AN ANALYSIS OF THE USEFULNESS OF READERSHIP RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY A MIDWESTERN DAILY NEWSPAPER

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE USEFULNESS OF READERSHIP RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY A MIDWESTERN DAILY NEWSPAPER

By

KAREN L. GILL

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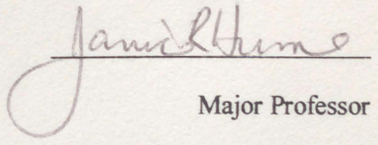
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Major Professor

Dr. Janice Hume

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ABSTRACT

This case study attempted to determine whether a readership survey of a Midwestern daily newspaper was conducted and prepared according to accepted survey research standards for sampling the target population, dealing with nonresponse and writing survey questions. It also attempted to determine whether the readership survey results provided the newspaper's editors with the type of information they needed and wanted to know about readers and nonreaders in order to make decisions about the newspaper's content. Information was gathered by conducting individual interviews with the survey's lead researcher and newspaper's executive editor and a focus group interview with the newspaper's other decision-making editors. Also the readership survey questionnaire and results report were compared to accepted survey research standards. The study's findings were that the readership survey failed to meet survey research standards in each of the areas studied. The sampling methods used to recruit respondents could create bias for groups such as those at home more often and those with higher incomes. The survey questions were plagued with ambiguity, unintended meanings, effects of social desirability and the use of various confusing rating scales. Because the newspaper's executive editor reviewed the readership survey questions and had access to the results, the survey seemed to provide him with useful information. But the other editors were not involved in creating the survey or writing the questions. Their knowledge of the survey and its results was so limited as to render the survey practically useless to them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Because of declining readership and increasing competition from television and radio, newspaper editors and publishers in the 1960s and 1970s began to rely more on private readership research to try to increase circulation and readership by attempting to find out more about their readers' needs and preferences. The Bureau of Advertising of the American Newspaper Publishers Association began conducting studies on all aspects of the press and its audience in 1960. By 1982, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau's $5-million Newspaper Readership Project had convinced most editors of the need for readership research (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 266).

Both the amount and influence of readership research continued to grow rapidly in the early 1990s. A survey of editors at 614 U.S. newspapers in 1990 found that 71 of them employed market researchers and that an additional 48 planned to hire market researchers within 2 years. The same survey found that 184 of the newspapers conducted editorial research in the 2 years prior to the survey and 267 planned to within 2 years. Methodologies for this editorial research included content analysis, telephone surveys, mail surveys and focus groups (Lowe & de Tarnowsky, 1991, p. 144). A 1991 study found that only 4 of 78 newspapers surveyed had conducted no readership research (Beam, 1995, p. 29). Another 1991 study found that half of the research directors in the study felt that research activity was increasingly influential at their newspapers. Experts estimated that the newspaper industry spent $30 to $40 million on research in 1992 (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 266). Today readership research holds even more clout within the newspaper industry. Newspaper readership surveys can cost $10,000 to $500,000, and some of the largest newspapers are spending $1 to $2 million per year in market research (Layton, 1999, p. 50).

But as it has become more widespread, readership research and its basis in marketing theory also have come under more criticism. Always seen as a threat, the market theory is now being blamed for eroding the quality of journalism, (McManus, 1994, p. 184-196) as well as failing to stop the decline in readership (Layton, 1999, p. 49). Market penetration rates have been declining for 20 years (Gassaway, 1995, p. 1), the percentage of Americans reading newspapers continues to decrease, and the percentage of Americans subscribing to newspapers is the lowest in history (Fink, 1996, p. 4). Says Doug Underwood,

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associate professor of journalism at the University of Washington, "There is not a scintilla of evidence that the marketing approach has improved newspaper readership at all" (Coyle, 1998, p. 41).

But supporters of readership research argue that it is essential to the survival of newspapers in an increasingly diverse and competitive market and that it helps journalists better serve readers (Beam, 1995, p. 28). They also point out that what may seem like problems with research actually are just part of the process of newspaper managers learning to use readership research (Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 88). What is lacking in this argument is solid evidence. Very little, if any, research has been conducted to begin to determine if readership research is an effective method for newspapers to use to increase circulation, readership or reader satisfaction. Newspaper editors and publishers are relying on a method with an untested level of effectiveness.

Now that newspapers have information about their readers and nonreaders, the question is how should this information be put to use to increase circulation or is it even possible to use it for this purpose? Why has it not led to circulation increases or even slowed down declining circulation? Is it because of a problem with the way the research has been conducted or with the way it has been used? Or is it some other problem entirely? Much research is needed to study the various aspects of readership research and how it has been used to answer these questions.

First, researchers must determine whether newspaper readership research as it currently is being conducted yields credible results and whether it provides useful information to newspapers' news departments. Researchers have studied readers and analyzed the results of the research without analyzing the research methodologies nor the way the news departments have used the research findings. Even the best research will have no effect on readership if the news department does not put it to work (Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 88). Writes Fink, "Newsrooms should be involved in such research from the start. The goal is information needed to operate efficiently, and news managers should help decide what that is. But also, editors tend to deprecate as inaccurate — or reject as interference — readership research in which they have no part" (Fink, 1996, p. 198). Therefore, research must also determine what role news departments play in planning and conducting the readership research.

One way to analyze the quality of research methodologies is to compare the methods used by newspaper readership researchers to accepted standards of quality research and to gain additional

information about the news department's role in the research and how the results were used. This study will begin working toward that goal by determining whether a readership survey conducted in spring 1999 for a medium-size Midwestern daily newspaper provided its news department with accurate and useful information about its readers and nonreaders. This will be done by comparing the survey's methods to accepted survey research standards and comparing results to the wants and needs of the news department.

This study will analyze the 1999 readership research of a medium-sized Midwestern daily newspaper to determine the reliability of the information it provided to editors. The newspaper publishes 7 days a week with a daily circulation of 31,500 in a city that is a regional trade leader with a population of more than 45,000. Its total market coverage area consists of five surrounding counties. It is one of eight subsidiary newspapers owned by a regional chain, which also owns the marketing communications company that conducted the research.

This study will seek to answer the following primary research question:

> **Primary question:** Do the newspaper's 1999 readership survey results give the news department reliable and useful information about its readers and nonreaders on which to base decisions about content?

In order to answer the primary research question, the following subordinate questions will be answered:

> **Research question 1:** Did the survey results provide the type of information editors wanted and needed to know about readers and nonreaders in order to make decisions regarding content changes in the newspaper?

> **Research question 2:** Was the readership survey conducted and prepared using accepted survey research standards for sampling the target population, dealing with nonresponse and writing the survey questions?

This study is limited to examining the 1999 version of the readership survey. It does not attempt to cover other readership surveys conducted by the same newspaper or any other newspaper. It will not attempt to replicate any of the readership survey results nor to correct any flaws found in the research. No original readership research will be conducted nor added to the research done by the newspaper.

Although many procedures used in survey research may affect the quality of the research, this study is limited to examining the readership survey's methods of sampling, dealing with nonresponse and question wording because those areas are the most likely to cause trouble for researchers. Those also were the problem areas identified by critics of readership research (Beam, 1995, p. 29; Layton, 1999, p. 57). This study also is limited to studying the roles and opinions of news department employees who are

identified by the executive editor as being "gatekeepers," that is they make decisions regarding what information will and will not be published in the newspaper. Other departments of the newspaper will not be included nor will other employees in the news department because they would have less need for information about readers and would be less likely to be informed about readership research results.

In as much as all researchers are faced with at least some limitations of time and money and the difficulties of measuring respondents' subjective states, it is expected that the newspaper's readership survey will have some limitations. It is also expected that at least some of the shortcomings of newspaper readership research identified by others in the newspaper industry will be present in the newspaper's readership survey. According to Layton, much newspaper research is subjective and unscientific (Layton, 1999, p. 49). If no shortcomings are found, it would seem to suggest that the type of research conducted by this newspaper differed in some way from the norm for the newspaper industry.

This study could provide the newspaper's editors with valuable information about the reliability of the research information presented to them about their readers. It could help them decide whether content changes to the newspaper should be undertaken based on the research results. It could help the newspaper evaluate future proposed readership research and results. It also could help other similar newspapers better evaluate their readership research or decide whether to engage in readership research at all. It also could help the research organization better evaluate the quality of the survey research it provides to other newspapers in the chain, as well as its outside clients. It could lead to improvements in the quality of research the organization conducts by pointing out its shortcomings. This study could form a basis for further evaluation of newspaper readership research, further research into how newspapers use readership research to change content and whether readership research is an effective method for newspapers to use to attempt to increase readership and circulation.

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CHAPTER 2

NEWSPAPERS' USES OF READERSHIP RESEARCH

Print media researchers have attempted to describe readers and their reading habits, to explain how editors make their decisions and how newspapers use readership research.

Studying readers

Most of the earliest research about newspapers focused on surveying reader interests. The June 1930 issue of Journalism Quarterly contained an article titled, "A reader interest survey of Madison, Wisconsin," that served as the prototype of many future readership studies. The American Newspaper Publishers Association conducted the most complete studies of newspaper readership that involved 50,000 interviews with readers of 130 daily newspapers between 1939 and 1950 (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 265-267).

Since then, a wide range of print media research has continued to focus on newspaper readers. Early general studies of nonreaders, such as Westley and Severin (1964) and Penrose, Weaver, Cole and Shaw (1974), found that nonreaders were more likely to be less educated, from a low-income household and very young or very old. Rarick (1973) found that home ownership and length of residence were key factors in newspaper readership. But Sobal and Jackson-Beeck (1981), finding that nonreaders were also more likely to be widowed or divorced, suggested that an interplay of more complex factors including readers' interpersonal relationships contributed to nonreadership of newspapers.

National surveys, such as Nafziger, Maclean and Engstron (1951) and those conducted by various press organizations, American Society of Newspaper Editors, Newspaper Readership Project and by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau under the direction of Leo Bogart (Bogart, 1989) have sought to describe broad characteristics of readers nationally, including demographic make-up, hobbies, interests and lifestyles, as well as how and why readers use newspapers. Bogart (1984) sought to study how television was changing readers' perceptions of news. He found that even though television news was becoming increasingly important, it had not overtaken newspapers and that the public perceived the two media as complementary. Bogart suggested that it was the mix of entertaining features and news that helped newspapers hold on to readers. These led to studies that have focused on specific descriptions of readers

from certain areas. Schwatz, Moore and Krekel (1979) identified four types of readers in one area of the United States according to their lifestyle and perceptions of themselves and others. The study attempted to provide evidence of the accuracy and flexibility of lifestyle-type readership studies. Lynn and Bennett (1980) examined readership over a broad geographic area and found that newspaper audiences in towns and cities differ from those in rural and farm settings in their use of local and non-local news. Other studies have focused on special populations targeted by newspapers. Younger readers especially have been studied heavily by researchers, such as Cobb (1986), Wanta and Gao (1994), Lehnert (1981) and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Ketter, 1995).

Other researchers examined the methodologies of measuring reading of certain items in the newspaper. Hvistendahl (1977) compared two methods of determining what readers read and do not read in a newspaper: the whole copy method, in which a whole copy of the newspaper was mailed to respondents to mark what they had read, and the clipping method, in which articles clipped from the same edition of the newspaper were reproduced on notebook-sized paper and mailed to respondents to mark. Hvistendahl found the two methods roughly equivalent. The advantages of the two methods were that they were cheaper than previously used personal interview methods, but could be proven less reliable than personal interviews, Hvistendahl wrote. Stamm, Jackson and Jacoubovitch (1980) examined the effectiveness of the various procedures used in readership research to measure what had been read in the newspaper. The study found that varying methods of measurement, such as what newspaper items were being measured, the time frame and the method of counting the instances of reading, produced different results that were not comparable. The study also tested a new approach to measuring reading behavior, that of having readers track "reading episodes" while they were reading the newspaper, rather than having them recall what they had read later. The researchers reported that this new approach proved feasible. Researchers have not examined methodologies for other aspects and other types of readership research that seek to describe readers' characteristics and wants and needs rather than measuring their reading behavior.

These studies have provided descriptions of readers' demographics and lifestyles and related these to their newspaper reading habits. Rather than studying the readership of a particular newspaper, they have described newspaper readers in general, and as Laurkas and Holley (1989) demonstrated in their study, local newspaper editors cannot take the results of national surveys to represent their markets because each

market is unique. As Bogart writes, "Attitudes toward the press in general are less meaningful than the ratings people give specific papers in their own communities" (Bogart, 1984, p. 713).

Also these studies have not focused on how newspapers can best use the results of the research. A study by Chaffee and Choe (1981) determined that lost newspaper readership is not directly attributable to deficiencies in the newspaper itself, but that it is mainly caused by social changes, including marital status, residence and employment. This study would seem to suggest that readership research should not be held accountable for the declining readership patterns. Much more research is needed in this area.

Studying editors

Studies of editors began with White's (1949) attempt to describe the factors that determine editors' or "gatekeepers," as he named them, decisions about what news stories to select or reject. White found that the reasons were highly subjective and based on value judgments from the gatekeeper's own experience, attitudes and expectations. They did not include the interests or needs of the audience. But White noted, "… the rather obvious conclusion that theoretically all of the wire editor's standards of taste should refer back to an audience who must be served and pleased" (White, 1950, p. 389). However, White's gatekeeper gave the impression that he knew the audience, and that he believed selecting news to suit the needs and interests of the readers was important. White did not attempt to determine how much information the gatekeeper had or used about his readers or how he received information about them.

Replications of White's study, Snider (1966) and Bleske (1991), also did not attempt to discover whether gatekeepers wanted to know about readers, how they arrived at their opinions about what their readers want or how much information they had about readers. Gans (1979) found in a sociological study of major newsmagazines and television newscasts that broadcast and print editors rejected feedback from audience research for a number of reasons. The editors believed that audience research was useless and that it would lower the quality of journalism. They also distrusted statistics and were reluctant to accept any procedure that cast doubt on their news judgment and autonomy. Instead of using the audience research for decision-making, they relied on feedback from a "known" audience made up of their superiors, colleagues, family, neighbors and acquaintances. They also believed that they could rely on their own interests and reactions as representative of their audiences'.

Sumpter (1998) found that editors seemed to prefer to consult fellow editors and rely on their past success in story selection. He also found that editors who lacked community ties created imaginary local readers as references. These editors used a composite of their spouses' interests, chance encounters with strangers, and telephone calls and letters from readers to create a model of the readers' interests. This model of imaginary readers often resembled the demographics of the newsroom. The editors believed that their interests mirrored those of readers.

Martin, O'Keefe and Nayman (1972) questioned editors of selected newspapers and their readers about their opinions of events covered in the newspapers. They found some accuracy in editors' perceptions of their readers' views, although they tended to believe the readers held stronger views than they actually did. Editors were more accurate in predicting readers' views than vice versa. But they also found that editors think that they agree with their readers more than they actually do and that editors' increasing experience alone did not improve their accuracy in perceiving their audiences' views.

Gladney (1996) found that editors rated newspaper attributes such as aggressive, original reporting; strong coverage of the newspaper's distribution area; and attractive visual presentation as much more important than newspaper readers did. And the Newspaper Readership Project found that editors and reporters fundamentally misjudged the public's reading and lifestyle habits (Fink, 1996, p. 198-199). Therefore, publishers and editors cannot base their content decisions on their experience or "instincts" about readers. As Fink writes, "Editors and publishers clearly need scientific research. Surveys repeatedly show that instinctive interpretation by both of reader views on news often can be very wrong" (Fink, 1996, p. 198).

Gatekeeping studies have found that editors seem to believe that it is important to base content decisions on readers' wants and needs, but these studies have not examined how editors obtain information about readers nor studied how these beliefs relate to the readership research their newspapers conduct. Also, studies have not looked at what role editors and news departments play in readership research.

Studying research usage

As early as the 1930s publications began conducting their own readership surveys (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 265), but it was not until 1977 that researchers began to look at how newspapers used readership research. Bogart (1989) reports the results of a 1977 study that found that a majority of editors

of papers of more than 50,000 circulation and a third of those in the 25,000 to 50,000 range had used an outside research firm to survey their readers in the last 2 years. Four out of five papers of more than 100,000 circulation had done so. Editors were also asked to rank the value of the research, and 57 percent described it as "somewhat useful" (Bogart, 1989, p. 341).

Lowe and de Tarnowsky (1991) surveyed editors representing 614 newspapers on whether their newspapers had conducted research and the type of research and methodologies that were used. Editors also were asked if they were pleased with the quality of the research and whether "minor" or "major" changes were based on the research. The measure of quality was based only on editors' perceptions rather than any measure of actual quality. The study did not address whether the editors found the information useful nor what types of changes were made to the newspapers.

