User Guide to: THE *LORD OF THE RINGS* QUESTIONNAIRE DATABASE

This database contains all the responses received to a questionnaire which was developed for use in the project, funded in the UK by the ESRC, to explore the launch and reception of *The Lord of the Rings: III*. This was a project involving researchers in twenty countries (listed below). The responses were acquired in several ways:

1. The main source was a web version of the questionnaire, mounted on the acquired site www.lordoftheringsresearch.net. This website became active on 17 December 2003, when the film was released simultaneously in most countries, and remained available until the end of May 2004. The questionnaire was accessed via a front page explaining the purpose of the project, but also allowing respondents to read and respond in 14 different languages: Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Turkish, Welsh.

2. Three countries chose, because of wider research interests and issues relating to their funding sources, to mount their own version of the web questionnaire: these were Belgium, the Netherlands, and Slovenia. In all three cases, this was to accommodate extra questions; in the first two cases, there were also one variation from the questions asked in the main questionnaire. This clearly led to issues about the merging of the questionnaires, which have some consequences for how particular fields within the database should be used. These are signalled in later detail.

3. In a number of countries, a paper version of the questionnaire was also used in the appropriate language(s), which were offered to cinema-goers at targeted cinemas at the end of screenings of the film. These were input in each country by researchers or clerical assistants. In order that it would be possible to examine similarities and differences between responses via the two routes, all paper-originated responses bear a distinct coding (see below for details).

The questionnaire

The English-language version of the questionnaire is appended to this explanatory document. Its questions generate 26 data-fields, as follows:

1. Record number
2. What did they think of the film?
3. Responses to the film in their own words
4. How important was it to see it?
5. Reasons for seeing the film: 1
6. Reasons for seeing the film: 2
7. Reasons for seeing the film: 3
8. What kind of story is *Lord of the Rings*?
9. Where is 'Middle-earth' in their imagination?
10. Favourite character, and why.
11. Main source of expectations
12. Sources of knowledge: 1

13. Sources of knowledge: 2
14. Sources of knowledge: 3
15. Most memorable moment/aspect
16. Most disappointing moment/aspect
17. Seeing the film as social, or not
18. Anything else to add
19. Age
20. Sex
21. Occupation
22. How often seen *Fellowship of the Ring*?
23. How often seen *The Two Towers*?
24. How often read the books?
25. Country
26. Language

In the original questionnaire, an extra question (27) asked respondents if they would be willing to be interviewed, and to give a contact phone number if so. This field has been eliminated from this version, for reasons of data-confidentiality.

The questionnaire was a combination of multiple-choice questions, and free-text questions, with unlimited space allowances for web-sourced answers (although clearly the paper version was constrained in this regard).

Multiple choice: Fields 2, 4, 8, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.
Free text: Fields 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.
Generated by research team: Fields 1, 26.

Commentary on Individual Fields

1. **Record number:** this field was added as an aid to identification of individual responses, and for location of those whom we would interview, after the completion of submissions. No reliable significance can be attached to the running order. At several points during the merging of the four databases, the running order became unreliable, therefore it cannot be assumed with surety, for instance, that lower numbers are earlier responses.

2. **What did they think of the film?:** This was a 5-point Likert Scale. Responses in the separate languages were transformed, after closure of the database, into numerical values, for ease of searching.

3. **Responses to the film in their own words:** This field contains free-text answers. It also contains the coding for those questionnaires which were completed on paper. The expression '%%' [double-percentage-sign] was used as the marker. Those with experience of using ACCESS will know that it is easy to isolate these by using the following form in a data-query: select this field, and in the Criteria row enter *%%* (to search for part of the field). A total of 2253 should then be selected. Subroutines to isolate paper-entered by country are of course also possible.

4. **How important was it to see it?:** This was a 5-point Likert Scale. Responses in the separate languages were transformed, after closure of the database, into numerical values, for ease of searching.

5. **Reasons for seeing the film: 1:** This was a free-text space. The form of the question invited *up to three* responses regarding the main reasons for seeing the film. In consequence, a much larger number of respondents have completed this field, than the next two.

6. **Reasons for seeing the film: 2:** A second free-text space.

7. **Reasons for seeing the film: 3:** A third free-text space.

8. **What kind of story is *Lord of the Rings*?:** This was for us a particularly important question. Respondents were invited (a) to select up to three of a list of 13 expressions, designed to indicate possible modalities of reality and meaning; or (b) they could also, if they preferred, select one of their own (although a miniscule number did the latter). In the course of merging of the four data-bases, these were converted to double-letter categories, for ease of searching (the reason for the double-letter form was to eliminate the possibility of accidentally picking up letters within the small number of (b) choices. The web versions of the questionnaire had built-in constraints to prevent respondents selecting more than three. These did not unfortunately prove invulnerable, however it is rare for someone to have managed to choose more than three. With the paper versions, this was impossible to police, therefore we accepted questionnaires where respondents had checked four or five, in order not to lose the remainder to their answers. *Please see the attached annotated questionnaire to determine the associated 'values' of each coding.*

9. **Where is 'Middle-earth' in their imagination?:** This was a free-text question.

