

# Dynamic Interviewing Program (DIP): Online interviews via ICQ



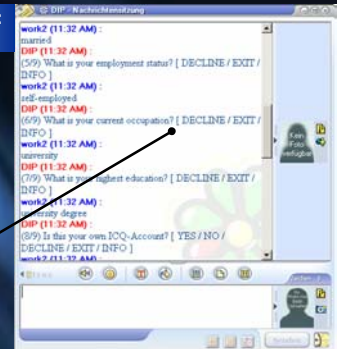
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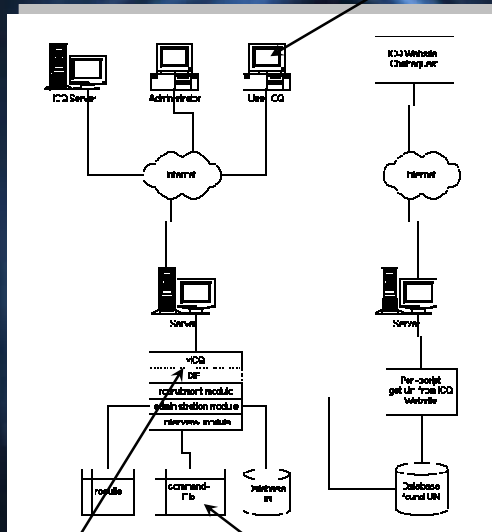
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Interviews are some of the most difficult and laborious procedures in online research, because this type of surveying presupposes synchronous communication. Up to now, Internet-based interviews were mainly conducted personally and one-to-one by the interviewer in the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and in Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs). The obvious disadvantages of these procedures is the necessary presence of the interviewee in the channel or chat room and the limit of one interview at one time, leading to low number of participants in Internet-based interview studies. To fill the gap, we developed DIP (Dynamic Interviewing Program) on top of a freely available instant messaging ICQ ("I seek you") client (vICQ). DIP allows automatic online interviewing via ICQ.

DIP at work:  
client-side



DIP's technical make-up (participant recruitment module, interview module, administration module)



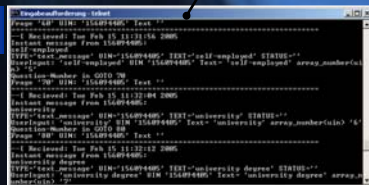
Disadvantages

- Demography of IM users is still unclear.
- Response rates can be very low because of spam filters used in newer versions of ICQ.
- Recognition of questions in open answer format is still difficult to handle.
- AOL changes the protocol of ICQ from time to time without making these changes transparent.
- At the moment only ICQ users can be interviewed.

Advantages

- Quick response because users who are currently online can also be interviewed.
- An interview study can be realized very quickly without programming. Only the command.txt file has to be built. Studies "over night" are possible.
- Help text can easily be implemented, without any programming knowledge.
- Adaptive presentation of questions is possible.
- Possibility of conducting research country-specific.
- Multi-tasking: DIP can interview multiple participants at once.

DIP at work:  
server-side



Example of a "command.txt" file that includes the questions as well as the answering process

```

# Interview
1=Hello I am DIP. I am a "dynamic interviewing program". I would like to ask you about some demographic data. There are just 9 short questions. Would you like to participate? Please use the options in the brackets. [ YES / NO / INFO ||FORCED=1|YES=20|NO=120|INFO=200
20=(1/9) What is your gender? [ MALE / FEMALE // DECLINE / EXIT / INFO ||FORCED=1|MALE=30|FEMALE=30|DECLINE=30|EXIT=120|INFO=210 (...)
100=(9/9) If you have any comment on that survey, please tell me now. [ DECLINE / EXIT / INFO ||FORCED=0|GOTO=120|DECLINE=120|EXIT=120|INFO=290
110=Thank you for your time.|ENDE=1
120=Would you like to be contacted again? [ YES / NO / INFO ||FORCED=1|YES=130|NO=130|INFO=300
130=Thank you for your time.|QUIT=1

# End of interview
500=If you want more Information about me just visit my homepage at http://mailbox.univie.ac.at/stefan.stieger/dip/|FORCED=0|GOTO=510
510=Sorry that's it. I have no more questions to ask.|FORCED=0|GOTO=530
530=-----|FORCED=0|GOTO=530

# Infomessages
200=Please select one option of the words in brackets, if appropriate, or visit my homepage http://mailbox.univie.ac.at/stefan.stieger/dip/.|BACK=1.

# Errormessage
1000=I am sorry, I only understand answers that are listed between the brackets. Please try again and use the options in the brackets.|BACK=1
    
```

Results of a study conducted with DIP (Stieger & Reips, in prep.)

An interview request was sent to 541 randomly selected ICQ users. The response rate was 28.3%, with response defined as responding to the minimum of one question. Answers to demographical questions were validated by checking the publicly available ICQ user address book. Mean age of participants was M=21.8 years, early drop-outs had a mean age of M=23.7 years and non-responders of M=23.4 years. 78.6% of participants reported to be male, versus only 64.9% among early drop-outs. Proportion of males for non-responders was in-between: 69.5%. In sync with earlier reports of limited false reports of demographical data in university-based Internet studies in the literature only 4.5% masked their gender (gender switching) and 8.1% their age.