Beam's 1995 study remains the most comprehensive look at how newspapers use readership research. Based on the results of mail surveys of middle- and senior-level editors at U.S. daily newspapers, the study found that certain kinds of content, such as comics, entertainment, business and sports, were more likely to be influenced by research. Other results focused on the characteristics of newspapers that use readership research. Beam found that larger newspapers, those owned by publicly held groups and those located in racially diverse cities used readership research more frequently than others. Those owned by publicly held groups used the widest range of types of research, which included focus groups, clip out/mail back surveys, scientific telephone surveys, scientific in-person surveys, voluntary call-in polls and scientific mail surveys. Beyond determining the types of research newspapers used, the study did not determine the quality of readership research conducted by newspapers. Beam suggested further research is needed into the quality of research newspapers conduct.

Research leads to changes

Editors and publishers have used the results of readership research to push for changes including overall improvement in newspapers and the increased production of zoned editions of large newspapers, which tailor news to suit the requirements of individual segments of a mass circulation (Fink, 1996, p. 12-13). The Torrance (Calif.) Daily Breeze offers an example of the effort expended on readership research. The publisher, department heads and assistants spent 1,000 staff hours creating a final version of a survey questionnaire. A task force was then charged with using the survey results to recommend three or four

changes to increase circulation, which led to the creation of a new entertainment magazine (Stein, 1994, p. 17). Another study in 1994 included 30 focus groups and led to changes in content of the Boca Raton (Fla.) News ranging from eliminating articles that continued from one page to another, changing design and reporters' writing styles to a methodological check for more visibility of minorities and women (Stein, 1994, p. 17).

Not without criticism

But market research, with its ideal of giving readers what they say they want rather than what journalists think they need to know, has been controversial since it first was introduced to news organizations. In 1961, Robert Silvey, head of audience research for the British Broadcasting Corp., presented his case of the fallacies of "giving the public what it wants." Among the flaws in logic Silvey pointed out was that market research assumes that the public already knows everything that it is possible to know and that it is now able to make a rational decision about what is best to know. "People should be given the chance of hearing things they've never heard before," Silvey wrote. Silvey also pointed out that giving the public what it wants implies giving the majority of the public what it wants while ignoring the wants of the minority. He also argued that to best serve the interests of the public sometimes it is necessary for the press to tell the public what it does not want to know -- to disobey the public for its own good. He argued: "It was right to make it known that Hitler was preparing for war whether people wanted to hear it or not" (Silvey, 1961, p. 264).

Silvey's objections to "giving the public what it wants" continue today, 39 years later. Reuven Frank, former president of NBC News, was quoted in 1998 as saying, "This business of giving people what they want is a dope pusher's argument. News is something people don't know they're interested in until they hear it. The job of the journalist is to take what's important and make it interesting" (Hickey, 1998, 34). While these objections were voiced by broadcasters, those serving mass audiences in print also have criticized the marketing perspective. Editors have viewed marketing research as a threat to their editorial prerogative (Bogart, 1989, p. 340; Gassaway, 1995, p. 2). Editors who believe the essence of their craft lies in their knowledge of what is right for readers are fearful of a marketing perspective that gives more credence to consumer needs rather than editors' perceptions (Bogart, 1989, p. 340).

Many editors also are distrustful of statisticians and are likely to see firsthand comments by individuals as more credible than abstract statistics (Bogart, 1989, p. 341). Studies have found that editors feel an "unknown" audience is incapable of determining what news it truly needs and that editors placed more value on feedback from their superiors, colleagues and from a "known" audience made up of their friends, family and acquaintances (Gans, 1979, p. 232-235; Sumpter, 1998, p. 6,13).

Critics also have held that newspapers' pandering to readers is eroding the quality of journalism and undermining the ability of newspapers to foster thoughtful citizen participation in government (Beam, 1995, p. 28). In his book, Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? McManus attempts to study the effect of the marketing concept on journalism as it is practiced primarily at local television stations but applies his findings to journalism in other forms. McManus presents four social impacts of market journalism: consumers are likely to learn less from the news, consumers may be misled, news sources may become more manipulative, and the audience may become more apathetic about politics (McManus, 1994, p. 184-196). Others have criticized the high cost of readership research for putting it out of the reach of community newspapers (Gassaway, 1995, p. 1; Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 97).

Identifying shortcomings

But despite editors' underlying fear and skepticism of the marketing concept, a report by the Project on the State of the American Newspaper found that many newspaper editors may not be skeptical enough of readership research. "They have not questioned the accuracy of the surveys that land on their desks or the pitfalls of the methodologies researchers use. Most have not even questioned research's most obvious failing – that it has not arrested the decline in readership, as its advocates have claimed it would" (Layton, 1999, p. 49).

Layton points out that much of newspaper research is "subjective, unscientific and amenable to manipulation," and that its serious weaknesses include a reliance on focus groups and a dependence on the questions asked in surveys (Layton, 1999, p. 49). A 1991 survey found that focus groups and clip-out mail-back surveys were the most common methods of gathering information about readers among the 78 newspapers surveyed, even though these techniques produce results that cannot be generalized to the newspaper's readership because they do not rely on probability sampling (Beam, 1995, p. 29). Layton also pointed out that survey questions often contain assumptions and biases and are subject to misinterpretation.

The order of questions also introduced bias. Other problems arose from the increasing difficulty of getting a high enough response rate (Layton, 1999, p. 57).

Support, suggestions for research

Supporters of readership research say that the rapidly changing market and changes in readers' lifestyles make readership research increasingly necessary to a newspaper's survival. As Schoenbach and Bergen write, readership research "is increasingly necessary in a growing, diverse, competitive, even aggressive market with an ever more indifferent audience" (Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 89). And Fink states that newspaper management must be research-driven and that skilled researchers should be involved in determining the newspaper's strategy (Fink, 1996, p. 33).

And despite critics' fears, Underwood and Stamm (1992) found that the marketing perspective might have some positive effects on newspapers. They surveyed 429 newsroom staffers at 12 daily newspapers and found that management changes were causing the newspapers to become more market-oriented and more concerned with readers' wants and needs. But these journalists also reported that their newspapers continued to stress time-honored journalistic values, and a slim majority felt their newspapers were improving in quality.

Supporters of readership research acknowledge that changes are needed in the way research is conducted and used. Researchers Schwartz and Moore point out that most readership studies only provide demographic information about readers without providing the type of psychological information newspapers need to connect to readers. They explain that demographics do not provide answers to the questions of how and why readers and nonreaders differ and how readers in each demographic differ from one another, among other limitations (Schwartz & Moore, 1979, p. 125-126). Denton adds to this argument the need for research that goes beyond asking people questions. He writes that research should be more probing and use more controlled experimentation to find ways to inspire people to read newspapers regularly. He suggests using research techniques borrowed from research used to study consumer behavior. This type of research should allow exploration of more complex phenomena such as the relationship between newspapers and readers. He also points out the need for more collaboration between academics and newspaper professionals, along with more money to support research (Denton & Kurtz, 1993, p. 39-40).

Gassaway counters the criticism that the high cost of research keeps it out of reach of smaller papers by suggesting that they solicit proposals from faculty members at nearby colleges and universities to conduct their readership research and that they train staff members to conduct the research (Gassaway, 1995, p. 6). And Schoenbach and Bergen recommend that newspapers hold down their costs by launching more joint research efforts with other newspapers (Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 98). Many supporters also point out that editors and news departments need to be more involved in the research. Fink writes that research objectives must be stated in detail by newspaper executives who will use the findings, including the publisher and editor (Fink, 1996, p. 33), while Gassaway expands this to suggest that key editors and reporters be involved in planning the study and writing the questions to be asked (Gassaway, 1995, p. 7).

Gassaway also suggests that the newspaper staff should respond to the survey questionnaire to get an idea of what they think of the newspaper. He states that having a complete report of the results, including a presentation by the researchers to key people and departments of the newspaper, is essential to using the research to its advantage. Staff meetings should then be held in each department to discuss the findings and to ask for suggestions from employees on how the newspaper should respond (Gassaway, 1995, p. 7-8). Pointing out the difficulty of using research results appropriately, Shoenbach and Bergen suggest that newspapers appoint an editor with the sole mission of applying the results of readership research. They also suggest that journalism students should be taught how to use research results (Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 103).

But even while advocating the use of readership research, supporters also caution that it should not supplant the judgment of editors, and that newspapers must not overlook their journalistic function to inform and educate readers. Gassaway points out that research results are static and that readers' opinions are likely to change. Research, he writes, should be used as a kind of "road map" guiding journalists in understanding their readers and making decisions. "Readership studies should never be taken as a perfect formula for putting out a popular paper" (Gassaway, 1995, p. 7-8).

In his essay, "Old newspapers and new realities: The promise of the marketing of journalism," Frank Denton acknowledges editors' misgivings about the marketing concept but argues that editors can use marketing knowledge and techniques without compromising their independence, integrity and instinct.

He points editors to a branch of marketing called social marketing, in which marketing techniques and knowledge are used to benefit society rather than simply to make a profit (Denton & Kurtz, 1993, p. 37).

Fink encourages newspapers to conduct more research. He writes:

> Money, journalistic genius and idealism can be poured into a newspaper – all to no avail unless the newspaper is 'tuned' to provide what the market wants and needs. (Note the distinction: Financial success lies in providing what the market says it wants; journalistic success requires providing, additionally, what we, as trained and responsible journalists, think the market needs) (Fink, 1996, p. 30).

Studies of readership research have formed basic patterns of readership research usage at newspapers, but they have not analyzed the quality of readership research being conducted, whether the news departments had input into how the research would be conducted, nor whether the research provided the news department with the type of information editors wanted and needed about readers. Also they have not studied whether the research led to circulation increases for newspapers or whether any other changes have been attributable to the research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This study used interviews, a focus group interview and document analysis to examine how one newspaper's readership survey was prepared, conducted and used.

Research question 1: Did the survey results provide the type of information editors wanted and needed to know about readers and nonreaders in order to make decisions regarding content changes in the newspaper? Information needed to answer this question was collected by interviewing the newspaper's executive editor and conducting a focus group interview with eight of the newspaper's editors. First, an interview was conducted with the newspaper's executive editor, using the questions listed in appendix A. The researcher orally questioned the editor and noted his replies. Questions focused on the executive editor's beliefs about the uses of readership research for the news department, his involvement in creating the survey, whether he believed the survey meets the goals set forth for the research, and how he believed the news department expected to use the results of the research. He also was asked to identify those editors whose duties included selecting information for publication. He identified eleven editors. These editors were recruited as participants for the focus group interview.

The editors identified by the executive editor were asked to sign up to attend a scheduled focus group session, which was held at the newspaper's office during most of the editors' regular working hours, to eliminate problems associated with late or absent participants (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 449-452). Editors were provided with a presession questionnaire (appendix B) including broad questions to be asked during the focus group interviews. They were asked to have it completed when they attended their scheduled focus group session. This presession questionnaire was used to help reduce group pressure on participants to agree or disagree with the other participants by thinking through their opinions before hearing those of other editors. The moderator of the focus group interviews was provided a list of broad questions, as well as more probing follow-up questions (appendix B) to use as a guide during the sessions (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 452). The moderator made a tape recording of the session. The tape recording was transcribed and examined for recurrent themes and categories of responses. This transcription (appendix B), as well as general impressions of the sessions reported by the moderator, were

used to determine what, if any, information the editors wanted and needed to know about readers; what role, if any, they played in the research; and whether they believed the survey provided them with useful information. Focus group responses were compiled and compared to information provided by the executive editor so that the information could be corroborated, in accordance with Robert Lin's principles for data collection in a case study (Lin, 1994, p. 79).

Research question 2: Was the readership survey conducted and prepared using accepted survey research standards for sampling the target population, dealing with nonresponse and writing the survey questions? Information needed to answer this question was collected from analyzing the readership survey questionnaire and survey results report (appendix D) and interviewing the researcher in charge of the readership survey. The survey results report was analyzed because some standards for conducting research apply to how the results are reported. A focused interview was conducted individually with the lead researcher, using the questions listed in appendix C. A copy of the list of questions was provided to the lead researcher prior to the interview so that he could gather any information needed to answer the questions from research files or other researchers. This oral interview of the readership survey researcher was transcribed (appendix C).

Detailed information about the survey gathered from the readership survey instrument, survey report and researcher interview was gathered and compared to survey research standards for good sampling, dealing with nonresponse and writing survey questions. It was determined how standards apply to the survey and whether the requirements of applicable standards were satisfied. These standards will be described fully in the next section. The standards come from those described in widely used and regarded survey research methods guide books, including Survey Research Methods and Improving Survey Research Questions, both by Floyd Fowler; Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method, by Don Dillman; Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement by David Miller; Survey Errors and Survey Costs by Robert Groves; and Mass Media Research: Designs and Methods, by Roger Wimmer and Joseph Dominick. This information was then used to review the survey's credibility in each of the areas of sampling, dealing with nonresponse and wording of the survey questions.

Sampling

Fowler (1993) describes standards for probability sampling as part of a total survey design in which all features of the survey are evaluated to determine the quality of the survey and credibility of the data.

The sample frame (people in the population who have a chance to be selected for the survey) should correspond as closely as possible to the whole population studied. The report should include the percentage of the study population who had a chance to be selected and how those omitted were distinctive from those included. If respondents were selected from a list, it should be determined how the list was compiled, when and how additions and deletions were made and the characteristics of those left off the list. Whenever an identifiable group of the population is selected at a different rate than the rest of the population, that group sample should be weighted so that the oversampled people are not overrepresented in the sample statistics (Fowler, 1993, p. 17-18).

For telephone surveys in which only self-reporting is appropriate, a procedure should be used to objectively designate one person from each selected household to be the respondent. It would be biased to select whoever answered the telephone because then each person would not have a known chance of selection. Each response should then be weighted by the number of eligible people in that household, otherwise any estimate related to marital status will be distorted (Fowler, 1993, p. 25-26). Groves notes that undercoverage of those members of the population without telephone service is common in telephone surveys and that failure to have telephone service is strongly correlated with family income. Overcoverage is also possible with households that have more than one telephone. Responses from those respondents with more than one telephone should be weighted to compensate (Groves, 1989, p. 116-117).

Fowler states that sample size should be selected by determining how large a sample will be required to provide a minimally adequate sample of the smallest subgroup of importance. Other less desirable methods, according to Fowler, of selecting sample size are specifying a fraction of the population, calculating a desired confidence level for one variable and selecting a "usual" or "typical" sample size.

Design of sample selection affects estimates of sampling error. Sample errors for simple random samples should not be reported if the design included other methods or when it is not a probability sample.

If a probability sample is not used, the survey should warn readers that the results cannot be generalized to the whole population (Fowler, 1993, p. 33-36).

This study used the lead researcher's responses to questions 2 to 5 in appendix C to determine the degree of difference between the sample frame and the population and whether the survey researchers took steps to ensure that this difference was as small as possible. The readership survey report prepared by the researchers (appendix D) was analyzed to determine if the sample frame and these differences were reported along with the survey results. Responses to questions 6 and 7 were used, along with an analysis of the readership survey report, to determine if oversampled groups were weighted correctly. Responses to questions 8 through 10 and an analysis of the survey report provided evidence of possible bias in the selection of respondents from identified households and whether members of the population with more than one telephone were overrepresented. Response to question 11 was used to determine whether the researchers used the correct method to determine sample size. Response to question 13 and an analysis of the survey report was used to determine whether the sampling error was correctly computed and reported.

Based on the researchers' performance in these areas, it was determined whether the standards for accurate sampling were met.

Nonresponse

Fowler notes that all surveys should include efforts to increase response rates and to avoid procedures that create differences between respondents and nonrespondents. The effect of a low response rate depends on the percentage not responding and the extent those not responding differ from the population. Nonresponse is one of the most important sources of systematic error. If "screening" is used to find members of the population to be studied, screened units not in the study should not enter the response rate calculation (Fowler, 1993, p. 38-39).

A response rate of 75 percent is often used as a minimum. A response rate of much less than 65 percent indicates one or more basic steps were not followed for a telephone survey (Fowler, 1993, p. 40,45). For telephone surveys, 6 to 10 calls should be made to each household in the evening or on weekends. Calls made during the day will create bias for those who are unemployed, retired or working at home as well as for households with small children. This type of bias is also introduced when interviewers

call random numbers within a particular exchange until a certain number of respondents have been selected (Fowler, 1993, p. 44-45,49-51).

Mail surveys that look professional, personalized and attractive will have a positive effect and make them easier to complete. The response task should be clear and easy. Questions should be attractively spaced, easy to read and uncluttered. Sending money with questionnaires increases response rate, as does sending reminder cards or letters along with replacement surveys and calling respondents on the phone to remind them to send in surveys (Fowler, 1993, p. 45-47).