10. **Favourite character, and why:** Although it is not strictly necessary to this explanation of the database, it may be of interest to potential users to know that this question was not originally in our design. However when we piloted the questionnaire with 300 students in Aberystwyth, the one recurrent demand was for a question about favourite characters. It was an important part of our research design that completing this questionnaire should as far as possible feel like a continuation of the experience of watching the film. Faced with a very strong demand for this, we chose to drop one other question (space being closely limited by what we could fit on two sides of an A4 sheet for the paper version) and insert this free-text question. It did subsequently prove very valuable, for exploration and analysis.

11. **Main source of expectations:** This was a multiple-choice question, with nine options. Respondents could choose one of the nine, or could nominate their own. As with Question 8, an insignificant number chose outside our range.

12. **Sources of knowledge: 1:** A free-text question. This group of three questions is patterned after Questions 5-7. Respondents were invited to choose *up to three*, but because a number chose only to indicate one or two Sources, the highest percentage response rate is to this first question.

13. **Sources of knowledge: 2:** A free-text question, as above.

14. **Sources of knowledge: 3:** A free-text question, as above.

14. **Most memorable moment/aspect:** A free-text question.

15. **Most disappointing moment/aspect:** A free-text question.

16. **Seeing the film as social, or no:** A free-text question.

17. **Anything else to add:** A free-text question.

18. **Age:** In the web questionnaire, this was organised into age-bands, as follows: Under 16; 16-25; 26-35; 36-45; 46-55; 56-65; Over 65. These were then coded 1 – 7 for ease of searching. Paper questionnaires simply asked people to give their age, and these were entered into the appropriate category by the coder.

19. **Sex:** A multiple-choice question.

20. **Occupation:** A multiple-choice question, with thirteen choices. The explanation of this question and its coding will be the longest, since it was the most complicated, both to decide upon and to manage. In designing the questionnaire, we realised early that we did want, if at all possible, to gain some kind of knowledge of respondents' occupations. However, since this was a world-wide study, it was quite impossible to conceive of this as a free-text space. The number of possible kinds and names of occupations would have be prohibitive. It would have made organising and categorising impossible, and would have undone the possibility of quantitative searches by occupation. Following prolonged discussion in the network, a decision was made that in the main questionnaire we would offer a series of categories of *kinds of occupation* and ask respondents to choose one. *[The list is given in the attached questionnaire.]* We recognised this was risky, but decided that the risk was worthwhile, and that we would know if it had been worthwhile when we attempted to use the categories we had generated.

There was, however, a further consideration. Given that at the centre of our research's attention was the question of the functions of fantasy in the lives of audiences, we wanted respondents to allocate themselves to a category. Many jobs, we realised, could well be categorised under more than one of our headings; and the difference between the two might well indicate something of people's *attitude towards* their occupation. [A serious-funny example to explain what we mean, here: upon beginning our searches of the database, we discovered that there is, as there should be, a strong connection in the UK between being Under 16, and being a Student. However, we also found that a small number of Under 16s had categorised themselves as Unemployed. Wondering if this might indicate some kind of school-refusal, we separated the two groups and studied their similarities and differences. We also chose a small number for interview (only a very few had given contact details).

One other complication should be noted. Although as a whole our research network agreed with the decision to code occupations in this way, two of the groups – Belgium, and the Netherlands – which chose to operate with separate web questionnaires also chose to collect occupation information in a free-text fashion. By

happy chance, the two were operating in effectively the same language (Dutch/Flemish), and the main UK research contained one member originally from Belgium who undertook the categorisation of these responses under the most evident heading. What is as a result missing, however, from these respondents, is that element of decision about their own job categorisation. Someone interested in exploring within the world data the relations between self-categorised occupation, and aspects of response to the film, might well consider excluding the responses from these two countries.

21. **How often seen *Fellowship of the Ring*?:** This was a multiple-choice question, with three options. In the paper version, these were given as a choice of boxes to be ticked.

22. **How often seen *The Two Towers*?:** This was a multiple-choice question, with three options. In the paper version, these were given as a choice of boxes to be ticked.

23. **How often read the books?:** This was a multiple-choice question, with five options. In the paper version, these were given as a choice of boxes to be ticked.

