“Wiki surveys: Open and quantifiable social data collection"
Wednesday, January 25, 2012 @ 12:30-2:00pm
295 Lafayette Street, 4th Floor
Conference Room

Research about attitudes and opinions is central to social science and relies on two common methodological approaches: surveys and interviews. While surveys enable the quantification of large amounts of information quickly and at a reasonable cost, they are routinely criticized for being "top-down" and rigid. In contrast, interviews allow unanticipated information to "bubble up" directly from respondents, but are slow, expensive, and difficult to quantify. Advances in computing technology now enable a hybrid approach that combines the quantifiability of a survey and the openness of an interview; we call this new class of data collection tools wiki surveys. Drawing on principles underlying successful information aggregation projects, such as Wikipedia, we propose three general criteria that wiki surveys should satisfy: they should be greedy, collaborative, and adaptive. We then present results from www.allourideas.org, a free and open-source website we created that enables groups all over the world to deploy wiki surveys. To date, about 1,500 wiki surveys have been created, and they have collected over 60,000 ideas and 2.5 million votes. We describe the methodological challenges involved in collecting and analyzing this type of data and present case studies of wiki surveys created by the New York City Mayor's Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). We conclude with a discussion of limitations, many of which may be overcome with additional research. [Joint work with Karen Levy]

Professor Salganik's bio-sketch and contact information can be found here: http://www.princeton.edu/~mjs3/

**A light lunch will be served.**