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Growth spurt

With the dawn of a new millennium, qualitative research is very much alive and well in the US. Expenditures have grown substantially in the 90s, and new industries are fast becoming regular users. Field services and practitioners alike are on the increase.

Many American practitioners have a strong appetite for learning new ways to think about, and conduct, qualitative research. Continuing education emphasises projective techniques and interest in projectives has been spurred by ad and brand management agencies.

There are a number of US researchers who look to other industries for new approaches. The Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) attracts a loyal following. Some study NLP and other ways the brain responds to stimulus, to promote more active respondent listening and participation in the interview.

American practitioners are curious about on-line focus groups. While few have conducted them, on-line seminars are popular, and we wonder how conventional methods will be impacted. Within the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA) membership, alternatives to groups are ever-increasing, including minis, IDIs, dyads, and triads – both in person and via the telephone. Fewer, but still noteworthy percentages, report involvement with videoconferencing, ideation sessions, and observational research. Time will indicate the success of a new technology for allowing clients to watch groups live via the Internet. "Hot topics" involve ethical and legal issues, whether certification should be initiated, why we should be called "qualitative research consultants" rather than "moderators," and how to improve quality recruitment.

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