



Title:	Internet Research		
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1 Internet research

The vast amount of social and behavioral information potentially available on the Internet has made it an important tool for researchers wishing to study the dynamics of human interactions and their consequences in this virtual medium. Researchers can potentially collect data from widely dispersed populations at relatively low cost and in less time than similar efforts in the physical world. However, the problem of subject identification and verification can severely limit this potential. For example, researchers could unknowingly involve protected populations or decisionally impaired subjects in the research study. There are also online data integrity issues.

Internet research protocols may involve research on the topic of the internet, research collecting data over the internet, observations of human behaviors on the internet, or some combination of these aspects. In evaluating studies utilizing the internet as a research tool, the IRB should ensure that investigators have a plan for:

- Obtaining and verifying informed consent if required, including parental permission and child assent; and
- Maintaining the promised degree of privacy of subjects and confidentiality of information through the use of appropriate security measures; and
- Ensuring appropriate online data collection method and data validation checks.