Autocomplete in Qualtrics

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The Premise

You are programming a survey in Qualtrics. You have a question where you *can* have people type responses freehand, but it would be a pain for you to analyze once all your data are collected. Questions like these are perhaps too long for a dropdown as there are too many potential options. Sound familiar? Think, perhaps, about questions that ask about nationality, or occupation/industry, or company of employment, or, in my case, college/university of enrollment.

If you are interested in a respondent's company of employment, you can ask them to fill in their response, but you know that your outcome would be messy. A response of "Starbucks", "starbucks", "Starbucks Coffee" or "SBs" all refer to the same place – "Starbucks Coffee Company". The Regular Expression code needed for this and other companies will be a nightmare to code.

Now think to a similar instance – colleges and universities. There are thousands of them, all accredited and all with students each year. If you are interested in knowing where your respondent attends college, you can have them fill in the text box. Here, using my university – Northwestern University – as an example, you might get "Northwestern", "northwestern", "NW", or "NU". The first three are OK, but "NU" can easily be confused with "Northeastern University" in Boston.

Perhaps, to save your time later, you might find it useful to have an autocomplete box so that your respondents can type and select the relevant response, which provides a standard manner for data analysis later on. But how do you do this in Qualtrics?

Qualtrics recognizes that this feature is necessary and noted that they will implement an autocomplete feature sometime in 2023. Assuming you have access to it down the line, this is great news. In the meantime, what can you do?

I thank the people in this chat space for making this tutorial possible.

In Preparation

Regardless of which way you go, using my low-tech method or with Qualtrics' forthcoming fancy autocomplete feature, you will require a full list of possible options. For the companies, you can scrape the

Better Business Bureau directory[1]. For colleges, you can get the data from the IPEDS directory[2].

Once you have a full list of the qualifying responses for your question, we can proceed.

Setting up the Question in Qualtrics

Once you have the data, the rest of the process is rather simple.

1. Set up a Qualtrics Survey, whether it is a new one or an existing one from before.
2. For the question that require this autocomplete method, set up a text entry question, complete with the text of the question, similar to the following.

3. Now, you are ready to engage with the JavaScript. In your favorite text editor, adopt the following code. Here, you only need to change the part within the variable setting where I put "Options go here". This is where you include all the possible options.

```
var textOptions = [
 # Options go here

];
jQuery('.QR-' + this.questionId).autocomplete({source:textOptions})
```

4. Here is an example of an adopted JavaScript code with a handful of colleges and universities:

```
var textOptions = [
    "Northwestern University",
    "Northeastern Illinois University",
    "Oakton Community College",
    "Oehrlein School of Cosmetology"
];
jQuery('.QR-' + this.questionId).autocomplete({source:textOptions})
```

5. When you have your entire list, go back to Qualtrics, right click anywhere in the question field and select "Add JavaScript" in the options.

[1] Best wishes as I have yet to do that.