Miller (1991) suggests these other methods of improving response rates to mailed questionnaires: including a cover letter from sponsoring institution describing the importance of the questionnaire with an appeal from a prestigious, respected person; appealing to altruistic values and advancement of knowledge; promising a report of results to be sent to the respondent; timing questionnaires to arrive at the home near the end of the week; using envelopes with regular stamps rather than business-reply postage; designing the questionnaire with an aesthetically pleasing cover, interesting title, attractive page format and using type that is easy to read in low light with poor vision (Miller, 1991, p. 153-155).

A study by Vigderhous (1981) found that the best time to call a household to find someone home was 6 to 7 p.m. on weeknights. The study also found that it is usually easier to find someone home during the spring and fall rather than during the summer and winter.

This study used the survey researcher's responses to questions 14 and 15 in appendix C and an analysis of the survey report to determine whether survey researchers took adequate measures to attempt to increase the response rate and whether screening methods were used correctly. Response to question 16 was used to determine whether potential bias was introduced in the process of telephoning respondents. The survey instrument and survey report were compared to guidelines for appearance and increasing response rates to mailed surveys. Based on the researchers' performance in these areas, it was determined whether the standards for increasing response rate and reducing differences between respondents and nonrespondents were met.

Questionnaire wording

Fowler (1993) states that survey questions should be designed to be reliable, in that they provide consistent measures in comparable situations, and valid, in that answers correspond to what they are intended to measure. He presents the following general guidelines:

Each respondent should be asked the same question.

Each question should mean the same thing to every respondent.

Questions must be complete sentences.

Questions should be easy to read using simple words that are short and universally understood.

Questions should avoid terms with multiple meanings.

If any possibility of misunderstanding exists, respondents should be provided with definitions.

Supplementary questions should be used for complex questions (Fowler, 1993, p. 70-79).

In his 1995 book, Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation, Fowler gave the following additional guidance on survey questions:

- Survey questions should ask about first-hand experiences of respondents, not what they acquired second-hand.
- Respondents cannot answer questions about hypothetical situations that they have not encountered or how they will respond to something new.
- Few respondents are able to report the reasons they do the things they do, especially in complex situations.
- Unwarranted assumptions and hidden contingencies, such as respondents needing to have certain opportunities in order to answer the question, should be avoided.
- Feelings or behaviors must refer to a certain period of time.
- Survey instruments should be designed to make reading questions, following instructions and recording answers as easy as possible.
- Respondents should be given information on the priorities or goals of the task, the data collection process, how to play a respondent role and the purposes or goals of each subpart of the survey. (Fowler, 1995, p. 1-7).

This study used the researcher's response to question 19 in appendix C and an evaluation of the survey questions in appendix D to identify survey questions or procedures that violate these general guidelines.

Factual data questions

Fowler presented additional guidance on questions covering factual data and subjective states. The research objectives and the kind of answers needed to meet objectives should be defined. Questions should be designed separately from stating overall research goals, but each question should be matched to an objective.

Respondents should have shared, common understandings of the question meaning, and those meanings should be the ones intended by researchers. To ensure this, surveys should provide complete definitions and clarify ambiguities. But if definitions or rules for counting events are complex, surveys should add extra basic questions or ask respondents a series of questions so that researchers can put together the components needed to fit the needed definition. It should be as simple as possible for respondents to answer (Fowler, 1995, p. 8-20).

Respondents should know the answers to the questions being asked by having the information, being able to recall the information and being able to place it in a time frame. For most questions, self-respondents are better than proxy respondents. Small events or events with minimal impact on respondents should be placed within a shorter time frame. Most respondents will not make the extra effort to recall, so recall must be stimulated by adding introductory material to allow time for thinking about the event, asking multiple questions or stimulating associations. If the reporting of time is very important, accuracy can be improved by stimulating recall activities, using data collection procedures to generate boundaries or filling out diaries. Asking questions about a "usual" behavior assumes that there is a regularity to the event that may not be present. Answers should be provided that fit this reality (Fowler, 1995, p. 20-28).

Distortion can arise from the effect of "social desirability" in which respondents want to make themselves look good or avoid looking bad. Assuring confidentiality of responses and communicating this protection to respondents should reduce distortion. Confidentiality should be upheld by minimizing the use of names and other identifiers, keeping forms locked away, keeping nonstaff people away from forms and

disposing of them properly. The importance of response accuracy also should be communicated by having respondents make a commitment to providing accurate answers (Fowler, 1995, p. 28-33).

Increasing the respondent's perception that the question is appropriate and necessary also can reduce distortion. This can be accomplished by providing an explanation of the purpose of the information, adjusting the level of detail of answers given, allowing respondents to answer in code and asking sensitive questions only if the answer has a clear role in the research (Fowler, 1995, p. 33-45). Respondents look for clues to how their answers will be interpreted. Questions should be designed to minimize respondents' perceptions that their answers will be judged negatively. This can be accomplished with the following techniques: Providing introductions to questions that give socially acceptable reasons for negative answers, giving negative and positive answers equal time and acceptability, providing a way to state whether this answer is average for the stated time period, allowing respondents to present themselves in a positive light, allowing respondents to write in amounts rather than using response categories that give clues to what is considered "normal," or using broad categories as responses rather than specifics (Fowler, 1995, p. 35-45). For more sensitive questions, respondents can be given a series of socially undesirable states and allowed to answer whether they fall into any one of them rather than specifying which one. More elaborate coding mechanisms may be necessary with some information (Fowler, 1995, p. 35-45).

This study used the survey researcher's responses to questions 1 and 18 in appendix C to determine whether the survey's goals and objectives were defined and whether they were matched to questions. Response to question 20 and an analysis of the survey questions in appendix D were used to determine if the questions were written so that all respondents could understand their intended meanings and to identify any questions that may have been too complex for respondents to answer correctly. Responses to questions 19 and 22 of the researcher interview questions and an analysis of the survey questions were used to determine whether efforts were taken to increase the accuracy of respondents' answers and to stimulate respondents' recall abilities. Responses to questions 21 and 23 through 27 and an analysis of the survey questions were used to determine whether researchers made efforts to reduce distortion from social desirability by addressing confidentiality, commitment to accuracy and sensitivity of questions.

The researchers' performances in these areas were analyzed to determine if standards were met for writing survey questions to gather factual information.

Subjective states of respondents

The most commonly asked questions in surveys deal with how respondents feel about themselves or others. Results of these questions involving the subjective states of respondents always are relative and should only be used comparatively, not as having absolute meaning. Small changes in wording can produce very different results, as does the wording of response alternatives in which people think about the ordinal position of the response as well as the meaning of the words. The last response alternative presented is often the most often chosen (Fowler, 1995, p. 46, 77).

Researchers must define what is to be rated, the dimension or continuum on which it will be placed and the characteristics of the continuum. Response tasks should use a single, well-defined dimension, and categories should be clearly ordered and unambiguous. Categories should provide researchers with as much information as possible about how respondents compare to others. To the extent they are valid, more categories are generally better than fewer. Most respondents can use meaningfully five to seven categories. Adjective scales are more consistently calibrated than numbers (Fowler, 1995, p. 47-55).

More direct ratings usually are better than "agree-disagree" ratings, which have the following drawbacks: Questions often are complex and sometimes more complicated than necessary, questions can only be asked about extremes of a continuum in order to be interpretable, questions often yield little more information even when more categories are offered, respondents who are less educated tend to answer "agree" (Fowler, 1995, p. 55- 57).

For rank ordering, it is generally best to give a list and have respondents rate each one according to a scale. All respondents should be using the same scale and given an explanation on how to use it. If the purpose is to identify priorities or preferences, open-ended questions give more choice and offer the opportunity to learn the unexpected. The variety of answers may make it hard to analyze, but respondents like to answer in their own words. A list of possible answers may be provided, unless it is very long or unknown (Fowler, 1995, p. 57- 60).

Magnitude estimation provides more information about distances between categories using numbers with absolute meaning and some algebraic properties. They may not be meaningful for some subjective states, are time-consuming and seem to work best with respondents chosen for their cognitive abilities (Fowler, 1995, p. 60- 61).

Questions about ideas should measure only one dimension and provide an option for those who do not know enough about an idea to have an opinion. Multi-item measures provide more detailed measurement across a larger spectrum than single questions, produce a better measure of what a set of questions have in common and may be the best way to measure complex states (Fowler, 1995, p. 60- 67).

Dillman (1978) provided the following additional guidance on question structure and wording. Open-ended questions may place too much demand on respondents, causing them to feel embarrassment. Other drawbacks include the difficulty of constructing meaningful variables, reading respondents' handwriting and respondents' providing answers that do not match the question asked (Dillman, 1978, p. 88-89).

Questions should avoid abbreviations and unconventional phrases. They should be specific and use simple words without making the question too long (Dillman, 1978, p. 98-99). Bias can be introduced by implying a certain behavior has been or should be engaged in, using unequal comparisons, using rankings with a lack of balance between positive and negative categories and using words with strong emotional appeals (Dillman, 1978, p. 101-105).

Wimmer and Dominick provide the following suggestions on avoiding question-order bias, in which previous questions predispose respondents to certain answers: initial questions should be simple and easy to answer so that respondents become accustomed to answering questions; demographic data, personal questions and sensitive information should be at the end of the questionnaire; and questions should progress logically from general to specific with clear and logical transitions (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 119-120).

This study used the survey researcher's responses to questions 28 to 30 and 31 in appendix C and an analysis of the survey questions in appendix D to identify the types of questions used to measure subjective states. Each category of question identified was compared to guidelines for that category of question. The responses to these questions and analysis of the survey questions also were used to determine

whether bias was introduced into the survey from the ordering of the questions or response alternatives, whether the types of questions used were appropriate for the information needed, and whether the results of subjective states questions were appropriately reported. This information was analyzed to determine if the survey met the standards for writing survey questions to measure subjective states.

Presurvey evaluation of questions

Questionnaires should be tested beforehand to find out if respondents can answer the questions and perform the tasks required through focus groups, intensive individual interviews or field pretesting. Although this step adds additional time and cost, it is the best way to ensure that the survey is a reasonable measure of what is being studied (Fowler, 1995, p. 104). As a method of presurvey evaluation, focus groups can help define the topic and research questions, examine assumptions about the reality respondents will be asked to report on and evaluate assumptions about vocabulary, concepts and terms. The goal of the focus group should be to get participants with a diversity of experiences and perceptions unless large differences in opinions about the topic would make the people feel uncomfortable (Fowler, 1995, p. 105-110).

Intensive individual interviews allow researchers to find out how respondents understand the questions and perform the response tasks. Interviews should be conducted with a range of people who will be respondents in the actual survey (Fowler, 1995, p. 110-114).

Field pretesting is conducted when the survey is near the final form. For mail surveys, respondents may be observed filling out forms and questioned about whether any questions were confusing or hard to answer (Fowler, 1995, p. 115-116).

This study used the researcher's response to question 31 in appendix C, question 10 of the executive editor interview questions in appendix A and question 15 of the editors' questionnaire in appendix B to determine if any methods of presurvey evaluation were used in creation of the readership survey and whether these methods were properly used.

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CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Research standards

In spring 1999, the marketing organization owned by the parent company of this newspaper conducted a readership survey. Other readership surveys had been conducted for this newspaper in 1993 and in 1996. The 1993 survey was conducted by a different marketing organization. For the 1999 survey of this newspaper, the marketing organization purchased a list of random telephone numbers for a 14-county area surrounding the newspaper. Interviewers called these numbers in an attempt to recruit respondents for the survey. These respondents were mailed questionnaires, and interviewers called them back on the phone to record their answers.

The objectives for the survey were originally determined by Clark, Martire and Bartolomere, a nationwide marketing organization that conducted the 1993 survey for this newspaper, as well as for other newspapers owned by the parent company. When the marketing organization owned by the parent company took control of the survey in 1996, they met with publishers of the newspapers to make recommendations for changes to the objectives and to establish priorities for the objectives. These current objectives are results of these meetings between researchers and publishers. They are listed in order from most important to least important as assigned by publishers:

- To determine and compare current measures of reader satisfaction, and editorial and circulation service with previous measures.
- To obtain current product positioning information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the newspaper.
- To identify a strategy for circulation growth linked to reader interests and needs and to illuminate perceived barriers to circulation growth.
- To create a current profile of the marketplace, readers, non-readers, subscribers, and newsstand readers.
- To provide a variety of advertising/shopping pattern measurements for sales support activity.

Upon completion of the 1999 survey, an "executive summary" of the results was provided to the newspaper's publisher and executive editor.

Sampling

The executive summary did not include any information on what percentage of the population had a chance to be selected for the survey or how those who were omitted might have been distinctive. Neither did the researchers determine this information. According to Fowler, the report of results should include this information (Fowler, 1993, p. 17-18). But based on information gathered from the survey's lead researcher during an individual focused interview (appendix C), it appears that the sample frame for this survey differed from the whole population under study in the following ways:

- Only members of households with working telephones were included.
- Only those who were at home to receive the recruiting call from 5 to 9 p.m. weekdays and Saturday mornings and afternoons between March 23, 1999, to April 20, 1999, were included.
- Those households with a member employed by an advertising agency, newspaper, television station, radio station or market research company were excluded.
- Those who were not willing to provide their names and addresses for mailing of the questionnaires were excluded.
- Only those heads of household older than 18 years were included.

Respondents were recruited by having interviewers call telephone numbers on a list provided by a separate marketing research organization. The researcher purchased a list of 3,000 random telephone numbers covering a 14-county area specified for the survey. This list included nonworking, business and other unusable numbers.

The researcher was unsure how the Maritz Marketing Research compiled the call list that he purchased, and he had no information on how deletions or additions were made to the list. He stated that it was not determined how those left off the list might have been distinctive. Fowler states that researchers should determine this information (Fowler, 1993, p. 17-18). According to information provided by a sampling consultant at Maritz Marketing Research, the call list used by the researcher is compiled from a national database purchased from InfoUSA. This organization scans all white page telephone directories in the United States, then addends this list with phone numbers gleaned from other household records, such as

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drivers' license, credit card, magazine subscription, bank, mortgages, banks and others. The sampling consultant said this database is updated every three months.

According to information from Maritz, to produce a random digit dialing list, a frequency count is made of the number of telephones in every telephone block group in each county and ZIP code area throughout the United States. A telephone block group is defined as all telephone numbers having the first eight digits in common. The county or ZIP code area within the sample area is selected in proportion to the desired sampling frame. A telephone block is selected within that area in proportion to its frequency. The last two digits of the telephone number are randomly generated with an equal likelihood, and appended to the telephone block group to form a full 10-digit telephone number. The researcher said there was no particular reason why this list provider was chosen.

Interviewers attempted to contact each household on the list. Respondents were chosen from each household by requesting the male or female head of the household older than 18 with the most recent birthday. This procedure was used to objectively designate a respondent, but according to the researcher, it was used to "randomize male-female responses." It was chosen because the researcher had experience in using that method at another research organization, as well as having seen it used by other researchers.

But the researcher said that females were overrepresented in the study because they were more likely to answer the telephone and complete the survey. It was determined that they were overrepresented by comparing survey results to census information. Therefore, the females responses were weighted by calculating female and male populations within each county, according to purchased population projections based on census information. According to the executive summary of survey results, the weights were calculated by taking the total number of adult males or females in each county and dividing it by the number of interviews per county and gender. Each weight was then multiplied by each corresponding response in all weighted tabulations.

Young adults aged 18 to 24 also were underrepresented in the survey according to census projections, but that group's data was not weighted, primarily because respondents were required to be heads of household, which few were, and because it would have made the survey too complex, the researcher said. Respondents were not questioned about the number of eligible adults in the household nor about the number of telephone lines in the household. Therefore, no weighting was done to compensate for

these effects. According to Groves, responses from respondents with more than one telephone should be weighted to compensate for possible overcoverage (Groves, 1989, p. 116-117).

The number of respondents recruited by telephone to be mailed questionnaires was 500. This number was chosen, according to the researcher, to ensure that responses were received from at least 400 respondents. The minimum of 400 survey responses was chosen as the sample size because that number was used for the newspaper's first survey in 1993, and because the researcher views it as the most common number of surveys to be completed. It also produces the "industry standard" of a 5 percent margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level, the researcher said. He also stated that results are reported for smaller groups, such as for the number of males or females in the newspaper's core area, which could come from as few as 160 to 180 surveys. Therefore, a larger sample size would be preferable to increase the size of these groups, although the publishers in the newspaper group are not willing to pay for a larger sample size, he said. Fowler stated that the sample size should be selected by determining how large a sample is required to provide an adequate sample of smaller groups of the sample (Fowler, 1993, p. 33-36).

