



# QDS™ NEWSLETTER

## Questionnaire Development System



### NOVA's QDS-Web™ SBIR Grant

Congratulations to the NOVA QDS™ programming team for their exceptional work in developing a concept and design for a Web-based administration module capable of conducting large-scale target population surveys. Early in 2003, NOVA observed the growing popularity of the World Wide Web and listened to the needs of current QDS™ users. A prototype Web-based module was designed, resulting in award of a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant from NIH's National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to prove feasibility. Following several years of hard work dedicated to developing, testing, and improving the module, a Phase II SBIR was awarded in August 2007 to further implement and commercialize the QDS-Web™ version with capability for automatically generating Structured Query Language (SQL) for posting to a server. QDS-Web™ will also provide a user interface to convert SQL responses for storage in the QDS™ Warehouse Manager. A beta version of QDS-Web™ is anticipated later in 2008.

The birth of QDS™ began in 1995 when NOVA received its first SBIR grant award from NIDA to create an improved methodology for design, implementation, and data management of multiple types of survey questionnaires. A major goal was to design a quick, easy, and cost-effective method for researchers to generate their own surveys without having to hire expensive computer programmers. The concepts for QDS™ were based on nearly a decade of NOVA experience in designing, implementing and providing central data management for large HIV/AIDS cooperative agreement behavioral intervention longitudinal studies. By 1998, the first version of QDS™ entered SBIR Phase III commercialization. Sales have increased each year and today more than 3,000 QDS™ modules are in use worldwide.

The growth process and nurturing of QDS™ continued and, in 2001, NOVA was honored with yet another Phase I SBIR award—this time through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)—to develop a hand-held administration system for complex questionnaires. This award facilitated development of the Handheld-Administered Personal Interview (HAPI™), a hand-held questionnaire administration module that is fully integrated into the QDS™ system structure and allows for questionnaires to be quickly and easily built from the Design Studio and for data to be stored in the Warehouse Manager.

Thus, over the last 12 years, SBIR awards have allowed NOVA to develop QDS™, HAPI™, and most recently QDS-Web™. National and international QDS™ product sales have enabled NOVA to continually enhance basic components and address operational issues identified by our loyal QDS™ users. ♦

### Tips and Tricks

Sometimes it is necessary to customize the label of the **Special Response** button for automated interviews. These responses include the **Don't Know, Refused, and Not Applicable** buttons.

To change wording for special response buttons, open Design Studio, select **Language** menu, and choose **Translations** in the Design Studio. Then select the **Edit** button.

On the **Responses** tab, enter alternate wording of your choice; for example, you might prefer **Declined to Respond** as alternate wording for **Refused** in an ACASI interview. This wording will be substituted for the defaults throughout the entire questionnaire. On the computer you will be using to conduct interviews, test the new wording to make sure the new text fits on the button.

## Coming Soon!! QDS™ With Non-Roman Characters

A major system upgrade currently in progress will enable users to conduct interviews in any language, including those that use non-Roman alphabets. NOVA has received many requests for this feature, especially from our international customers. We are also working to provide users more control over font choice so that they will not be restricted to administering ACASI with a single font (MS Sans Serif).

QDS™ currently stores character information using 8 bits of storage per character. For non-Roman alphabets, the programs that make up the QDS™ suite all needed to be revised to support Unicode, which stores every character in at least two bytes or 16 bits. This larger memory allocation enables Unicode to represent most known languages using a uniform system.



We also had to address the fact that interview modules could no longer assume that the font used for text display was a fixed height, since some character sets require more space on the screen than others in order to be readable. Interview administration modules will be revised to lay out each screen using a variable font height.

Some export options that QDS™ supports in the Warehouse Manager, such as the SAS .XPT format, do not support Unicode, so additional file formats will be supported for the export function. To ensure maximum compatibility, QDS™ will continue to use Rich Text Format (RTF) for reports.

With the completion of this new version of QDS™, users will be able to conduct interviews with most of the world's populations. ♦

### Did You Know?

If the CAPI or ACASI program is not properly shut down (for example, if the power goes out or the program is shut down using Ctrl-Alt-Del), your interview file can be identified as damaged when you attempt to open it in the Warehouse Manager.