[2] See IPEDS data directory. Use the Survey Data feature on the right hand column and select "Complete Data Files" in the dropdown. For the full list of colleges, download the Institutional Characteristics file and take out the full name of the institution.
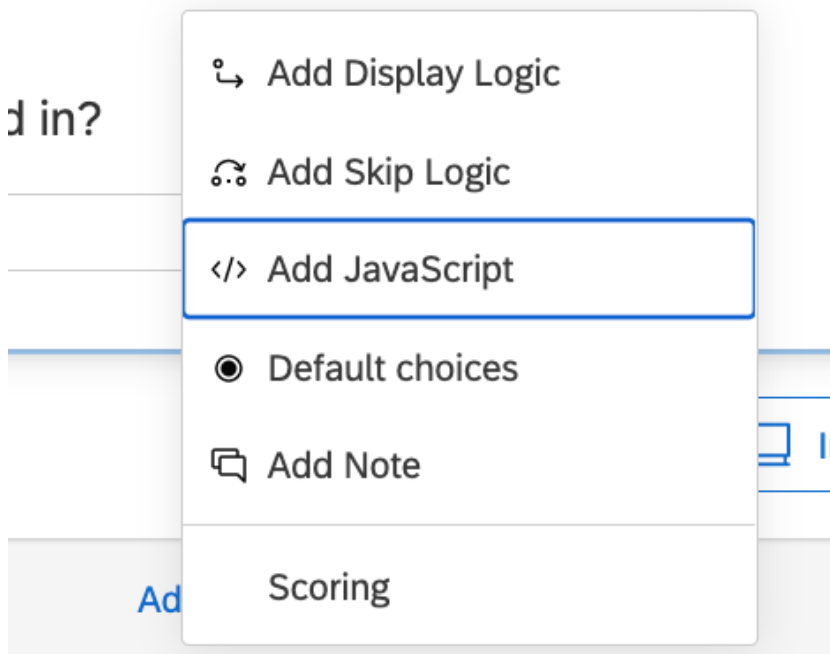
6. Here is a blank JavaScript editor. In this block, you will add the
   code that you just wrote into the space where it says

```
Qualtrics.SurveyEngine.addOnReady(function()
{
    /*Place your JavaScript here to run when the page is fully displayed*/

});
```

Edit Question JavaScript

```
Qualtrics.SurveyEngine.addOnload(function()
{
    /*Place your JavaScript here to run when the page loads*/
});
Qualtrics.SurveyEngine.addOnReady(function()
{
    /*Place your JavaScript here to run when the page is fully displayed*/
});
Qualtrics.SurveyEngine.addOnUnload(function()
{
    /*Place your JavaScript here to run when the page is unloaded*/
});
```

7. Once you are done, click "Save". Then, navigate to the Look and
   Feel section of the Qualtrics editor. Here is where you pick a back-
   ground for your survey. Once you are on that page, locate the
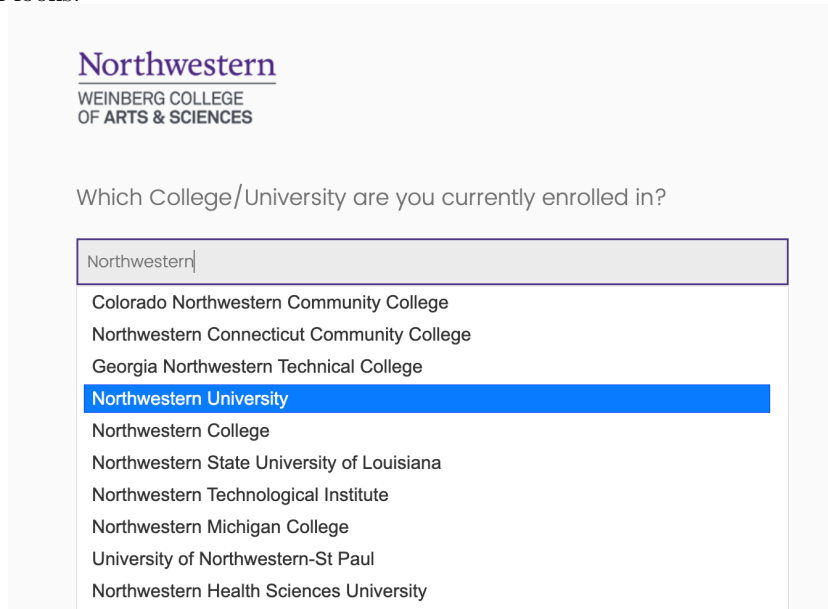   "General" tab on the left hand column. From there, locate the
   "Header" input field.

8. Under "Header", insert the following:

```
<link href="https://ajax.googleapis.com/ajax/libs/jqueryui/1.12.1/themes/smoothness/jquery-ui.css"
rel="stylesheet" />

<script src="https://ajax.googleapis.com/ajax/libs/jqueryui/1.12.1/jquery-ui.min.js"></script>
```

And you are done! Publish your survey or preview it and see how it all looks!