The sampling error was not computed or reported for individual survey questions. The only sampling error determined and reported was the overall maximum, which was plus or minus 4.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. It was determined by consulting a listing of simple random sample errors. The survey was conducted as a simple random sample probability sample.

No subgroups were selected at different rates from the general population because none were identified as being important. There were no quotas for male or female respondents.

Not all of the standards for accurate sampling were met. The method of calling numbers on a large list with no more than three callbacks until the required 500 respondents were recruited most likely resulted in the overrepresentation of females in the sample, rather than the explanation given by the researcher. If the screening procedure was used correctly, it would not matter if females answered the telephone more often. The screening method should have been used to ensure the random selection of respondents from a household despite who answered the phone. Although it does seem that this procedure was used correctly to randomly select a respondent from each household, the researcher seems to believe it is being used to try to ensure the correct percentage of male and female respondents.

Of the various methods that could be used to determine sample size, the researcher used one of the least preferred methods, according to Fowler (Fowler, 1993, p. 33-36). The survey would benefit from having a larger sample size so that a larger sample of subgroups of the population could be studied.

Because the sample only includes those with telephones and because the data is not weighted according to the number of telephone lines in the households, it is possible that the sample is biased toward those with higher incomes. The marital status results are likely to be distorted, also. Overrepresentation of females was compensated for by weighting the data but underrepresentation of younger age groups was not. It appears that overall sampling error was determined and reported correctly.

Nonresponse

Interviewers called telephone numbers on the random list a maximum of three times during the evening and on Saturdays. They attempted to call all the numbers on the original list, then called back those working residential numbers a second and third time until 500 respondents were recruited. It was not determined how many total calls were placed. Surveys were then mailed to those 500 recruited respondents. Interviewers called back respondents to gather their responses on the phone. Responses were gathered from 412 respondents, resulting in a response rate of 82.4 percent.

Surveys were mailed out with a $2 incentive included because of the researcher's desire to reimburse respondents for the amount of time they would have to spend to fill out a survey of this length. The researcher stated that the format of calling to recruit respondents and then mailing out questionnaires so that respondents could see the entire survey in advance was a method used to increase response rate. These methods were chosen, according to the researcher, because the survey has so many questions. "There's too much of a chance [if it were administered entirely over the phone] for people to just start giving you any old answer just because they're tired – respondent fatigue," he said.

The respondents were encouraged to call in to report their answers over the phone. "If there are questions, the interviewer can manage that process and make sure the information is complete and all accurately filled out," the researcher said. According to the researcher, no other methods were used to attempt to increase response rate.

The questionnaire (appendix D) was nine pages in length with questions written in a small type size and very little white space, creating a cluttered appearance. It did not include a cover letter, cover or

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title, and only a short paragraph explaining that respondents would be contacted by phone to record their answers. There was no explanation of how the survey would be used nor any offer made to make a report of the finding available to respondents. Some of the questions included very long lists of possible responses, which could make it difficult for respondents to determine which box to check with which response. Questions were printed in shaded boxes, which caused them to be difficult to read. Questions should be spaced well, easy to read and uncluttered, according to Fowler (Fowler, 1993, p. 45-47). Other suggestions for increasing response rate are including a cover letter and promising a report of the finding to respondents (Miller, 1991, p. 153-155).

The survey achieves its 82 percent response rate because of the method employed to recruit respondents by phone before mailing out the survey questionnaires. Other methods, such as improving the questionnaire's appearance, making it easier to read and fill out, and providing more explanation of the importance of the survey could have improved the response rate.

More troubling, though, is the potential bias introduced by the calling method. Although calls were placed in springtime evenings, a good time to call to find people at home, they began with large number of 3,000 telephone numbers and only called until the required number of 500 respondents were recruited. This resulted in few callbacks. According to Fowler, bias is introduced for those who are at home more often, such as the retired, unemployed, or those working at home and with small children when interviewers call random numbers within a particular exchange until a certain number of respondents have been selected (Fowler, 1993, p. 49-51).

Questionnaire wording

Like the objectives, the wording and organization of the questions originated with the 1993 survey that was created by a different research organization. Over time, they have been altered, with some removed and some added, according to recommendations of the researchers, as well as suggestions of publishers and other newspaper executives. This has resulted in a hodge-podge of different questions from different sources that do not seem to follow any guidelines.

Interviewers were instructed to read the questions and responses as written without giving explanations of their own, according to the researcher. They could reread the question if requested or if they believed it was answered incorrectly. They were instructed to avoid making comments about the

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responses or attempting to explain the question. Interviewers were not monitored, so it is not possible to know if these instructions were followed.

The questionnaire (appendix D) consisted of 54 questions, including a few with as many as 54 separate items for respondents to rate. The questions will be analyzed individually and then in groups according to type and problem, according to the guidelines for writing survey questions cited earlier.

Question 1: "Which of the following places are of particular interest to you when it comes to news coverage?" Possible responses given are the state, an area of the state and various cities, then ending with "your own community." This question is vague. It does not adequately explain what is meant by "particular interest to you when it comes to news coverage." This question could be interpreted to be asking which of the locations does a better job of covering its own local news. Also, there are no broader options given than the state, nor a "none" or "other" option for those not interested in any area in the state.

Question 2: "Thinking only of local news in your own community, which one of the following sources do you rely on most for the local news that interests you?" Response options given are "Television," "Radio," some newspapers in the state listed by name, "a weekly newspaper," "the Internet," "none" and "other (please specify)." The phrase "your own community" is not defined. Respondents' definitions of "local" and "community" could vary widely, as pointed out by Layton (Layton, 1999, p. 55).

Questions 3-6: The researcher stated that for these questions, respondents are not supposed to realize who is sponsoring the survey, but this newspaper is listed as the first response option in each question, which could bias responses. These questions should include a "none" possible response also.

Questions 6, 7: "Of the papers you have mentioned above, are the papers you read usually delivered to your house during the week, purchased from a rack or store, or do you usually read copies supplied by someone else?" The names of eight newspapers and "other (please specify)" are listed to match with how the newspaper was obtained. "If you usually read copies of (this newspaper) supplied by someone else, who do you obtain your copies from?" Response options are "your place of work; friend, neighbor, or relative; other (please specify)." These questions should provide a response option for those who believe there is no "usual" to these events, according to Fowler's suggestions (Fowler, 1995, p. 20-28).

Question 9: "Would you say you completely agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or completely disagree to each of the following words or phrases that might be used to describe (this

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newspaper) based on what you have seen or heard, or your own experience?" Following are 25 statements to be rated. This question is vague in wording. It should be more clear that items refer to how well they describe the newspaper. The number of positive and negative items to rate is not equal. There are 17 positive items and only 7 negative. According to Dillman, using rankings with a lack of balance between positive and negative categories can introduce bias (Dillman, 1978, p. 101-105).

Question 10: "In your opinion, do you feel that (this newspaper) has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse in the last year or two?" It is unclear what criteria respondents should use to judge the newspaper. It should more specifically refer to news coverage or delivery or whatever elements are to be judged. According to Fowler, questions should include options for those who do not know enough about an idea to have an opinion (Fowler, 1995, p. 60-67). Therefore, a response option should be available for respondents who do not have enough knowledge of the newspaper to answer this question, such as "I do not know" or "not applicable."

Question 11: "Using a five point scale, please tell us how you feel about the news reported in (this newspaper) where a 1 represents "it's yesterday's news" and a 5 means its "fresh and up-to-date news?" A middle response option of 3 is listed as neutral. Response options numbers 2 and 4 are not accompanied by an adjective phrase to describe them, leaving respondents to guess at what they represent. According to Fowler, adjective scales are more consistent (Fowler, 1995, p. 47-55). Again, a response option for those without enough knowledge to answer this question should be included.

Question 16: "If you do not currently have (this newspaper) delivered to your home, what could (this newspaper) do, other than lower its subscription price, to get you to become a subscriber?" The question is open-ended. This question asks about what could be considered a hypothetical situation by asking respondents to predict what they would do. According to Fowler, respondents cannot answer questions about how they will respond to something new (Fowler, 1995, p. 1-7).

Question 18: "If you do not currently have (this newspaper) delivered to your home, did you happen to read the most recent edition of Applause delivered each Wednesday to some homes in the area?" The response options are yes or no. This question could be difficult to understand with so many prepositional phrases. Also, "Applause," which is a publication the newspaper sends free to nonsubscribers

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once a week, is not described or explained. Questions should be easy to read and be universally understood (Fowler, 1993, p. 70-79).

Questions 23, 24: "Which of the following news and advertising topics are of particular interest to you personally? How would you rate (this newspaper) when it comes to coverage of these items – would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?" Following this question are 54 items for respondents to rate. The arrangement of these questions could be confusing. Question 24 should include an option of "not applicable" or "I do not know." When respondents indicate that they are "not at all interested" in a topic, it is unlikely that they would be knowledgeable about the newspaper's performance on that topic. These items to rate include the abbreviations "anniv." for anniversaries and "commod." for commodities, which could be confusing to respondents and should be avoided, according to Dillman (Dillman, 1978, p. 98-99).

Question 25b: "Which radio stations, if any, have you listened to in the last seven days for more than 15 minutes?" Response options are the names of 11 radio stations, and "other (please specify)." This question is ambiguous. It is not clear whether the question is asking if the respondent listened to a radio station for a total of 15 minutes over the course of 7 days or 15 minutes per day or 15 minutes on any 1 of the 7 days. Respondents are left guessing to which one the question refers.

Questions 29-33: These questions are inquiring about shopping patterns, and although they are very similar, there are enough small differences to make them confusing. Questions 29, 30 and 33 include the phrase "whether you bought anything or not," but questions 31 and 32 do not. Respondents are left wondering if the phrases were inadvertently left out or whether "shopping" in questions 31 and 32 only applies to making purchases. Questions 31 and 33 include the phrase "you or other members of your household," but questions 29, 30, and 32 do not. Again, this question leaves respondents to wonder whether the others only apply to the respondent or to family members as well. But, respondents should only be asked about their own first-hand experiences, not those of other household members (Fowler, 1995, p. 1-7). Each of these seven questions uses a different time frame, which could be confusing to respondents and their attempts at recall. Questions 30-32 list different stores, but do not specify whether they refer to only stores in some locations or any store location.

Question 37: "If you live outside of (county in which the newspaper is located), how often do you visit (city in which the newspaper is located)?" Response options are "to shop, for entertainment or dining,

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for professional or legal services, for healthcare services, and stay overnight." They are listed with the symbol "#" before them, but the question is unclear as to how the question should be answered.

Question 38: "Which one source of advertising information do you rely on most when it comes to shopping for each of the following ... ?" Respondents are given 18 categories of products and services to match with name of this newspaper, "other daily newspaper, a weekly shopper, mailed advertisements/catalogs, radio, TV." The question does not define what is meant by "rely on" in this context. It should have "none" and "other" response options.

Question 39: "How long have you lived in this part of the state?" Four time increments are listed for response options. This question is very ambiguous. "This part of the state" is not defined and could be defined differently by each respondent.

Question 40: "Which of the following categories includes your age?" Six age categories are listed, starting with "18-24 year of age" and ending with "65 or over." Most age categories are divided into 9-year increments except the last option, which is "65 and older." Respondents could take these options to mean that younger respondents are more desirable or that older respondents' answers are not valid. These age categories should be extended to continue the 9-year increments up to a higher age, such as 90.

Question 43: "Which of the following categories best fits your employment status?" Response options are "employed full-time, employed part-time, retired, not employed, disabled, student, other (please specify)." In order to reduce the social desirability effect, in which respondents do not answer truthfully if they believe the answer will reflect poorly upon themselves, this question could allow respondents to state whether this is their usual status or restrict the status to a specific time period. Other possibilities, as suggested by Fowler, are to provide an open-ended question in order for uncomfortable respondents to present their employment status in a more positive light (Fowler, 1995, p. 35-45).

Question 44: "If employed full or part-time, what is your occupation?" Response options begin with "professional" and end with "operative/laborer" and "other (please specify)." Respondents could view the list of responses as being in order from most to least desirable. A better approach could be to list responses alphabetically or more randomly.

Question 45: "What is the highest level of education you've completed?" Response options are high school, some college, college graduate, post graduate." This question could be very uncomfortable for

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respondents who have not completed high school. These respondents could feel that their answers are not valid because they are not even included. This question could include lower levels or be open-ended to avoid giving the impression that those who have not completed high school will be judged negatively. This should be easy to accomplish because the response options are not categorized.

Question 47: "Do you or your family own or rent your home?" Response options are own home, own condominium/apartment, rent house, rent apartment/condominium." Respondents could view the switch in wording from "own home" to "rent house" as providing a clue to how the responses to this question are judged by researchers. This question should include an "other" option for those who do not rent or own a home, such as those living with family or friends, or in a group situation or other living arrangements.

Question 48: "Has anyone asked you to subscribe to or have a newspaper delivered in the last three months?" Response options are yes and no. This question is confusing, and it should more specifically ask whether someone working for the newspaper, such as telemarketers, has asked them to subscribe. As it appears to be from the follow-up question, the intent of this question seems to be to determine if any other newspapers are attempting to increase circulation in the newspaper's area. But as it is worded, it asks if "anyone" has asked them to subscribe, which could refer to respondents' friends or family as well.

Question 50: "Are you …" Response options are White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Other (please specify)." Very few response options are given, which could leave those whose race is not listed to feel that their answers are not considered valid. Responses should be more inclusive.

Respondents are asked about behavior of other members of their households or information that they may not have from first-hand experiences in three of the questions. These are questions 31, 33 and 34. No questions attempt to have respondents explain the reasons they do what they do, although one question, number 16, requires respondents to think about a hypothetical situation.

Some questions could only be answered by those who have read the newspaper, although the question is posed to all respondents, without screening out nonreaders. These questions also do not include a response option for those without enough knowledge to answer the question. These questions are 10, 11 and 24. According to Fowler, questions about feelings or behaviors must refer to a certain period of time

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(Fowler, 1995, p. 1-7). A total of 18 questions ask about a feeling or behavior without tying it to a specific period in time. These are questions 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 38 and 43.

Several questions are difficult to answer because of confusing or awkward layout of the questions, long lists or splits between pages. These are questions 6, 7, 9, 23, 24, 35 and 37. Neither the questionnaire nor screening interview included any information for respondents on the priority of providing accurate information. The only instructions included with the questionnaire explained that they would be contacted to collect their answers on the phone.

According to the researcher, interviewers discouraged people from answering the questions for anyone else, but it is not known how closely interviewers followed these instructions or any others because they were not monitored. It was also possible that mailed surveys were completed by someone other than the intended respondent or that respondents misled interviewers.

Factual data

Of the total of 54 questions on the survey, 38 were factual data questions and 16 were subjective state questions.

Because the research objectives and questions originally were defined by another research organization, it is not known whether each question was defined separately from stating the research objectives. The changes made to the questions and rating scales have resulted in a hodgepodge of scales and types of answers. The researcher seems to have only vague knowledge of the connection between questions and objectives. Therefore, it does not appear that the kinds of answers needed to meet the objectives have been defined. It also does not appear that the questions and objectives have been well matched. According to the researcher, objectives are listed in order of priority, with objective number 1 having been selected as the most important. But the last objective listed, that of providing advertising and shopping measurements, seems to have the most questions matched to it. Fourteen questions seem to support that objective. These are questions 21, 22, 26 and 28 through 38. Six questions, those numbered 9 through 14, appear to support objective number 1. Eleven questions appear to support objective 2. These are questions 2 through 6, 8, 15, 19, 24, 25a and 25b. Five questions, numbered 1, 16, 23, 48 and 49, appear to support objective 3. Eleven appear to support objective 4. These are questions 27, 39 through 47, and 50. Three questions do not appear to support any objectives.

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A total of 16 questions are ambiguous with undefined terms. These are questions 1, 2, 10, 18, 23, 34, 25b, 29 through 33, 37, 38, 39 and 48. No questions seem to be complex enough to warrant the addition of more basic questions or a series of questions. For questions that asked the respondents to recall which news sources they had read or listened to, the applicable time frame ranged from 1 to 7 days, which appears to be a short enough time frame these events. But questions that inquired about shopping and recreational behavior used time frames ranging from 3 to 12 months, which could be too long of a time frame without recall stimulation. Questions about Internet usage cover the last 7 days, which also could be difficult for respondents to recall. None of the questions included introductory material, multiple questions or any other methods to stimulate recall, as suggested by Fowler (Fowler, 1995, p. 20-28). The researcher stated that he and others involved in the survey were more interested in respondents' immediate impressions and what they believed, rather than actual events. Questions 6 and 7 ask about a "usual" event without providing a response option that would allow the respondent who believed there was no regularity to these events to provide an accurate answer.