24. **Country:** In the web questionnaire, this was a pull-down menu of all the countries in the world. The paper versions did not include this question. However, coders knew to enter the country in which they had collected the questionnaires.

25. **Language:** In the main web questionnaire, these were automatically generated by respondents' selection of a language. With the separate questionnaires, a field was added at the point of merger. With the paper questionnaires, coders knew to input the relevant language.

Further notes: in the design of the web questionnaire, we attempted to make some fields compulsory. However, this proved less than fully reliable. In most cases it did constrain people to answer all our necessary questions. In some cases, respondents managed to submit incomplete forms. We accepted these, rather than lose the valuable parts that they had completed. In the paper version, it was impossible to police completion of sections. Therefore provided a respondent had attempted both sides of the questionnaire, we accepted all answers. The shortfall in all cases is relatively small.

Many issues arose over translation, and had to be resolved. The most complicated involved the translation of the 13 expressions in Question 8, to capture different possible story-modalities. In all cases bar two, translations were done within the country whose involvement in the project had been the immediate motive for the language's inclusion. Translation problems were discussed within the team, to find the best possible solution. The two exceptions were: Dutch/Flemish (where, as we have said, the UK team contained a native speaker); and French (where our French collaborator joined the research late – in this case, the translation was undertaken for us by a native speaker from Luxemburg).

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING

1. What did you think of the film?
                Extremely enjoyable
                Very enjoyable
                Reasonably enjoyable
                Hardly enjoyable
                Not enjoyable at all
    [[STATUS – compulsory question. Multiple choice, no answer pre-marked.]]

2. Can you sum up your response to the film in your own words? [[STATUS – compulsory question. Text field, up to 100 words allowed.]]

3. How important was it for you to see the film?
                Extremely
                Very
                Reasonably
                Hardly
                Not at all
    [[STATUS – compulsory question. Multiple choice, no answer pre-marked.]]

4. What were the main reasons why you wanted to see it? *Please give up to three.*
    [[STATUS – compulsory that they give at least one answer.]]

5. Which of the following words comes closest to capturing the kind of story *The Lord of the Rings* was for you? Please choose *up to* three.

    Allegory
    Epic
    Fairytale
    Fantasy
    Game-world
    Good vs evil
    Quest
    Myth/Legend
    Spiritual journey
    SFX film
    Threatened homeland
    War story
    None of these

[[STATUS – compulsory that they give at least one answer. FORM – multiple choice, no answer pre-marked: moving cursor key over definition produces hovering definitions.]]

    If you chose "None of these", what alternative word or phrase would do better?

[[STATUS – required if 'None of these' has been ticked']]

6. Where, and when, is Middle-Earth for you? Is there a place or a time that it particularly makes you think of?   [[STATUS – compulsory that something be typed in.]]

7. Who was your favourite character? Can you say why?   [[STATUS – optional.]]

8. Many people measure a film against something they have already encountered. This sets up expectations and hopes for the film. Which, if any, of the following did this for you? *Please choose just the most important one.*

   The books
   The director
   One of the stars
   The first two parts of the film
   A game associated with the films
   Another book or film (eg   _____)
   Something in the real world (eg   _____)
   Something else (_____)
   Nothing in particular

[[STATUS - compulsory question: if answering any of last four, cursor automatically moves to associated box, where an answer must be given, with highlit text replaced by typed responses, saying 'Please say which']]

9. What were your main sources of information about the film before you saw it (eg, posters and trailers, a particular review, a particular newspaper, or magazine, or a TV programme, or the Internet, or maybe friends, casual talk or etc)?   *Please name up to three.*   [[STATUS – optional.]]

10. What to you is the single most memorable thing about the film? Can you say why?   [[STATUS – optional.]]

11. Was there anything which particularly disappointed you about the film? Can you say why? [[STATUS – optional.]]

12. For many people, seeing a film like this is a social event, an experience to be shared with other people. Was this true for you? Can you say in what ways? [[STATUS – optional.]]

13. Is there anything else that you would want to add that would help us understand your feelings about the film?   [[STATUS – optional.]]

14. Finally, a few simple facts about yourself:

    Age   Sex   Occupation

[[EMBEDDED LISTS FOR ALL THE ABOVE]]

15. Have you ever read the books?   Read All The Books Once
                                    Read More Than Once
                                    Read Some of the Books
                                    Still Reading for the First Time
                                    Haven't Read Any of Them

[[STATUS – compulsory question. Multiple choice, no answer pre-marked.]]

15. Where do you live?   [[EMBEDDED LIST]]

16. We hope to interview some people more fully by telephone about their responses to the film. Would you be willing to do this? If so, please give us a name and telephone number where you can be reached. *This information will not be given to anyone outside this research.* [[STATUS – optional.]]