Survey
Solutions

Dear friends of Survey Solutions,

In version 5.8.0 that we have released on May 2, 2016 you will find the following useful new features:

- Conditions on static text
- Validation of linked questions
- Hiding instructions
- New PDF questionnaire preview
- Other changes to designer
- Changes to interviewer

In addition this release note contains a description of experimental features and upcoming changes.

Conditions on static text elements

Enabling and validation conditions can now be applied to the static text elements. While static text element does not represent a question in the Survey Solutions system, it may be shown depending on the situation in the interview or contain validation of various previous questions. For example in a panel survey, you may use enabling condition to make interviewers read different instructions for the respondents who are being surveyed for the first time and for the ones that have been already surveyed.

Validation of static text elements can be used in the end of a section or questionnaire to conduct a check on several questions to establish their consistency. While questions are validated only

when they are answered, static texts are always validated, so their error message may be displayed even when no question is yet answered in the questionnaire.

Note that errors in the static texts are counted towards the total number of errors in an interview.

Validation of linked questions

Linked questions are used to single out a particular item or household member from a previously specified list. For example, the question "Who is the respondent?", or "Who is the household head?" may anticipate as the answer one of the persons of the household roster. Previously such questions couldn't be validated and the user received a message from the program if attempted to do so.

Now the linked questions may be validated, and open possibilities to conduct a number of checks, most usefully for the relationships in the family, for example:

- a person is different from his father:

$$@rowcode!=self[0]$$

- a person's father and a person's mother is not the same person;

$$fathercode[0]!=mothercode[0]$$

- a person's father is male:

$$HHMEMBERS[fathercode[0]].gender==1$$

- a person's parent is older than the person himself:

$$HHMEMBERS[fathercode[0]].age>age$$

We hope that validation of linked questions will greatly improve the quality of the data and simplify establishing the relationships within households being surveyed.

In general the answer to a linked question is a vector of coordinates of all the nested rosters from which the answer is picked. The above examples rely on the household members to be placed in the roster HHMEMBERS and the roster being the first level of nesting in the questionnaire (which is the most common case: household members nested into households). In that case it is sufficient to look only at one coordinate, which will have index 0 (zero). Hence we write `fathercode[0]` to obtain the code of the person's father in our validation conditions. As before, the enumerators will see household members' names in the selectors for the corresponding linked questions during interviews.

Hiding instructions

Long instructions texts for questions can now be put behind a button that, when clicked will reveal the instruction text corresponding to this question. This allows to unclutter the screen and use the limited tablet's screen space more efficiently. As enumerators begin with a new survey, they may be using the instructions often, but as they progress and get more experienced, they will be looking at the instructions less and less frequently. Instructions remain visible until the enumerator leaves the section.

New format of the PDF preview
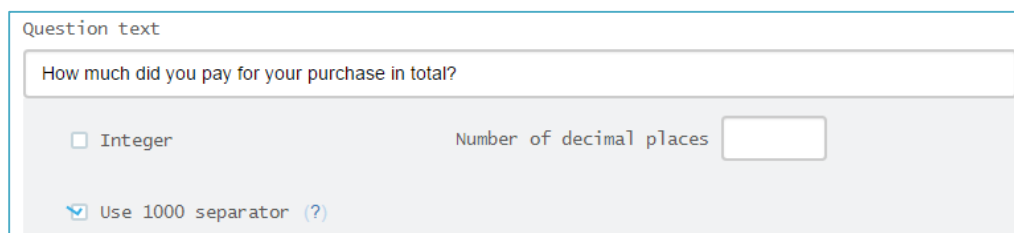
The PDF preview of the questionnaire has been completely reworked to improve the presentation of the core questionnaire properties and the various new attributes and elements added to the software in recent years.

The new PDF preview of the questionnaire provides a convenient overview of the whole questionnaire, detailed presentation of the options, conditions and instructions with a smart trimming of long texts and options' sets. The document includes the attachments (images) and a convenient legend page explaining various elements of the preview.

A print button has been added to the actions menu to send the questionnaire document to the printer.

Other changes to designer

Formatting of numeric questions can be controlled better with the tick of the corresponding option:

When formatting is imposed on the values being entered, a language-specific thousands separator and decimal separator are employed on the tablet (such as a comma and a dot for US-English). This does not affect the export of the data. Interviewers should practice working with the new formatted values entry fields.