The following statement was read to respondents during the screening interview: "Again, we are not selling anything, and all of your answers will remain strictly confidential." This was the only mention of confidentiality of responses. None was included in the questionnaire. In order to participate in the study, respondents were required to provide their names and addresses so that questionnaires could be mailed to them. Numbers on the backs of the questionnaires were used to track which respondents had mailed in their responses. Although this information was not released, the forms were not kept locked. Anyone in the research organization could have gained access to them or to the computer files containing this information. The researcher was not sure of how the forms were disposed of after use. These procedures are contrary to Fowler's requirements for assuring confidentiality (Fowler, 1995, p. 28-33).

There was no written or verbal statement made to respondents or required of them to commit to providing accurate answers, as suggested by Fowler to communicate the importance of providing accurate responses (Fowler, 1995, p. 28-33). Not only are they given no guidance or instructions on how to play a respondent role, but also they are not advised as to when they should fill out the questionnaire. Answers could be distorted if respondents read the questionnaire over before going back to fill it out or by putting it aside for some time, reading other newspapers, and then filling it out. No verbal or written explanation of

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the purpose of the survey or specific questions is provided to respondents. The researcher stated that some respondents have refused to answer questions 46 and 50, which ask about income and race. Some also have expressed confusion about the purpose of these questions. Fowler states that sensitive questions should be asked only if they have a clear role in the research (Fowler, 1995, p. 33-45). The researcher stated that the question on race is asked, although no analysis is done with it, because "some people want to know what is the percent."

Respondents are read the following statement during the screening interview: "There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in your opinions." No written statement of this type exists in the questionnaire. No questions include introductions explaining reasons for negative answers or use any other technique to minimize respondents' perceptions that their responses could be judged negatively, as by Fowler (Fowler, 1995, p. 35-45).

Many questions could provide clues to respondents of what the "expected" or "acceptable" responses are, which can create a social desirability effect (Fowler, 1995, p. 35-45). Question 1 does not provide a "none" response option, giving the impression that respondents are expected to be especially interested in local and state news. Questions about newspaper reading habits, numbered 3 through 6, do not provide a "none" response option, giving the impression that it is expected that respondents read at least one newspaper. Question 40 asks the respondent's age, listing most ages in 9-year categories up to age 65. Respondents could interpret this as indicating that older respondents are less desirable than younger ones. Age categories could be extended in 9-year increments up to an older age, such as 90. Question 43 asks respondents to describe their employment status, which could cause discomfort or embarrassment for respondents who are unemployed. This question could allow respondents to present themselves in a more positive light by explaining the circumstances or stating whether the status is the norm. Question 44 lists occupations in what respondents could considered descending order of desirability. Responses begin with professional and end with operative/laborer. A better approach could be to list responses alphabetically or more randomly. Question 45 asks respondents, "What is the highest level of education you've completed?" The lowest level provided is high school, which could cause embarrassment for respondents who have not completed high school. Respondents could believe that any lower achieved level than high school is not acceptable or possibly not valid for this questionnaire. This question could be open-ended, allowing

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respondents to simply state their level of education, especially since the responses are not in categories, or lower levels added. Question 47 asks respondents whether they rent or own their home, without reference to any other living arrangement or "other" response option. Those who are living with parents, in a group setting or other arrangement could determine this to mean that they are excluded. Question 50 asks respondents' race, but includes few response options, which could leave those forced to answer "other" feeling excluded.

Of the total of 38 factual data questions in the survey, it appears that at least 25 do not meet one or more accepted research standards for writing survey questions. Distortion arising from the social desirability effect seems highly likely. Respondents are likely to find clues as to what types of answers are expected in at least 10 questions. Questions should include "none" options more frequently, as well as more inclusive response options. Many questions appear to be ambiguous and in need of rewriting to ensure all respondents understand the intended meaning of the questions.

Written statements covering confidentiality and informing respondents of the necessity of providing accurate answers should be included in the questionnaire. Also, methods to ensure confidentiality should be put into place. More effort should be put into stimulating respondents' recall by including introductory material to allow time to think about the event and to make associations with news sources.

Subjective states of respondents

Of the 54 total questions on the survey, 14 ask respondents to give their opinions or feelings. According to Fowler, researchers must define what is to be rated, the dimension or continuum on which it will be placed and the characteristics of the continuum (Fowler, 1995, p. 47-55). Many of these questions do not appear to meet this requirement. This appears to be the result of the questions coming from various sources, including recommendations from publishers and other newspaper executives. Questions use many types of rating scales and switch from one to the other without organization or explanation for respondents on how to use the scales. Scales used include: a four-point scale consisting of completely agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat and completely disagree; a five-point scale consisting of completely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neutral, somewhat dissatisfied and completely dissatisfied; a four-point scale consisting of excellent, good, fair and poor; and a three-point scale consisting of very interested, somewhat interested and not at all interested. Another scale, used for question 11, includes five numbers, of which

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three are matched to adjective phrases and two are not, leaving respondents to guess at what the two unidentified scales represent. Three open-ended questions also are included. No rating scale is used more than once. The use of so many different scales would seem to make the response task more difficult, confusing and time-consuming for respondents to become accustomed to using each one.

Questions 23 and 24 require respondents to rate 54 separate items with two different scales, how interested they are in the topic and how well the newspaper performs on the topic. None of these questions includes a "no opinion" option for those who may feel they are not informed enough to render an opinion. The three open-ended questions do not seem likely to produce embarrassment for respondents, as Dillman suggests they may (Dillman, 1978, p. 88-89). Like other questions, these are recorded over the phone, which would seem to reduce the likelihood that their answers would not match the question asked, although it does produce the possibility that the interviewers could misunderstand the responses or not record them properly. The researcher stated that he lists the verbatim answers to these questions, alphabetizes them and then categorizes them according to what he believes are the main points of the respondents' answers. The subjective nature of the researcher's selection of categories and how he determines which category to place each response into could introduce bias in the reporting of the open-ended questions.

No questions use rank ordering or magnitude estimation scales. Of subjective states questions, one uses an abbreviation (question 23) and several are not specific in explaining what is being asked, explaining meanings of words such as "local," or providing a specific time frame (questions 1, 2, 10, 24 and 38). A lack of balance between positive and negative categories is a problem with question 9. There are 17 positive statements to attribute to the newspaper and only 7 negative. This appears to create bias for achieving more positive rankings and thoughts about the newspaper in the results, especially since respondents are more likely to answer "agree."

The only guideline for preparing questions identified by the researcher was the attempt to order the questions logically and to prevent the respondents from knowing what news source sponsored the survey initially. Therefore, general questions about reading habits are placed first in the questionnaire, although this newspaper is listed as the first possible response in each of these questions. This could not only clue the respondents as to the sponsor of the survey, but also create a bias for its selection. These questions are not simple to answer, as Wimmer and Dominick suggest the initial questions should be,

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because they are ambiguously worded and require recall of newspaper reading habits without methods for stimulation of recall (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 119-120). Simpler questions could be used to start the survey. These are followed by more specific questions about this newspaper and respondents' interests. Other questions refer to delivery service. This section is followed by advertising-related questions about what radio stations are listened to, what advertising is used, and shopping and recreational habits. Personal and demographic information is asked about last in the survey.

In reporting results of the survey, factual data and subjective states are both reported as absolute meanings, as well as being compared to previous measures. According to Fowler, questions about subjective states of respondents should only be used comparatively, not as having absolute meaning (Fowler, 1995, p. 46, 77).

Presurvey Evaluation

The survey was not evaluated in any way prior to its implementation. There were no focus groups, interviews or field testing in which respondents could be observed or questioned about the difficulty in answering questions, as suggested by Fowler (Fowler, 1995, p. 104). Changes were made to the 1999 survey based on problems encountered with previous surveys for this newspaper, as well as others in the newspaper group. Also, no alternative version of the questionnaire was used, which means bias could result from the placement of responses because the last response option is the most often chosen, according to Fowler (Fowler, 1995, p. 77).

The researcher stated that no problems were encountered in conducting the survey, but he did point out what he believes are weaknesses in the survey. He said that the survey does not measure intensity of respondent interest in certain topics. Even though the scale used includes "somewhat interested" and "very interested," these two are combined in the analysis. This is done to maintain consistency with the original study. He also stated that a weakness is having respondents rate the newspaper on all topics, although they may have no interest in some topics. The low number of younger readers surveyed is a weakness, according to the researcher. "They are a hard group to get a hold of and to secure their agreement to do a study," he said. He said he believes another limitation of the survey is the inability to determine how respondents differ from nonrespondents. He also stated that he does not believe that a single survey can be used for a newspaper. "I think it can provide you some basic information, but I don't think it

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can capture the complexity that a newspaper market faces. … I think it would be an error to rely on it to too much of an extent. … There's so much wrapped up in the newspaper that's undefinable," he said.

The survey did not meet commonly accepted standards for presurvey evaluation. Although researchers did make changes to the survey based on problems they encountered in conducting it or observed in the results, no methods were used to gain information from respondents about how they answered the questions, performed the tasks or evaluated vocabulary, terms and concepts.

Underlying survey problems

The survey's number-1 objective, according to the researcher interview (appendix C), is to be able to compare measures of reader satisfaction and respondents' opinions of editorial and circulation service with previous measures. To do that, the lead researcher said, the 1999 survey is based on the original survey conducted for the newspaper by another organization in 1993. Choices of methodology and question wording seem to be selected in order to maintain consistency with the previous surveys rather than to follow accepted research practices and without regard to their effect on the survey's accuracy. According to the researcher, the publishers usually chose to maintain consistency with the original survey, against the researcher's recommendations. "In a large part, we had to build what we did on what they did in order to maintain some sense of consistency," he said. "We didn't always recommend that that's the way it should be, but that's the way the clients decided that they would prefer to see it done," the researcher said.

In discussing whether the survey results were weighted to compensate for the underrepresentation of younger people, the researcher said, "It wasn't done originally, so it wasn't really a consideration."

According to the researcher, this original survey used faulty research methods and reported erroneous research results. One of these faulty research procedures was making telephone calls to recruit respondents during the day. This created a bias for older people and others more likely to be at home during that time. Also, according to the researcher, errors were made in weighting the data for the original survey. The researcher also stated that he believed the original research organization hired an outside firm to collect the data and that some of the data may have been falsified. The researcher said:

> They tended to have more retired people. So what I suspect, in some degree, is that in the original 1993 survey, as would naturally happen with a very long telephone survey, that in some cases, they got a disproportionate amount of retirees with nothing to do other than sit and talk to you on

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the phone. And I think that that influenced their results in way that I wasn't too happy about. … I think, in at least four (markets), they made errors in the way they weighted the data.

Still, according to the researcher, the publishers wanted to make comparisons between these possibly biased original results and current results, even though the methodology and some questions have been changed so significantly to make comparisons unreliable.

The survey's lead researcher seems to have limited knowledge and experience with newspaper readership research. He chooses research methods based on his experience in product research, rather than their application for readership research. In response to questioning about how he uses open-ended responses, he said, "And I added it (an open-ended question) because I've used it … I generally use it for ads, as a means to establish whether the brand positioning is out there or not." He also seems to make choices based on "common industry practice" rather than standard research practices. In some instances he used correct procedures, but did not seem aware of the reasons for their use. He also seems to have little confidence in the research results. "In any phone research, it's nearly impossible to prevent people from misunderstanding. So you just sort of have to take what you get," he said.

In other instances, his choices of methods, he said, are hampered by the desires and disinterest of the publishers or their unwillingness to pay for procedures regardless of their effects on the survey's accuracy. He said the sample size is smaller than optimal size because of a reluctance to pay for a larger sample, likewise, he said the publishers are not willing to pay for more surveys, even though he said he thinks the survey should be divided into several smaller surveys. The amount of information that is reported in the "executive summary" also is dependent on what information the publishers are interested in. In response to questioning about whether the sample population differed from the total population, he said:

> The clients just won't pay for it. They're not going to pay to make sure those people who chose not to respond are different or the same in essence as the people who chose to respond. They barely pay to find out what the people who respond say, so I could see trying to convince them that we need to check on the people who don't respond to make sure they're not different. It wouldn't wash.

One purpose of the survey seems to be to help sell advertising and to market the newspaper. Of the 54 questions on the survey, 7 are directly related to determining the respondents' interest in news and how

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well the newspaper performs on news coverage and 17 relate to advertising, advertising competition and shopping. Those questions that relate to news interest or to editorial or overall coverage, which would most likely be of interest to editors, are questions 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 23 and 24. Those relating to advertising, shopping and advertising competition are 21, 22, 25a and 26-38. Advertising, delivery and circulation information could help publishers reach their objectives and could help increase circulation, but it is not useful to editors. The researcher said that he believes the shopping and advertising section is used as a tool to help sell advertising and that it is at odds with the rest of the survey.

Editors and Readership Research

Through the editors' focus group (appendix B), presession questionnaire responses, and the executive editor interview (appendix A), all of the editors agreed that it is important to have information about their readers. Reasons given were to make sure story selection, story assignments and layout are matched to the readers' wants and needs. Knowledge of nonreaders' reasons for avoiding the newspaper is also important, the editors said, so that changes could be made in order to entice them to read. The executive editor said that it is important for all editors to have this information about readers, but specifically noted its importance for the deputy editor's use in assigning stories to reporters. An editor said:

> I think it is very important to have information about our readers because to me our entire role here is to provide a product that is useful and helpful to our readers. And if we don't know what information they want and what they find useful, then I don't think we can provide the product that can be useful to them.

But although they all agreed that information about readers and nonreaders is important, editors were hard pressed to name any specific information they wanted or needed to know about readers. Two editors mentioned these general categories of information: age, education, interests, political affiliation or beliefs, and occupation. The executive editor also noted that it was important to know how nonreaders were getting news information. Editors also listed in their responses to the presession questionnaire that they wanted to know the readers' opinions of the newspaper and information about their buying habits and income.

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Editors said they gathered information about readers from various sources, but the one source most often mentioned as the most important, as well as believable, was feedback from readers through phone calls and personal contact. The executive editor stated that he believed that feedback from readers was the most valuable source of information for editors. This result seems to support the finding by Sumpter (1998) that editors use a known audience to build a model of readers' interests. An editor said:

> I get a lot of information just from feedback when people call in. … I mean, you have to learn to ask questions: what did you not like about it, what would you like to see happen with it, and use that when you're putting out the next tab, to improve to what the readers' going to want, and you learn through several different calls and finding out what the consensus is.

Editors also seem to have formed an assumption that the majority of the newspapers' readers were aged 55 or older. This assumption seemed to have been based on the results of previous readership surveys. It seems to be the only readership result that they accepted and used in any way on a regular basis. Several editors mentioned that they use this information to make selections of stories to cover and to publish from those available from the wire services:

> It's come up several times that we all know that the majority of our readers are older readers. People who are reading the paper are older readers, so we tend to cover those issues a lot more. We're aware that if there's a story about Social Security on the wire, we probably ought to get it in because the vast majority of our readers are either on Social Security or soon will be, so it's an important issue to them.

The sports editors, though, expressed less acceptance of any readership results, instead relying on reader feedback and attendance figures at sporting events. But news editors countered that attendance could not be used for news event coverage. These news editors, like those studied by Gans (1979), said they rely on their own interests and judgment in making decisions regarding readers' interests and needs. They said that they believed their interests reflected those of their readers, so they chose articles in which they themselves were interested. An editor said:

> In some ways, we sort of, on the news side, determine what stories, a lot based on readership, but a lot based on just what we think is important. For instance, we'll cover a city or county

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commission meeting, and there might be 10 or 15 people in attendance, but we determine what's coming out of that meeting is important to our readers.

According to responses during the focus group, editors are not trying to increase the amount of information they have about readers or nonreaders, and even seemed to believe this was not something they wanted or should be doing. They expressed the opinion that readers should or would come to them with opinions. In presession questionnaire responses, these editors left this question blank or wrote that it was not applicable. But two editors wrote in the responses that they were trying to increase their information by looking at previous survey results or talking to readers they contact. "I don't think we solicit it, but we sure make ourselves accessible enough if you have a suggestion, you've got a phone number and address and e-mail. You know exactly where ... how to get in touch with us, if you want, you can come and find us. Most people know where you live anyway."

