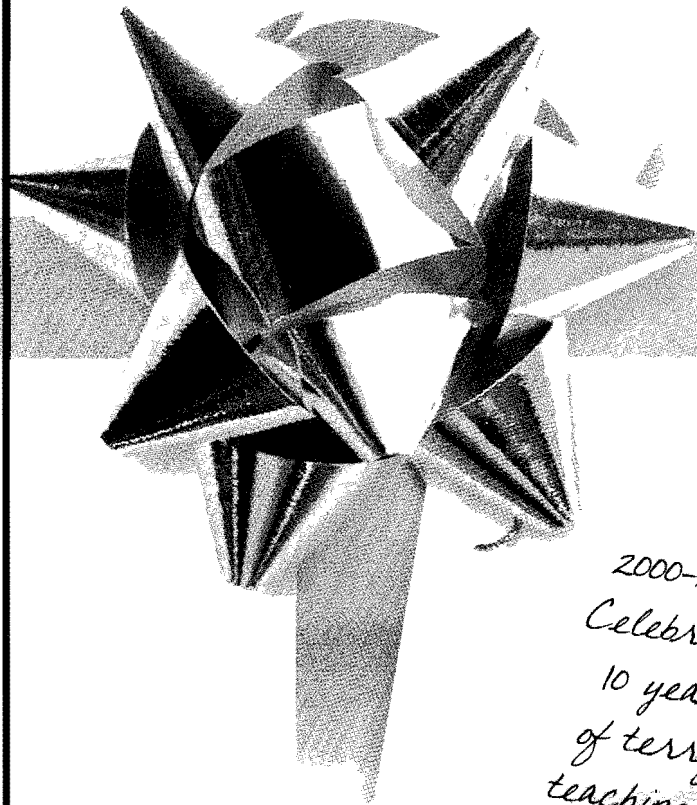


# *The* **Journalist** *Community College*

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*2000-2009:  
Celebrating  
10 years  
of terrific  
teaching tips*

# **GIFT 2009**

25 Great Ideas For Teachers + A SPECIAL REPORT: 10 Years of Great Ideas  
*A Summary of 253 GIFTs and 10 Tips for Creating Your Own Terrific Teaching Tools*

# **(Web)Monkeying Around in the Classroom**

## *How to use new technology in the classroom*

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### **Introduction**

The current generation of college students is comfortable using new technology as part of their daily lives. Students regularly check their Facebook sites, create and watch videos posted on YouTube and blog about their experiences and opinions. However, the technology employed by college students is almost exclusively used for fun and entertainment, not for professional or educational purposes. This GIFT obtains convergence between student interest in new technology and actual lessons in conducting online survey research.

Our activity involves having students learn to use an online survey package: Survey Monkey ([www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com)) or

Zoomerang ([www.zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com)) for data gathering and research purposes. Both sites offer free limited-use survey packages that can be used to teach students how to write effective survey questions, identify samples, calculate and interpret results. The students can create free accounts and develop surveys that work exactly like professional surveys.

Online research tools such as Survey Monkey can teach students a number of important professional lessons about research, language use, writing survey questions, analyzing data, etc.

### **Rationale**

College students know how to download music and movies, program their cellular telephones, send "tweets," "poke"

their friends and post blog entries, and some can even create Web casts and upload their blogs for RSS syndication.

We believe that this interest and aptitude in technology can be channeled to encourage JMC students to explore the research databases and professional tools available to them online. This assignment encourages students to teach themselves how to use an actual, professional, research tool and provides them with training in how research is actually conceptualized, executed and interpreted.

### Implementation

There are several possible approaches depending upon in which class the activity is used. Each bolded area highlights a different classroom approach.

### **Using Survey Software in Research Methods Classes (Mass Communication Research, Advertising Research, Public Relations Research)**

- Online surveys can be used in research methods classes to teach students how to pose research questions, identify samples, target samples, write survey questions, upload questions with appropriate responses, collect data and analyze findings.
- Online survey software packages offer video tutorials teaching how to create online surveys ([www.surveymonkey.com/Home\\_Videos.aspx](http://www.surveymonkey.com/Home_Videos.aspx)). Tutorials average about six minutes and provide an interactive way for students to learn how to set up and develop surveys.
- The tutorial describing Available Question Types & Options provides a nice complement to most survey research methods chapters.

- Survey Monkey allows students to export their data as CSV and can be analyzed in either Excel or SPSS.

- We have students report survey results within the eight rules on “Polls and Surveys” in the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*. Requiring students to address the AP areas before they begin the survey, gives students a clear reporting rationale/framework after they have collected the data.

### **Ideas for Public Relations Writing and Advertising Classes**

- Online surveys can be used as part of assignments in public relations writing or advertising classes. The results of the survey provide content for documents and ads.
- The students are asked to take the findings of their surveys and weave the results into a professional document. For instance, the results can be used in advertising copy (“Four out of five people surveyed prefer”) or in news releases or backgrounders (“88% of our employees volunteer their time in the community...”).
- Students gain valuable experience using data to make arguments. Using data also forces students to judge the validity of their findings and make choices about how survey answers should be reported.

### **Impact**

Because survey software is an online tool, students feel comfortable using it. Students who initially lacked confidence using Excel or SPSS become more comfortable with survey design, data entry,

data analysis and interpretation. Students like using the software and feel empowered when their survey is uploaded and they begin getting responses.

Additionally, the learning is interactive. As students send each other their surveys, they also receive feedback about mistakes in the process, suggestions for question wording, etc. Students also learn about both writing and research. The assignment is multilayered and teaches an assortment of lessons.

As for the morale of the teacher, this assignment is a lot like slipping vitamins into candy. Most students actually spent considerable time learning how to use the program and identifying ways that their student organizations, jobs and internships can use this software to collect public opinion data. Students start to love doing research because they quickly see the value of data. We find this very satisfying.