Mission

The Office of Research Integrity ensures research at Ball State University is in compliance with university policies and with applicable provisions of federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The ORI provides guidance to the BSU Research Community for research issues like:

- Significant Financial Conflict of Interest
- Human Subject Participation
- Use and Care of Animals
- Biosafety
- Radiation Safety
- Lab Safety and Security
- Controlled Substances

The Office of Research Integrity also offers a number of services for students, faculty, and researchers, including:

- Training and education
- Class/group presentations
- One-on-one or small group consultations
- Technical support for researchers
- Online guidance materials
- Online resources

Is My Project Human Subjects Research?

Determining whether or not a project is considered Human Subjects Research under the federal definition can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are plenty of resources available to help researchers make the decision. In addition to the Office of Research Integrity’s resource webpage, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Human Research Protection has made available decision trees to guide researchers through the process of determining whether a given project is considered Human Subjects Research and requires IRB review. Not only will this help you decide whether or not to submit for IRB approval, you can also use these resources to determine if your project will likely be eligible for exempt review or if you qualify for a waiver of informed consent. Be sure to browse this resource before beginning your next research project! You can find the decision charts here.
Internet Research Guidelines

Are you thinking about incorporating social media into your research project? Have you used internet-based survey software, such as Qualtrics or SurveyMonkey, to collect data? Most importantly, have you reviewed the Internet Research Guidelines on the Office of Research Integrity’s website? Now is the time! There are many ethical considerations that must be acknowledged before completing a research project that incorporates the use of the internet. Particularly as new technology continues to develop and make data collection easier and more efficient, it is important for researchers to stay on top of the ethical considerations that are involved in working with human subjects over the internet. You can read over the list of guidelines, put forth by the Association of Internet Research Ethics Working Committee, or contact our office if you have further questions about ethical internet research.

Education Gateway

Are you interested in learning more about the Office of Research Integrity and how we operate? Curious about how to submit an IRB protocol? Looking for resources about research integrity? Check out the Education Gateway tab on the Office of Research Integrity website. We have a variety of presentations, handouts, and other resources for graduate students, including an audio presentation on how to submit a protocol in IRBNet. We also have information about our Peer Mentoring Program. Faculty who are interested in requesting a class presentation by Office of Research Integrity staff can also do so here. And as always, call or email our office for more information! Check out the Education Gateway here.

Using IRBNet—A Quick Guide

IRBNet—the software program used for submitting research protocols—is an excellent tool for efficient submission and review by the IRB. It can also be confusing and overwhelming for first-time (and even seasoned!) researchers. If IRBNet has been giving you trouble, check out our IRBNet User Manual, located on the Office of Research Integrity website. We provide step-by-step instructions, complete with detailed screenshots, for everything IRBNet has to offer, from initial submission to closing your project. In addition, we provide guidance pages to help you understand the basics of IRBNet and what it has to offer.

www.bsu.edu/researchintegrity
Policy Updates

The Institutional Review Board Policy Subcommittee has been hard at work over the last few months, updating policies related to research, faculty advising, social media, and other issues. As these policies go into effect, the Office of Research Integrity will be updating our website to keep researchers informed. As always, if you have questions about changes that have been made in our policies and how it might affect your research, please call our office at 765-285-5052 or email us at orihelp@bsu.edu.

Using Amazon Mechanical Turk in Human Subjects Research

Guest Columnists: Dr. Thomas Holtgraves and Ethan Dahl
Department of Psychological Science

Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk) is a platform that provides a fast and economical means for conducting many types of human subjects research (HSR). It is well-suited for surveys and personality assessment, as well as experimental studies across a range of topics. The purpose of this article is to discuss some of the issues regarding the use of Mturk.

To collect data on Mturk one needs to register as a requestor. Currently there are over 490,000 studies (termed HITS) available from Mturk requestors. Potential research participants will be those who have registered with Mturk as workers and they are paid for their participation. Currently there are an estimated 500,000 workers from over 190 countries. Mturk workers represent a diverse population of people. In fact, some studies have described Mturk workers as being more representative of the US population than participants recruited from university subject pools (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Workers are also international, and can be directly targeted in terms of location as well as required to meet qualifications (e.g. have a minimum number of approved HITS).

Mturk protects its workers and requestors through a system of ID numbers that allow for anonymity. While requestor account names are visible to workers, these do not have to be actual names. Recently there have been concerns raised about the way in which the 14 digit Amazon ID numbers actually represent all associated Amazon accounts for a person (Lease et al., 2013), and this could become an ethical issue if sensitive information is gathered via Mturk.

Conducting a study on Mturk can be done directly on the Mturk website, or by linking with another platform such as Qualtrics. Qualtrics is the preferred method for several reasons, with the most important being ease of material creation (no coding necessary) and data security (housed on BSU servers vs. Amazon’s). To do this, study links are posted to Mturk, data collected in Qualtrics, and workers paid through Mturk. Payment verification can be done via a self-generated code entered in both systems.

The Mturk system offers an excellent outlet for fast data collection at minimal cost. Shorter surveys of ~50 items can obtain full samples within days, while compensating around $1.00 per participant. It has even been shown that it is only data collection speed, and not data quality, that is impacted by compensation rate (Buhrmester et al., 2011).

Mechanical Turk is quickly becoming a widely used research tool among scientists, and although there have been some recent concerns regarding confidentiality, it can be successfully used for quality data collection. If you have any interest in learning more about this tool please feel free to contact Dr. Thomas Holtgraves- 00t0holtgrav@bsu.edu or Ethan Dahl-ejdahl@bsu.edu.
Send out your Survey!

Attention researchers: Do you need a large group of students to take a survey for your research project? Consider sending out a mass email with your study information through the Ball State University Communications Center. The Communications Center is an IRB-approved method of sending out your research study and reaching a large number of students, faculty, or staff in the Ball State community.

Utilizing the Communications Center for research purposes is very simple. You can use this short form on the Office of Research Integrity website—just fill in your information and leave the rest of the work up to us! The Communications Center gives researchers an efficient and dependable way to get their surveys out to all Ball State students. Consider using the Communications Center for your next research project!

Upcoming IRB Meeting Dates and Deadlines

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