At least one editor also expressed the opinion that the amount of such feedback received on a certain topic indicated how much interest existed in that topic among readers. In the focus group, almost all the editors mentioned readership surveys as being a helpful source of information about readers and nonreaders, and all editors responded in the presession questionnaire that editors should use readership surveys to get information about readers and nonreaders. But in almost every instance, surveys were mentioned as being an additional source of information to supplement other sources, rather than as a main source in and of itself. This indicated one of the greatest points of agreement among the editors. Other sources editors relied on and trusted were personal feedback and the editors' own judgment. The executive editor said that surveys can provide a background or framework upon which to measure the validity of feedback from readers, but that the actual feedback carries more weight. Editors seemed to be concerned about the quality of journalism that would result from relying exclusively on a survey to tell them what the readers wanted. There was some indication of the editors' feeling that using surveys supplanted their judgment. An editor said:

> We can take that information [from a survey] and use it, but we've all been trained as journalists, so we have to use our training and instincts and our feelings as typical readers, too, to base a lot of our decision-making on, too. If we gave readers what they want, we'd be covering the same kinds of things that Jerry Springer covers.

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In addition, one editor noted that personal feedback is more accurate than the results of a readership survey, although another editor said the readers they are more likely to hear from are those with strong opinions, either positive or negative, and not necessarily the average reader:

> I always take reader feedback with a grain of salt, too, because the people who are going to call you are the ones who are very upset or the ones who are very, very pleased with what you've done. Whereas the vast majority of the people you don't hear from. So in that regard, I think a survey can be valuable, too. I don't think you can do one without the other. I think you have to pay attention to all the different things you hear, engaging your readers' opinions.

Editors said that limitations, including infrequency, lack of specificity and limited information, of readership surveys in general reduced their usefulness. Editors preferred the feedback from readers because it is more immediate and because it could give more specific information on issues and stories of interest to readers. As Gans (1979) found, the editors also expressed a distrust of statistics. Editors were concerned that the research methods had some unintended effect on the results. But because the editors were not familiar with the methods the researchers used, they had more of a vague sense of skepticism, rather than any criticism of a particular procedure. Interestingly, some editors said that the fact that the surveys change very little from one to the next made them less useful, although that seems to be the publishers' goal for the survey. These editors said that the survey results did not change the opinions they already had formed about readers, and that the results showed that they were giving these readers want they wanted:

> I think I respond more to that [personal feedback] than I do to surveys. You don't see them enough. I think things change, and I have some doubts about who exactly they've gotten a hold of. I think we operate more on phone calls and what we hear on a daily or weekly or monthly basis, not every 3 years.

The executive editor's knowledge of and involvement in the survey was much greater than the other editors. The executive editor said that he believed the news department should be involved in reviewing survey questions and tailoring questions to meet needs of the news department. Despite this, none of the editors in the focus group was involved in any way with the creation of the survey. The executive editor, in meetings with publishers and other executive editors in the newspaper group, reviewed survey questions and made recommendations for changes. He said that he was given a written report of the

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results. In the presession questionnaire, two editors wrote that they had limited knowledge of the survey results. The other editors said they did not know the goals or objectives of the survey or even that it had been conducted until just before the focus group. They only received an abstract report of the survey results the night before the focus group was conducted, although the survey was completed about 9 months earlier. None of these editors had seen the complete survey or its results. "I have a feeling if this meeting [focus group] weren't going to take place, we might never have seen the results of this survey."

Despite this, at least one editor expressed an interest in working on the survey, if given the chance:

> If they would have come to us and said, 'Should we be asking certain things about our readers?', I'm sure we could have come up with some questions that would have been different or maybe we would not have asked some of those or we would have asked them differently.

Because the editors in the focus group had only very limited information about the survey and results, many found it difficult to determine whether this survey was accurate or useful or provided the kinds of information they wanted and needed. Editors did not seem knowledgeable about the methods of judging the accuracy of readership research, and at least one editor did not seem to believe it was possible to do so. Other editors voiced concerns about the way the survey was conducted and when. Sports editors seemed particularly concerned that respondents with no interest in sports, such as older women, were being asked to rate the quality of sports coverage. They were also concerned about the accuracy of the responses considering the length of the survey. Editors also expressed a desire for more information about the survey's methodology. An editor said:

> I also don't think any of us have had the survey long enough to process it and feel like, 'It's not giving me this information.' We never saw the complete survey. We only saw this [short abstract of results], and we just saw that recently. ...We haven't even had time to process what's here, let alone think about what's not here.

Those editors who had a limited look at the survey results agreed there was very little change from previous surveys and that it showed that editors were giving readers what they want. Some interpreted this consistency of results as proving the survey's accuracy, while others seemed to think it reduced the survey's usefulness:

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This latest survey, when I looked it over, I really didn't see anything that had changed any of my thinking because the results were so similar to what they had been. And so my thinking remains the same. People are still wanting the same kinds of information that we're already trying to give them.

The executive editor said he believed the survey in general was accurate. "I agree with the findings. That's what my gut feeling would tell me." But he was skeptical about some of the results because they were not consistent with feedback from readers.

Editors said they were not given any guidelines on how to use the survey results. The executive editor said that they are given guidelines and directives to follow based on the survey results in combination with other factors, but that they might not realize that they are based on survey results. He said these are guidelines in choosing and assigning more state and local news and to use more local sources. The editors said they did not believe they would be receiving any guidelines or that the newspaper had any plans to use the survey results in any way. But the executive editor said the newspaper was planning a narrower page width and more features that were based in part on the survey results. Only one editor in the focus group indicated using the results or planning to use the results in any specific way. In the presession questionnaire, several wrote that they would use the results to select more stories of interest to readers. An editor said:

> I think basically the survey was done, the department heads reviewed it, and that was the end of it. I don't think there was any intent to do anything with it, as far as we know. I have no idea how long they've had the results in hand.

The editors' focus group comments, responses in the presession questionnaire as well as reluctance to answer various questions combine to suggest that the editors feel that the survey and information about readers does not directly concern them, but that it "belongs" to someone else, or that they are powerless. This seems to be the result of the editors having no part in the research process. When asked whether they were trying to increase the amount of information they had about readers and nonreaders, one editor replied, "That's out of our control." And when asked if they have any plans to use the survey results, this editor replied, "Not unless some directive comes down from on high."

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Editors seem unaccustomed to thinking about ways in which the survey could benefit them, or even that it could, and what information they want or need to know about readers and nonreaders. Editors involved in newspaper design seemed reluctant to answer these types of questions in the focus groups and one said the news desk refers calls from readers to the deputy or executive editor. Likewise, one editor responded "not applicable" to questions on the presession questionnaire that presumably would apply to all editors. When asked whether the survey provided the kinds of information they wanted to know, one editor replied, "I didn't know what I needed to know because I didn't know it was coming. I didn't know what I wanted to know."

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

At the dawn of the new millennium, newspapers are scrambling to determine the best ways to compete with radio, television and new media for readers and to preserve their place in a democratic society rather than becoming obsolete. One of newspapers' major challenges is to find a way to fight declining circulation. Critics are challenging one of the first ideas proposed to increase circulation, that of using the marketing concept of learning about readers' wants in order to provide them with a better "product." Critics point out that its use has so far failed to stop the decline in circulation and also are questioning the ways marketing is affecting the quality of journalism and newspapers' ability to educate members of a democratic society.

But supporters of the marketing concept are calling for more and different types of readership to be conducted to help newspapers better connect with readers and more of an active role for newspaper publishers and editors in determining how the research will be conducted.

Despite the large amount of information collected about readers through newspaper readership research, very little research has been conducted to establish how accurate and reliable this information is; what role, if any, news departments have played in shaping the research; and how news departments should best use the results of the research.

Much more research of this type needs to be conducted before deciding if readership research is an effective method for newspapers to use to attempt to retain readers or if it should be abandoned in favor of other, more effective methods. This study begins to provide some of the information needed to address this question by assessing the quality of the readership research a newspaper conducted, what role the news department played in the research, and by determining whether the newspaper's news department found the research results useful.

Credibility of survey results

In each of the research processes studied – sampling, dealing with nonresponse and question wording – the 1999 readership survey failed to meet accepted standards for survey research. Because of the sampling methods used for the survey, it is possible that the sample population overrepresents older

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individuals, as well as those with higher incomes. Results relating to marital status are likely to be distorted. The survey also would benefit from using a larger sample size.

The survey achieves an acceptable response rate because respondents are recruited by telephone before being mailed questionnaires, but the method of starting with a large number of telephone numbers and calling only until the required number are recruited creates bias for those who are at home more often, such as the retired, unemployed or those who work at home or have young children.

The survey questions appear to have been written with little regard to research guidelines. Out of 38 factual data questions on the survey questionnaire, at least 25 have problems with ambiguity, unintended meanings or effects of social desirability. The 14 questions regarding subjective states of respondents each used a different type of rating scale, which were not well defined or explained to respondents. Many questions do not provide a "no opinion" response option for those who lack information to answer the question and some response options are noninclusive to those perceived to be in the minority. Some create bias for positive ratings of the newspaper. Respondents' recall is not stimulated in any way. The survey does not include written statements of confidentiality, and few methods are used to protect respondents' confidentiality. Respondents are given very little guidance in how to perform the respondent role. They are not required to sign or read statements regarding the importance of providing accurate answers. The survey was not evaluated before use based on how respondents answered the questions.

Several factors seem to contribute to the survey's failure to meet accepted research practices. Choices of survey methodologies and procedures do not seem to be selected to produce the most accurate results, but rather to maintain consistency with previous measures, to hold down costs, or to produce the kinds of results the publishers are looking for. According to the researcher, the publishers' number-1 objective is to be able to compare measures of reader satisfaction and editorial and circulation service with previous measures. But this seems especially detrimental to the survey because the original survey used faulty methods and reported erroneous results, according to the researcher, and because the methodology and some questions have been changed from the original. The lead researcher also seems willing to abide by the publishers' desires and other's suggestions, in part, because of his limited knowledge of newspaper readership research and reliance on market research practices with which he has direct experience.

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Usefulness of survey results

All of the newspaper's editors studied agreed that having information about readers and nonreaders is important, but they only suggested general categories of demographic information that they wanted or needed to know. Editors relied mainly on feedback from readers through personal contact and telephone calls to get information about readers, and they believed this information to be accurate and reliable. They also rely on their own judgment when selecting information for publication, as well as their belief that readers are interested in the same types of information they are. They are not trying to increase the amount of information they have about readers, but rather believe that the readers should come to them with feedback.

The editors said they believed surveys are helpful and that editors should use them to get information about readers, but only in limited uses and in combination with other sources of information. They were concerned with the negative effects of relying on research. They thought that surveys were limited because of the generality of information they provide and their infrequency. The editors have used previous survey results to create an image of what they believe is their typical reader.

Only the executive editor had any input into the 1999 survey. He reviewed survey questions and suggested changes in meetings with the newspaper group's other executive editors and publishers. He received a written report of the survey results and said he believed they were accurate. The newspaper's other editors played no role in planning or conducting the research. They had only limited knowledge of the current survey or its results, and therefore were not able to judge the accuracy or usefulness of the results. The editors seemed to have little knowledge of how to judge the accuracy of survey research, but they did have concerns about the methods used to recruit respondents. The editors did not believe the results would be used in any way and did not have plans to use them. They seemed to have only vague, if any, knowledge of how to use research results. The executive editor said the results would be used in combination with other information to make changes to the newspaper, but that editors probably were not aware that previous changes to the newspaper had been related to survey results.

The lack of input from editors in the 1999 survey, as well as previous ones, seems to have resulted in the editors' beliefs that the survey is not something they have any control over and that it does not concern them. They seem unaware that the survey could be used to benefit them specifically or even that

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they should be concerned with what information it provides them. The exclusion of the editors from the survey process seems to have resulted in their desire for more updated information losing to the publishers' desire to maintain consistency of survey information.

Because the executive editor was included in the decision-making process and had access to the results, it can be assumed that the survey did provide the type of information that he wanted and needed to know about readers and nonreaders. The survey results also included the types of general demographic information the editors said they wanted and needed to know, although they did not have access to these results. The one result from previous surveys that the editors have most readily accepted and use in daily decision-making is that the majority of the newspaper's readers are aged 55 and older. Unfortunately, this result is one most likely to be inaccurate. Results from the 1999 survey show that 16 percent of the newspaper's readers are younger than 35, 37 percent are aged 35 to 54 and 48 percent are aged 55 and older. Although aged 55 and older does constitute the largest age grouping of readers, it would not be a majority. The research method of calling many telephone numbers until the desired number of respondents were recruited could have created a bias for those at home more often, such as the retired. Also, young adults aged 18 to 24 were underrepresented in the survey because respondents were required to be heads of household, the researcher said, and no weighting was done on these results. The survey conducted in 1996 used the same methods as the 1999 survey, so it can be assumed that it, too, was biased toward older respondents for the same reasons. Results of the original survey that the editors were more familiar with were even more likely to be biased toward older respondents, according to the researcher. This survey, consisting of many questions, was conducted entirely over the telephone during the day. Errors also were made in weighting the data of the original survey, according to the researcher.

Examination of survey problems

This study suggests that the readership survey conducted by this newspaper did not provide its editors with accurate or useful information about its readers and nonreaders. The major causes of this failure reveal that the survey was subject to many of the same shortcomings of readership research identified by other researchers, as well as others that were not previously identified.

The results of the survey cannot be trusted to be accurate because of a failure to follow accepted standards of quality research. The survey relied on questions that were biased and contained assumptions of

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the way respondents were expected to answer, just as Layton (1999) found, although this survey did not seem to have question order bias or difficulties with a low response rate as Layton predicted. Like the limitations of readership research pointed out by Schwartz and Moore (1979) and Denton and Kurtz (1993) most of the survey questions applicable to editorial usage covered demographics and did not provide any in-depth information about readers.

The results of the 1999 survey do not seem to be useful to the editors because they were not involved in the process of creating the survey or writing the survey questions. Only the executive editor was involved in review of the questions with other executive editors and publishers from other newspapers in the newspaper group and was given a written report of the results. The other editors were not informed of the results of the survey in any way. This falls short of the suggestions given by Gassaway (1995) for editors' involvement in planning the study and writing questions, as well as the presentation of research results by researchers and staff meetings to discuss the use of results.

The editors' opinions of readership research in general were very similar to those of editors studied by Gans (1979), Sumpter (1998) and Bogart (1989). Like these editors, they seemed to be distrustful of statistics and felt that giving readers what they want would lower the quality of news coverage. They believed that they could rely on their own judgment as well as their interests in selecting information for publication. They relied on feedback from readers and acquaintances for the majority of their information. But editors in this study did believe readership surveys could be useful for limited purposes, if used in combination with other information, and they believed past survey results were accurate. In this way, they differed from the editors studied by Gans, who did not believe the research was useful and did not accept it. They also were more accepting of research than would be expected based on Fink's statement that editors reject research that they have no part in as inaccurate and inferring (Fink, 1996, p. 198). But their responses are similar to the 57 percent of editors who ranked the value of research as "somewhat useful" in a 1977 study (Bogart, 1989, p. 341).

While Schoenbach and Bergen suggest that journalism students be taught how to use readership research, (Schoenbach & Bergen, 1998, p. 103) the results of this study point out the need for educating everyone involved with the readership survey - researchers, publishers and editors - in general research standards as well as readership research practices and uses. The publishers and researcher seemed unaware

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of what procedures must be followed to ensure accurate research results and why these procedures are necessary. They also seem unaware of what practices are best suited for use in newspaper readership surveys. The editors also seemed unaware of how to evaluate the survey results, as well as how to use them. If they had been more knowledgeable about accepted research practices, they might have been more questioning of the methodologies used in the survey, as Layton suggests editors should be (Layton, 1999, p. 49).

Publishers should give the editors more of a role in creating a survey that could help increase newspaper circulation over the long term by improving the quality of information provided to readers. Despite the 1999 readership survey's flaws, it could be put to use by the newspaper's editors. Editors should seek out the survey results that have been compiled by the researchers based on the apparent amount of reader interest in certain topics. Editors could use these lists of "topics with above average interest but below average performance scores" to identify areas for further coverage or new columns or features.

Suggestions for future improvement and further research

Readership surveys are bound to fail if they are conducted without an understanding of the unique needs of newspapers and editors. They will be useless if the results are not put to work in each department of the newspaper, including the newsroom. In order to make the research more worthwhile, the newspaper should make these changes:

- Educate publishers, researchers and editors about accepted research methods, as well as specific procedures best suited to newspaper readership research.
- Appoint a knowledgeable editor or readership researcher to work with the research organization and apply the results of the research.
- Make a commitment to conducting only high quality and accurate research.
- Divide the survey into smaller, separate studies of advertising, circulation and editorial objectives.
- Use addresses of survey respondents for further analysis of readership, circulation and advertising by location.
- Use the research to focus on improving the quality of journalism.

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- Involve editors in planning the survey and writing questions.
- Provide timely results to all departments of the newspaper, including presentations by researchers.
- Discuss results and request suggestions from employees on how to put the results to work.