To attempt interview recovery, start CAPI or ACASI from the start menu and choose your control file from the Open dialog box. Next, select the Resume a Prior Interview radio button. If the last interview is recoverable, the program will jump to the last question answered. If this is the very last screen of the interview, select Next Question to get the Save prompt. If it's not the end, select Alt-F4 to terminate the interview and save when prompted (if keyboard is disabled, simultaneously click the left and right mouse buttons in the upper left corner). Now you should be able to open the .QAD file in the Warehouse Manager and recover your data.

### Congratulations!

NOVA is pleased to announce the winners of our recent drawings. Each will receive a copy of the QDS™ Design Studio with HAPI™ installed on an HP PocketPC.

- ♦ Dr. Paul Freeman
- ♦ Ms. Ivory Howard
- ♦ Dr. Richard Wang



## QDS™ User Profile: Barbara Estrada

Barbara Estrada is President of Impact Consultants, Inc., a Tucson, Arizona, company that contracts with community-based organizations and universities to conduct research and evaluation on their behavioral health programs in areas such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mental health, minority health, and disabilities. In addition, she writes grants and provides technical assistance, as needed, to her management and IT clients.



Ms. Estrada's current projects include evaluation and technical assistance on several projects funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Whenever possible, Ms. Estrada prefers to use QDS™ for data collection. She has followed the development of QDS™ from its inception and it remains her "favorite research data collection tool." QDS™ meets all of her expectations for a high-quality survey development software package.

Four years ago, Ms. Estrada began an exhaustive search for data collection software to support research and evaluation. She discovered that all major competitors, except QDS™, lacked one or more of the components she was seeking. For example, some programs provided a great data entry module, but had no ACASI/CAPI capability. Others had CAPI but did not export data into a usable file format. Only QDS™ was able to produce surveys in a natural-sounding voice and provide components she needed to complete her projects from start to finish.

Impact Consultants was recently awarded a subcontract to support two HRSA Special Projects

of National Significance grants, including the Prevention with Positives project, for which the company adapted an HIV prevention intervention to be made available to HIV infected patients in a primary care setting. Patients using QDS™'s CAPI/ACASI capabilities complete assessments for both studies at baseline and at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months.

Impact Consultants also employs QDS™ for several small, ad-hoc studies such as substance abuse medication adherence evaluations and mental health screenings of patients within the same clinic.

Program staff administer adherence assessments by having the patient complete the assessment on the computer. The substance abuse and mental health screener is a paper-and-pencil assessment that is patient self-administered and later entered into QDS™ in data entry batch mode.

When asked about other features she would like to see in the QDS™ data collection and management system, Ms. Estrada stated, "It seems that any time I get an idea, either that functionality already exists, or it is included in the next QDS™ version—for example, handheld compatibility." In addition, she has been very pleased with the QDS™ *Quick Start Guide*, which she references when she needs to know which files go with which component. She has been especially happy with the QDS™ technical support, describing the QDS™ support staff as "very knowledgeable, friendly, helpful, and prompt." Ms. Estrada has enthusiastically recommended the use of QDS™ to her company's data coordinating center, a HRSA multisite project, and she continues to be a very satisfied client. ♦



## QDS™ Training

NOVA Research Company offers QDS™ trainings in our training facility in Bethesda, Maryland, or at your own offices. Depending on the topics requested, most trainings take between 1 and 2 days. Once your specific needs have been determined (i.e., length, location, number of trainees, and content) NOVA will provide a price quote for your training.

Training topics include:

- Overview of QDS™
- Starting a New Questionnaire
- Data Elements
- Skip Instructions and Marker Elements
- Edit Elements
- Substitution Tokens
- Table Elements
- Automatic Variable Elements
- Custom Reports
- Security
- Working With Multiple Languages
- Build Options
- Survey Testing
- Warehouse Manager

Contact Ben Neal at 301-986-1891, extension 106, or at [support@novaresearch.com](mailto:support@novaresearch.com) for more information.



## QDS™ User's Manual Available Online

Visit <http://www.novaresearch.com/qds> for a free download!



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### How Are You Using QDS™?

We would like to know! Please e-mail Paul Young, QDS™ Principal Investigator, at [PAYoung@novaresearch.com](mailto:PAYoung@novaresearch.com) with a description or story of your unique application of QDS™—don't forget to include citations for any published articles based on your work. A profile may be posted on our Web site or featured in the next **QDS™ Newsletter!**