

DEP Unlimited: Solving Complex Run-Time Problems with Manipula

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Introduction

Outline of our paper and this presentation

- A continuation on the topic we discussed in our 2013 IBUC paper:
 - For our biggest and most complex surveys, the use of Manipula in the Blaise DEP can add functionality and decrease programming complexity
- Moving from the concepts and theoretical advantages to implementation and more meaningful examples

Purpose and Organization

- The focus is on three specific challenges we face in programming our largest and most complicated surveys
- For each I'll briefly explain the challenge and our approach, followed by a short demo
 - Challenge 1: Managing Rosters
 - Challenge 2: Managing Off-Path Data
 - Challenge 3: Using External Programs to Collect and Manage Data

Challenge #1: Managing Rosters

- A Roster: a list of items, e.g. persons, jobs, ...
- Blaise has a great way to choose from a list, with an enumerated or a set question and a type with fills
- Adding to list can be done as well, for instance with grids
- But combining them is difficult
- Unless... you allow adding, editing, deleting through a menu option that starts a Manipula dialog and procedure
 - The dialog lets you add, edit or delete as desired by specifications
 - The procedure allows for changing the data for the general list and the current question in the background

Challenge #1: Managing Rosters

- DEMONSTRATION #1

Challenge #2: Managing Off-Path Data

- Trying to allow for answering questions ‘out of normal order’, e.g. jobs for different people in a household
- Allowing a more structured way than remarks to enter ‘late breaking news’, e.g. adding a person late during an interview
- Parallel tabs are an option, but it may be hard to control availability
- Our solution: A menu item that allows the possible choices at that stage of the interview, uses SETACTIVEFIELD to ask the necessary question, then puts you back where you left off

Challenge #2: Managing Off-Path Data

- DEMONSTRATION #2

Challenge #3: Using External Programs to Collect and Manage Data

- Sometimes a more graphical interface is a more user-friendly way to get the correct responses
- The difficulty is getting data from the interview to the external executable and vice versa
- Using Manipula procedures before and after the call to the external executable enables better control over the interaction

Challenge #3: Using External Programs to Collect and Manage Data

- DEMONSTRATION #3

Conclusion

The first part of the conclusion:

The use of Manipula

- Really helps presenting more user-friendly screens and flow options in the DEP
- Allows for dedicated 'external' Manipula code for the most complicated screens, as opposed 'clogging' the general datamodel rules
- Greatly extends the power and flexibility of the DEP

Support

This is the time to acknowledge the great support we received from the Blaise Team at Statistics Netherlands, whenever we reached out with questions or requests for a feature.

Which leads me to the second part of my conclusion....

Conclusion

The final part of the conclusion:

Blaise Support at Statistics Netherlands
has really picked up

since I left



Thank you!