Other newspapers, as well, could benefit from analyzing the way they use readership research. If readership research is to be used to help newspapers reverse declining circulation, it must be conducted according to accepted standards for scientific research and a commitment to providing accurate information. All departments of the newspaper must be able to use the results to their best advantage. In order to do this, key employees, including editors, must know how to conduct and use the research, and they must be included in the goal-setting and creation of the survey. Working journalists, as well as journalism students, need to be better educated in how to conduct and use readership research.

Also further academic research should be focused on answering questions in the following areas:

- Interaction between news departments and the readership research their newspapers conduct
- Editors' opinions about the value of learning about their readers' wants and needs
- Effectiveness of different methods of learning about readers
- How editors determine what changes to make in content
- Empirical tests of whether content actually changes in response to readership research, as opposed to editors' perceptions
- How best for news departments to make use of readership research
- What types of information about readers are most useful for content changes
- Connection between newsroom involvement in readership research and its acceptance of the results
- How newspapers balance commercial and journalistic interests
- How newspapers can increase their readers' interest in public affairs and public information
- What factors influence editors' decisions on whether to accept or reject research results.

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If used correctly, readership research and the marketing concept can help newspapers compete in the future, but newspapers must be committed to holding on to their tradition of striving to empower people with information they can use to govern themselves and help solve the problems of society. This is not done by simply giving the newspaper over to the readers by providing only what they want as a way to increase profit. To do so would be to abandon the newspaper's role in a democratic society. Instead research should be used to give editors more and better information about readers so that they can make better decisions about newspaper content. The power and influence of marketing, along with information gained from research, also should be used to find a way to spur the public to become more interested in reading information they need to know, to create a desire for quality journalism and a concern for public affairs. The question should not be whether newspapers should give readers what they want or what they need to know, but rather how newspapers can do both.

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APPENDIX A

Executive editor informed consent form

Executive editor interview questions

Executive editor interview responses

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Informed consent for Kansas State University research study

Subject orientation: You are asked to take part in a research study designed to determine whether the readership survey conducted in spring 1999 for this newspaper provided its news department with accurate and useful information about its readers and nonreaders. In order to do this, it is necessary to gather information from you by conducting a focused interview. The researcher will orally question you and transcribe your replies. The researcher will ask questions focusing on your beliefs on the uses of the readership survey and your involvement in creating the readership survey. It is expected to take an hour to an hour and 30 minutes to complete the interview. You will not be required to participate in the study in any other way. There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study. Foreseeable benefits of the study are that the results could provide you with valuable information about the reliability of this newspaper's 1999 readership survey results. It could help this newspaper evaluate future proposed readership studies and results. Participants in this study consist of about 12 of this newspaper's decision-making editors, the executive editor, and the lead researcher of the 1999 readership survey. Your name will not be associated with the information you provide. Only records of the information you provide will be maintained until the study is completed, which will be within two months.

Informed consent statement: I have read the foregoing subject orientation and agree to take part in the study.

My participation in this study is purely voluntary. I understand that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled and that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

If I have questions about the rationale or method of the study, I understand that I may contact Janice Hume, Assistant Professor, A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications, 105 Kedzie Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1501, at (785) 532-3959.

If I have questions about the rights of subjects in this study or about the manner in which the study is conducted, I may contact Clive Fullagar, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 1 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1501, at (785) 532-3224.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Executive editor interview questions

This study's researcher asked the newspaper's executive editor the following questions and transcribe his responses in writing:

1. Do you believe it is important or not important for news editors to have information about the newspaper's readers? About nonreaders? Why or why not?
2. What types of information do you believe editors should have about readers and/or nonreaders? Is it more important for some editors to have this information than others? Why or why not?
3. Do you expect editors to use the information about readers and/or nonreaders in some way? How?
4. What do you think is the best way for editors to gain this information about readers and/or nonreaders?
5. Do you think editors should get information about readers and/or nonreaders from a readership survey? Why or why not? What kind of information do you think editors should get from a readership survey?
6. Do you believe the newspaper's news department should be involved in the creation of the readership survey? What role do you think the news department should play?
7. Were you or any other members of the newspaper's news department involved in determining the goals and objectives of the readership survey? How were you/they involved?
8. What are the goals and objectives of the readership survey as you see them? How do these relate to the newspaper's news function?
9. Were you or any other members of the newspaper's news department involved in writing the survey questions? How were you/they involved?
10. Were you or any other members of the newspaper's news department involved in presurvey evaluation of the survey questions? How were you/they involved?
11. Were you or others in the news department informed about the methodologies the researchers planned to use to conduct the survey before implementation? How were you/they informed?

12. Did you or any other members of the newspaper's news department have any concerns about shortcomings or limitations of the survey questionnaire, its methodologies or any other aspect of the survey? Were these concerns communicated to the researchers?
13. Were any steps taken by researchers to address concerns expressed by you or other members of the news department about the survey? What steps were taken? Did the steps resolve the concerns to your/their satisfaction?
14. Were you notified of any problems encountered in conducting the survey? Were you aware of any problems? How did you become aware of the problems? What problems were encountered? Were they resolved? How?
15. How were you informed of the results of the survey? Were the results communicated to other newsroom employees? Which ones? How were they informed?
16. Did newsroom employees express any opinions on the results? What were their opinions? How were they expressed?
17. In general, do you believe the survey results are accurate and reliable? Why or why not?
18. Do you find any particular parts of the survey more or less accurate than other parts? Which ones are they? Why?
19. Do you believe the survey accomplishes its goals and objectives? Why or why not?
20. Do you believe the information is useful to the news department? What information is useful? In what ways is it useful?
21. Did the survey provide editors with the kinds of information about readers that they needed to know? How about the information they wanted to know? Why or why not?
22. Were newsroom employees with access to the survey results given any guidelines or directives on making use of the survey results? What were they? Are they being followed?
23. Are the newsroom employees making use of the survey results? In what ways?
24. Do any editors plan to make changes to the newspaper in any based on the survey results?
25. Could you please identify each editor in the news department whose duties include deciding what information will or will not be published in the newspaper?

Executive editor interview responses

1. It's important for information about readers and nonreaders. It is important to tailor the product to the needs of the readers and nonreaders. Surveys are fairly helpful, so are feedback from readers that call or write or write letters to the editor. Nonreaders, you wonder why they are not reading.
2. Readers: likes and dislikes and where their interests lie so we can tailor content. Nonreaders: We need them to increase circulation, and we want them to read and they are important to advertisers. But beyond that, we are also concerned about them not getting community information. It is important for the community for the citizens to have information about the community. If they are not reading, where are people getting information, and is it reliable? All editors need information. It is especially important for (deputy editor) because he assigns the stories and for new people who do not know about the community.
3. Framework is already in place from changes based on past surveys. Changes based on past survey: we launched the health page, use more brief news articles, more state news. But some, especially newer people, on the desk have little knowledge of the survey. Changes planned based on this survey: narrower page width, more features, just starting on process of that.
4. Feedback from readers by phone, mail and letters to the editor because it's immediate and specific is the most valuable. Also feedback from fellow editors and supervisory editors.
5. Yes, but it's not bedside reading. Most helpful: likes and dislikes. Surveys most helpful for making comparisons. The 1993 survey was not helpful because there was no benchmark. With the history and ability to make comparisons it becomes more valuable. Surveys provide a background, framework for judging calls against. When many people call to complain, the survey is helpful to know whether this is just a vocal group or how many people are actually interested. Surveys have shown a growth of interest in financial information. It's still a minority, but it's growing. The survey lets you see that, so it gives you the bigger picture. Surveys show how you are perceived. Image was poor in 1993, but it's been better in the next two. You have to take the results with a grain of salt, too. Surveys show that readers are satisfied with delivery, but based on calls they get into circulation on a daily basis shows

that's not the case. Actual circulation experience has more weight than the survey. I do not know why the difference, maybe the ones surveyed aren't the ones having delivery problems.

6. Yes. They should review questions and help researchers tailor questions to suit specific needs.
7. Yes. Publishers and (parent company's) board determined them in 1993, and the editors reviewed each other year surveyed. (Research organization) made some changes the next year when they took over and the editors have made some revisions.
8. To better know readers and to know where we are doing well and where we are not.
9. No. All the department heads reviewed the questions, added some and amended the dislikes and likes and threw out some. We made comments and gave them to (research organization), and they made changes. They had the expertise.
10. No. (Research organization) did all the work. We told them what we wanted, and they came up with the method and survey and wrote the questions.
11. Yes. (Research organization) sent a draft of the questions and discussed it with the publisher, who explained it to the department heads. All was filtered through the publisher.
12. No
13. Not applicable
14. (Research organization) did not express any. They updated us on the progress of the survey, what was not going on results. They thought it was better than '96 because it was shorter and people knew what was going on, no pressure calling.
15. (Research organization) sent over the written report. No staff meeting, (Research organization) did not explain. We thought it was a shortfall to not do some presentation all together, which they had done in '96. It would not have been much more expensive to have them come over to discuss it. No other employees had access.
16. Not applicable
17. Yes, generally. I believe in the process: sampling, calling people and asking questions and get results within 5 percentage points and this is accurate. "And I agree with the findings. That's what my gut feeling would tell me." I'm not sure if every question would be accurate.

18. We get the feeling that (the newspaper's television guide) is important to people. Saturday has become our biggest selling day and that's the day it comes out. But the survey shows that only about half are interested in it. I would have thought (the television guide) would have been more important to people than that. Maybe the question was not clear. I do not agree, I think it should be higher. "But the survey has numbers and I don't." We might increase the size of (television guide). We do not take the survey as straight fact. People are not as happy with delivery as the survey said they were. The survey may be good for that period in March [when it was conducted] but we have serious delivery issues in spite of the survey findings. We do not take the survey verbatim.
19. It's pretty helpful. Having that background gives you a basis in which to make decisions. I'm confident with decisions based on survey in combination with other factors.
20. It's useful for making changes.
21. I think it was a help. "I don't think you can or would want to build a newspaper around a survey. It's a good starting point."
22. Editors have been given guidelines and directives to follow that are based on survey results, but they do not know or are not told that they are based on the survey. These are guidelines in choosing or assigning stories: use more state news, more local news, more local people and more sources, names. These are coming from the survey and other factors.
23. It would cost money to address some specific things in the survey, but some other things would not cost money but readers would like: like more state news. It would not cost money. We've already got it on the wire. It's just a matter of making the choice to use a story on a city in the state rather than Bill Gates, for example.
24. The survey says people are interested in more national and international news, but our franchise is state and local news. We know that they have more access to national and international news elsewhere, but not as much to state and local news, so we focus on that. So we take the survey with a grain of salt on some topics.
25. The executive editor identified by name 11 decision-making editors to be included in the focus groups.

APPENDIX B

Editors' informed consent form

Editors' presession questionnaire

Moderator's guide

Transcription of editors' focus group

Informed consent for Kansas State University research study

Subject orientation: You are asked to take part in a research study designed to determine whether the readership survey conducted in spring 1999 for this newspaper provided its news department with accurate and useful information about its readers and nonreaders. In order to do this, it is necessary to determine what information the newspaper's editors wanted and needed to know about readers and nonreaders. To gather this information, you are asked to take part in a focus group discussion with other editors. It is expected to take you one to two hours to complete the focus group discussion. You will not be required to participate in the study in any other way. There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study. Foreseeable benefits of the study are that the results could provide you with valuable information about the reliability of this newspaper's 1999 readership survey results. It could help this newspaper evaluate future proposed readership research and results. Participants in this study consist of about 12 of this newspaper's decision-making editors, the executive editor, and the lead researcher of the 1999 readership survey. Your answers to these questions will be kept completely confidential. No names or other identifying information will be associated with the information you provide. Only records of the information you provide will be maintained until the study is completed, which will be within two months.

Informed consent statement: I have read the foregoing subject orientation and agree to take part in the study. My participation in this study is purely voluntary. I understand that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled and that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

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Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Editors' presession questionnaire

Subject instructions: *Please write your answers to the following questions on this sheet of paper. The most important thing you can do is to make sure that the answers you provide are as accurate as possible. The information you provide is very important to this research study. Please bring the completed questionnaire with you to your focus group discussion. A moderator of the discussion will ask you about your answers to these questions.*

Thank you very much for participating in this study.

Newspaper editors hold varying opinions about the value of learning about the readers of their newspapers and about those people who live in the community but do not read the newspaper. Those working in and studying journalism have made strong arguments both for and against the value of this information. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. We are only interested in your opinions.

1. At this time, what is your opinion as an editor about having information about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper? *Please circle one:* Is it important or not important?

2. At this time, what kinds of information about readers and nonreaders in general do you want and need as an editor? *Please write your answers below:*

   _____

   _____

3. At this time, how do you feel about the amount of information you have about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper? *Please circle one:* It is too little about right too much.

4. Are you attempting at this time to increase the amount of information you have about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper?

____ Yes ____ No

5. If so, in what ways are you attempting to increase the amount of information you have about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper? *Please write your answers below:*

_____

_____

6. At this time, in what ways do you as an editor expect to use the information you gain about readers and nonreaders? *Please write your answers below:*

_____

_____

7. At this time, do you think editors should use readership surveys as one way to get information about readers and nonreaders of their newspapers?

____ Yes ____ No

8. What kinds of information about readers and nonreaders do you think editors should get specifically from a readership survey? *Please write your answers below:*

_____

_____

In spring 1999, the research organization owned by the parent company of this newspaper conducted a readership survey. For this survey, people living in a 14-county area surrounding the newspaper were randomly recruited by telephone and mailed questionnaires. These questionnaires asked respondents questions about themselves, as well as whether they read this newspaper and what news and information interests them. All references to a survey on this questionnaire refer to this readership survey.

9. Were you involved in any way with this newspaper's 1999 readership survey?

____ Yes _____ No

If so, in what ways were you involved with this survey? *Please write your answers below:*

_____

_____

10. Were you informed in any way of the results of this survey?

____ Yes _____ No

11. If so, how were you informed of the results of this survey? *Please write your answers below:*

_____

_____

12. Do you believe that the results of this survey in general are accurate?

____ Yes _____ No

13. Do you know what the goals and objectives for this newspaper's 1999 readership survey were?

____ Yes _____ No

14. If so, do you believe this survey as conducted accomplishes these goals and objectives?

____ Yes _____ No

15. At this time, do you believe the information provided by this newspaper's 1999 readership survey is useful or not useful to this newspaper's editors?

____ Useful ____ Not useful

16. Did your supervisors at this newspaper give you any guidelines or directives on how to use the results of this survey?

____ Yes _____ No

17. If so, what guidelines and/or directives were you given on using the results of the readership survey?

Please write your answers below:

_____

_____

18. Do you plan to use the results of this newspaper's 1999 survey in some way?

____ Yes _____ No _____ I do not know yet

19. If so, in what ways are you using or planning to use the results of the survey? *Please write your answers below:*

_____

_____

This concludes the questionnaire. Again, thank you for your time and consideration to providing accurate responses.

Moderator's guide

(Moderator will discuss these instructions with participants)

Participant instructions: *The purpose of this focus group discussion is to gain your opinions about what you might want or need to know about readers of this newspaper; what role, if any, you played in the newspaper's 1999 readership survey; and whether you believe the survey provided you with useful information. This information will be used as part of a Kansas State University research project to determine the usefulness of the newspaper's readership research.*

There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. We are interested in your opinions, so please feel free to make relevant comments. This is an informal gathering, so you may ask questions and speak up at any time. It is not necessary to have the agreement or disagreement of every participant. This focus group discussion will be tape recorded for future reference in the research project.

(Moderator will ask the questions in bold type first, and then follow-up with the questions in plain type as needed.)

1. **At this time, what is your opinion as an editor about having information about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper?**

   If you believe it IS important for you to have information about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper, why do you believe it IS important?

   If you believe it IS NOT important for you to have information about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper, why do you believe it IS NOT important?

2. **At this time, what kinds of information about readers and nonreaders, if any, do you want and need as an editor?**

3. **At this time, how do you feel about the amount of information you have about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper?**

4. **Are you attempting at this time to increase the amount of information you have about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper?**

   If yes, in what ways are you attempting to increase the amount of information you have about the readers and nonreaders of this newspaper?

   In what ways do you as an editor expect to use the information you gain about readers and nonreaders?

5. **At this time, do you think editors should use readership surveys as one way to get information about readers and nonreaders of their newspapers?**

   Why do you think editors SHOULD use readership surveys as a way to get information about readers and nonreaders?

   Why do you think editors SHOULD NOT use readership surveys as a way to get information about readers and nonreaders?

   What kinds of information about readers and nonreaders do you think editors SHOULD get from a readership survey?