Autosuggest of roster names and variable names suggests variable and roster identifiers as you type syntax conditions and helps avoid confusion with numerous standard C# keywords:
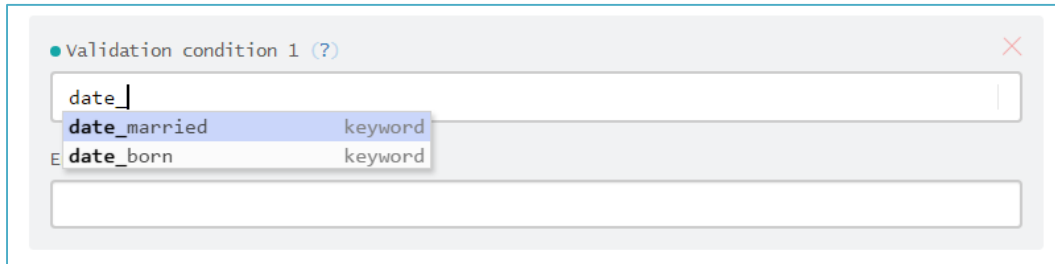
Improvements to the error messages: some error messages are now more informative about the nature of the error, particularly the syntax errors:
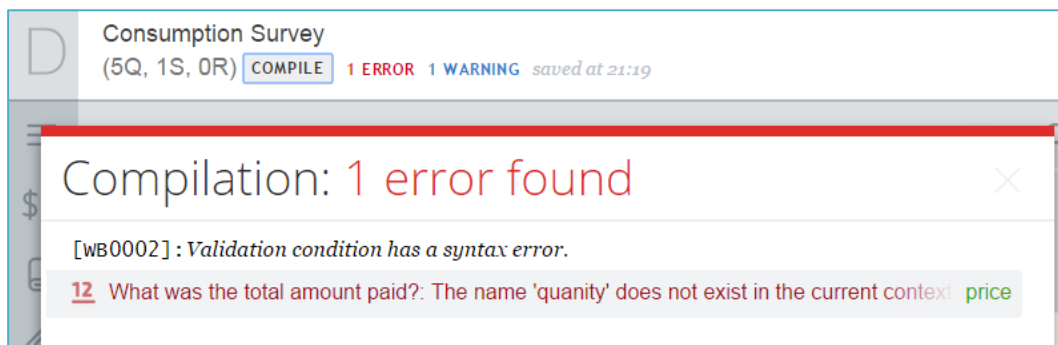

Changes to interviewer

Interviewer app can now synchronize more efficiently when the tablet is going to sleep mode or when the user switches to another application. This can help avoid unnecessary synchronization retries or subtle disconnection errors.

It is now easier to enter values to the data entry fields as we have increased their touch-sensitive area to cover the whole field. Previously it was not always straightforward to press exactly the touch-sensitive area of the data entry field. Now with larger area the enumerator's work is more streamlined.

Experimental features

We are developing functionality to help enumerators to reach their target destinations. If the questionnaire contains a prefilled GPS location question the interviewer app will use its coordinates to display the destination location in a default mapping application (Google Maps, or similar).
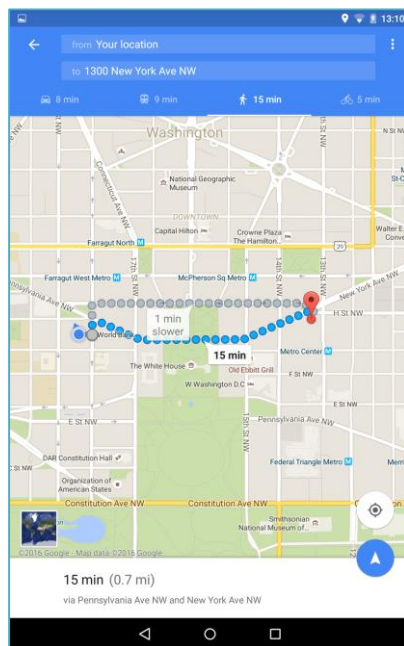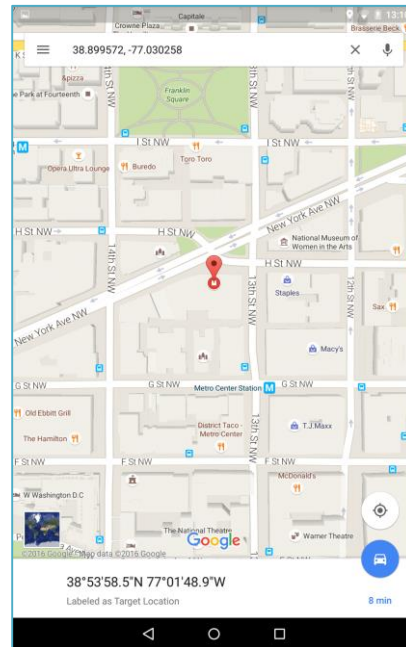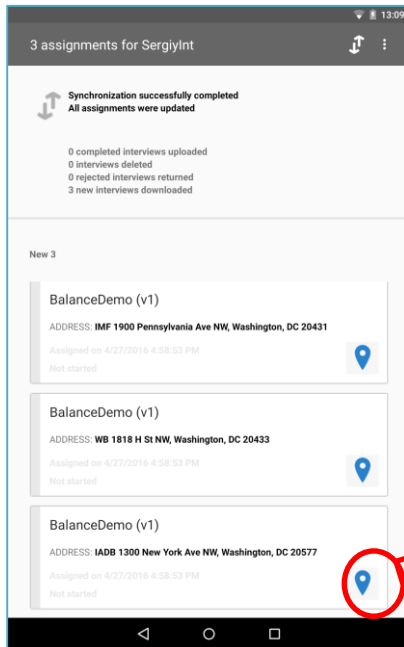
If the mapping application supports the route search, then the route from present location to the destination may be planned. Some applications may require internet connection for visualization of landmarks, public transit routing, and/or other functionality.

This feature is currently experimental, and we encourage our users to try it and provide feedback to us.

Upcoming changes

We will be phasing out the public questionnaires feature in favor of curated collections of questionnaires.

If you are currently relying on the public status of the questionnaire in collaboration with your colleagues please share the questionnaires with your collaborators individually via a questionnaire's settings.