling is a beneficial active learning technique for a number of reasons, including:

- Anonymous responses = increased willingness to participate
- It’s engaging and enjoyable
- Presenters can modify presentation content based on responses
- It facilitates discussion

Polling data can be the basis for identification of trends and patterns, and for assessment.

Ways to Incorporate Polling
There are many ways to use polling in any kind of library presentation setting, and it can be used with a range of age groups. Here are a few ideas:

- Send a poll before the presentation to find out what participants want to learn
- Poll participants a few weeks after the presentation to see what they’ve retained
- Use in a class as a tool for paired discussion
- Poll students at the start of class to determine knowledge or skill level, and use results to adjust instruction to best fit their needs
- Use “fun” questions at the beginning of a presentation to get participants’ attention, break the ice, and teach them to use the technology
- Use polls during a presentation to check comprehension
- Use responses to look for common misunderstandings and modify future instruction to address the issues

Best Practices
As with the use of any new technology, there are some best practices that will help you ensure success in using polling. Training is key; regardless of the technology you plan to use, have a thorough understanding of how to use it before you go live.

- Simplify response options. If you only have an hour with your participants, you don’t have time to teach them 3 different ways to respond to your poll questions.
- Use a tool that’s large enough to accommodate all of the participants in your audience.
- Develop question banks to enhance your flexibility. Use a variety of question types (such as multiple choice and open response) and use them for a variety of reasons, but don’t overuse them. Polling should lead to discussion, which takes time. Limit the number of polls in a session.
- Use questions that are relevant to your objectives, and explain why and how you are using the technology. Avoid using polling just to keep participants awake!
Our Sources


About Us

Amy Snyder
Adjunct Reference & Instruction Librarian

Surveying students at the beginning of class helps me customize library sessions based on student responses. I like polling because even shy students can share their opinions and influence the direction of class. I am excited to experiment with Padlet in class for things such as brainstorming search terms as a group.

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Jill Hallam-Miller
Reference & Instruction Librarian

I get a kick out of trying new technology in the classroom, and I’ve used Poll Everywhere to engage students and faculty during presentations. Students particularly enjoy being encouraged to use their phones to respond. Poll Daddy offers some really cool asynchronous features that I’ll be using in the future.

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For more complete information and to join the conversation, meet us at

http://librarypolling.wordpress.com/