(Moderator reads the following to the participants)

In spring 1999, the research organization owned by the parent company of this newspaper conducted a readership survey. For this survey, people living in a 14-county area surrounding the newspaper were randomly recruited by telephone and mailed questionnaires. These questionnaires asked respondents questions about themselves, as well as whether they read this newspaper and what news and information interests them. All references to a survey refer to this readership survey.

6. **Were you involved in any way with this newspaper's 1999 readership survey?**

   In what ways WERE you involved with this survey?

7. **The research organization prepared a booklet that presented the results of this newspaper 1999 readership survey. Have you read this booklet of results of this survey?**

8. **Were you informed of the results of this survey in any other way?**

   How WERE you informed of the results of this survey?

   Do you believe that the results of this survey in general ARE ACCURATE?

   Why do you believe the results of this survey in general ARE ACCURATE?

   Why do you believe the results of this survey in general ARE NOT ACCURATE?

9. **Researchers established goals and objectives for this newspaper's 1999 readership survey. Do you know what these goals and objectives were?**

   If yes, do you believe this survey as conducted accomplishes these goals and objectives?

   In what ways do you believe the goals and objectives WERE NOT accomplished?

10. **At this time, do you believe the information provided by this newspaper's 1999 readership survey is useful or not useful to this newspaper's editors?**

   In what ways do you believe the information IS USEFUL to editors?

   In what ways do you believe the information IS NOT USEFUL to this newspaper's editors?

11. **Did this newspaper's 1999 survey results provide you with the kinds of information about readers and nonreaders that you now want and need to know?**

12. **Did your supervisors at this newspaper give you any guidelines or directives on how to use the results of this survey?**

   If yes, what guidelines and/or directives were you given on using the results of the readership survey?

13. **Are you now or do you plan to use the results of this newspaper's 1999 survey in some way?**

   If yes, in what ways are you using or planning to use the results of the survey?

Transcription of editors' focus group

MODERATOR: This is an informal gathering, so speak up when you have an idea. We'd like to encourage everybody to state their opinion about all of the questions because it really helps later when she's trying to compile the information. It is not necessary to have agreement or disagreement from everybody here. If you have an opinion that's different, please express that. It's important to get the whole range of opinions about the different issues we'll be discussing. We'll be tape recording, so I ask that even though my voice is very soft she knows what I'm going to be saying, so please speak up so the mic can get it. It seems to be a very sensitive mic. I tested it a few times. If you'll speak to the mic. We had a back up, but it folded on us.

At this point, what is your opinion as an editor, and I understand all of you are an editor, about having information about readers and nonreaders of your newspaper?

(pause, no response)

What is your opinion about … What does it do for you as an editor?

EDITOR 1: I think it is very important to have information about our readers because, to me, our entire role here is to provide a product that is useful and helpful to our readers, and if we don't know what information they want and what they find useful, then I don't think we can provide the product that can be helpful to them.

MODERATOR: Does anybody else share that opinion or disagree with it?

EDITOR 2: I used the information from the survey, one part of it that listed the top interests of our readers. I've got that tacked up over on my cubicle. I use it when I'm making assignments for reporters. I keep in mind that most of our readers are of a certain age and most of them are of a certain political bent. The majority of them … there are certain things about them that they're interested in. They're interested in health issues. They're interested in issues that affect the elderly, because most of them are elderly -- or elderly meaning 55 and above – the bulk of them. So they're interested in history. Those types of subjects, so if you know what they're interested in, it makes it a lot easier to either add a story to the schedule or discount one. So I use the information daily in making assignments. I don't look at the survey every day,

but I've got a pretty good idea from the surveys we've done what our readers are interested in and plus there are other ways too. They call you and tell you, or they write you letters or you hear a certain chord in the community, and people get upset and talk about things. But the survey was interesting for a variety of reasons. One of them because it helps me make assignments to reporters.

MODERATOR: Not just surveys but all kinds of information is what we're talking about at this point. Any information that comes to you about your readers and people who don't read. We'll talk specifically about the survey in a little while.

But you say it is important. Why do you believe it's important? I mean you touched on the specific information that you use to chose. …

EDITOR 2: Well for the very reason that (editor 1) said. (Editor 1) said that if you're not putting out the product that your readers want, then you won't be in business long.

MODERATOR: And you think this helps you make that determination?

EDITOR 2: Yes.

MODERATOR: Anybody else … What information you use and that includes this survey, any kind of information, how do you use information that comes to you about your constituents?

(pause, no response)

I'm sorry, what's your name?

EDITOR 3: (name). (giggling) … How do we use the information?

MODERATOR: How do you use it, what do you use it for? Do you find it useful? I'll back up for you. Do you find the information you get from …

EDITOR 3: I don't make assignments. And … uh …

EDITOR 2: But you lay out pages. And you know that some of our readers would be interested in a certain story. We sit in budget meetings, we say we think our readers would be interested in this because it's got a Social Security story, or you got a story that affects what they'd be interested in. You think because of what you've heard …

EDITOR 3: Basically, we lay out pages based on how our readers think or what they'd like to see.

EDITOR 4: I know in sports, you only have to look at the attendance figures at a game to figure out exactly what somebody wants. If you haven't covered a team that's popular, then you're sure to hear

about it. Having not seen this survey and having only … based on '96, I can't say we look at a survey and count on very much. We get daily feedback. If you're not at a game and you get a number of phone calls, you know you've blown it. And if you know there are 79,000 people showing up in Arrowhead Stadium for every game for the last 20 years, maybe you want to put something in the paper about it. Or if you've got 45,000 Kansas State fans traveling down to Dallas to watch the Wildcats play, may you want to staff that game. Or if Allen Field House is sold out every game for the last 18 decades, then maybe you want to cover what the Jayhawks are doing, … or if you've got gyms full of parents and fans watching high school games, then maybe you want to cover those games, too. There are other things going on such as hunting and fishing and … there are thousands of guys out slaughtering birds and fish, then you probably you ought to be covering that, too. And you have to do other things people are participating in, as best you can. The information comes to you basically on a daily basis. The feedback comes from readers on a daily basis, you can't wait for a readership survey that comes out once every three years to decide what you're going to do. If you're waiting for that, you're going to be lagging behind pretty sadly.

MODERATOR: Who else … I noticed you nodded both times. I'm sorry, I can't remember your name.

EDITOR 5: Well, I guess what I was thinking was ..

(Interruption. Arrival of another editor)

MODERATOR: I think we can allow you in, it's only been about 10 minutes. Basically, we're discussing how, we're still on the first question, how useful people find information about readers and nonreaders of the paper. I'm sorry, I interrupted.

EDITOR 5: That's OK. I get a lot of my information just from feedback when people call in. I was thinking for instance of one particular phone call when I did the cookbook tab. I had someone call in, and they wanted to complain, but by just sitting and asking her – I mean you have to learn to ask questions: what did you not like about it, what would you like to see happen with it, and use that when you're putting out the next tab, to improve it to what the readers' going to want, and you learn that through several different calls and finding out what the consensus is – what do they want, what are they looking for. And you use that it to improve it to their wants and their desires.

EDITOR 2 to EDITOR 5: You also get information on a daily basis on weddings, engagements and milestones, and those sorts of things, babies' names, and that tells you what your readers want in the paper, too.

MODERATOR: Can survey-types of information give you some of the same information or not?

EDITOR 5: Somewhat. Somewhat. It can tell me what they would like to see as far as health, but that doesn't tell me what kind of health they're looking for. That's something I have to seek out and by looking at who's the majority of our readers. We have a high elderly population, so what are the health issues that the elderly are looking at, and then I have to break it down myself, and I do that through feedback and talking to people.

MODERATOR: (name), what do you think? What kind of information about readers and nonreaders do you want and need?

EDITOR 6: I'm like (editor 3), I basically lay out pages. Most of our local stories are given to us, and what I'm selecting are national and state stories. And I look at myself as a fairly typical reader, so most of the things I'm interested in, I see as a lot of readers have similar interests, and that's kind of how I go about selecting the stories … if that makes any sense.

MODERATOR: Do you want to jump in here, (name)? What is your opinion about having or getting information about your readers and nonreaders?

EDITOR 7: It's always important, you're always fighting a battle about what they want to read opposed to what they need to read. Sometimes that's not always the same. You have to … you tend to put yourself in the position of a reader, a typical reader, whatever that is and make a decision based on that and hope it's the right one.

MODERATOR: How useful is information from your readers to help you do your job as an editor?

EDITOR 8: I think we as sports layout – what the survey says supposedly Big 12, Chiefs, things like that that are important to them, and that's what we try to provide to our readers. It's like (editor 4) was saying, you have 50,000 fans at a K-State game or 80,000 at a Chiefs game, it's pretty apparent where the interest lies. Sometimes on tight days when you have three or four different type of stories you could fit into a space, if it's a story that people are interested in from the market survey, like a Rockies or Denver

Broncos games, something that's not maybe in our area, then I'll put that in there just because there's more interest in that than say a Brewers game or Angels game or something like that. I know that that's what people want to see, so I try to provide them with that kind of information.

MODERATOR: I should go around and ask everybody, what kind of information do you look for, what kind of information do you need about readers and nonreaders?

EDITOR 3: If you know what their occupation is, what their age is, education, do they like to read, do they like to watch TV….

MODERATOR: If you know these things, how do you use that information?

EDITOR 1: It's come up several times that we all know that the majority of our readers are older readers, people who are reading the paper are older readers, so we tend to cover those issues a lot more. We're aware that if there's a story about Social Security on the wire, we probably ought to get it in because the vast majority of our readers are either on Social Security or soon will be, so it's an important issue to them. I think a lot of the information we talked …, I mean, we use is not from this latest survey because most of us didn't see that until last week, but when we did a redesign of the paper 5 years ago, we did surveys and focus groups and everything and at that time we found that more people were interested in health news. And I think at that point, we increased the amount of coverage of health news and history. We started running a lot more historical kinds of things and paying attention to those kind of things, even like anniversary dates of things. I think we pay more attention to that stuff, too. People want to read about that kind of stuff.

MODERATOR: What kinds of information do you utilize as far as readers and nonreaders?

EDITOR 2: I just want to know what they're interested in. Nonreaders – I want to know why they're not reading us. So if there's a way we can capture that, maybe change the paper in some ways without abandoning our core audience, but try different things to get people reading. If you know why they're reading or what they're interested in, you follow the scenario of what you're going to do, how you're going to present things, how you're going to lay things out, the amount of copy you're going to provide, the stories you're going to assign them. And the same thing is true of nonreaders. If you know they're not reading the paper, maybe there are things you can do to get them to read.

MODERATOR: What about you in sports?

EDITOR 4: One thing you've got to look at is how people get their information today. There are so many ways they can. It's become the computer age. Now people can access games on radio, they can access them on TV, they can access them off the Internet. They can listen to them and update them. They can get a running box score. There's all kinds of different ways people can follow a game or get game information or information on an event. So that impacts the way you're going to cover something. A lot times you find yourself lagging behind because today people want instant access. They want to know immediately off the television, off the Internet, off the radio, so now you're coming from behind and that impacts the way you will cover a story. Maybe you might take a different slant, or if you're covering something that perhaps isn't on the radio or on television or on the Internet, such as high school-type stuff, you might approach it a little bit differently than you would a KU game or a Chiefs game that's going to be splattered all over television, all over radio, all over the Internet.

MODERATOR: Does that kind of information come to you a lot from survey-type things or is it, like you were talking about, the kind of daily feedback…

EDITOR 4: Nothing comes from a survey. That comes from hopping on the Internet and following the game yourself. And finding out what's going on, if the K-State basketball game isn't on television, you listen to it on the radio. Or if there's another game that you're waiting for, you just hit the Internet, they're updating it every 5 minutes as to what the score is, how much time is left, running a box score, anything you need is there. You find it just like readers do. They will search until they find it because it's out there, if you look hard enough, unless it's a high school game or something like that.

MODERATOR: We did touch on this briefly…(unintelligible) (name), what about you? What kinds of information do you need?

EDITOR 5: About the readers?

MODERATOR: About the readers and about the nonreaders.

EDITOR 5: Well, like (editor 3) said, I'd like to know their age and their education level and what their interests are, their political bent helps a little. Basically, from the nonreaders I'd like to know why they're not reading. Where is their dissatisfaction and whether or not I can change that. I think probably those …

EDITOR 3: The situation in (this county), though, if you're reading a newspaper, you're reading our paper. So, if you're a nonreader, chances are you're probably not reading any paper. In some ways, we sort of … on the news side determine what stories, a lot based on readership, but a lot based on just what we think is important. For instance, we'll cover a city or county commission meeting, and there might be 10 or 15 people in attendance, but we determine what's coming out of that meeting is important to our readers.

MODERATOR: (Name), what about you, what kinds of information about the readers …

EDITOR 6: I can't handle that one.

MODERATOR: Anyone?

(pause, comments among participants)

What about the amount of information that you're getting, the survey every few years, do you feel the amount of information you have about readers is enough, adequate, too much? What about the amount?

EDITOR 2: The amount's fine. The surveys really don't change that much. People are still old, they're still conservative, they're still worried about health care. Those things don't change that much, so I'm more concerned about hearing from the readers about what they consider to be an interesting story. I want phone calls, and letters and e-mail and things like that. Story ideas, that's what I'm looking for.

EDITOR 4: Having not seen this most recent survey, well, I saw it briefly yesterday, but the numbers didn't change that much from '96 to '99, and they didn't change that much from '93, so I think (editor 2) is right, you've got to go by what you're hearing now. And if you live by the survey, you die by the survey. You don't know who they've contacted, exactly what was going on that day. If they're asking a 78-year-old widow what she thinks about our Chiefs coverage, I think she'd could probably care less, and I think that's going to influence it. I think you've got to go with more ... it can give you trends, but I don't think you can live and die by the survey.

EDITOR 8: I'd like to know personally when these people were contacted, from a sports angle. Are they calling these people from 1 to 4 in the afternoon or 5 in the afternoon when you're most likely to get a housewife or someone like that. Or are you calling between the hours of 5 and 9 when you have a chance to get somebody my age who works and is an avid fan?

MODERATOR: More information about how they gathered this …

EDITOR 8: Exactly. Or maybe from 8 to 5 and they go home or if they are trying to spread them around and make the same amount of calls from 5 to 9 at night. To me it makes a lot of difference when they gathered the information, at least from a sports angle.

EDITOR 4: Anybody can sling numbers at you, but it's how they get those numbers and where they're coming from that's important to me. Not so much exactly what the numbers say.

MODERATOR: (Name), I noticed you're nodding.

EDITOR 5: Well, I just think the survey is a nice place to base a starting point. This tells me a little bit about our readers but I need to go out and find some more before I can feel like I'm doing a good job. To really talk to the readers myself to feel I'm getting enough information to put out something they're going to be happy with.

MODERATOR: So it's useful, but just as a springboard for information you would seek from other sources.

EDITOR 5: Right.

EDITOR 1: To me the survey is just one of the tools we use. We've done other things, and we all hear from people. When we're out in the community we hear from people what they like and don't like about the (this newspaper). I think the survey helps in some ways. There have been things we've learned from the survey that I didn't know before, but this latest survey the numbers were the same as they have been, so I don't think it really changed my perception any at all.

MODERATOR: Do you think the information from the survey is enough, or would you like more information from that survey?

EDITOR 1: I guess the information that was there was enough. I think the fact that the numbers stayed almost identical to what they were three years ago pretty much tells you that if it's probably pretty consistent. If it's that consistent, the numbers are probably pretty accurate to what people out in the community are thinking. In some ways, we can take that information and use it, but then we've all been trained as journalists, so we have to use our training and our instincts and our feelings as typical readers, too, to base a lot of our decision-making on, too. If we gave readers what they want, we'd be covering the same kinds of things that Jerry Springer covers. We don't do a whole lot of that because you're just …

MODERATOR: Does anybody here feel the surveys don't cover enough information from that kind of a source, that you don't have enough information about your readership?

EDITOR 4: I think they're thorough. Very thorough. (snickering)

MODERATOR: And you laugh?

EDITOR 4: They're very thorough.

MODERATOR: Uh-ah. Too thorough?

EDITOR 4:You said it.

MODERATOR: Well, no ...

EDITOR 4: I think if you go out in the community, and somebody mentions an event that perhaps wasn't there, I think that's an isolated incident. I think if two people say something to you, that's curious. If three people say it to you, it's a trend. If four people say it to you, you blew it. I think I respond more to that than I do to surveys. You don't see them enough. I think things change, and I have some doubts about who exactly they've gotten a hold of. I think we operate more on phone calls and what we hear on a daily or a weekly or a monthly basis, not every three years.

MODERATOR: (Name), what do you think? Do you think the amount of information you have from the surveys and other sources is adequate?

EDITOR 7: If you include the letters to the editor, the phone calls. If somebody's upset, they'll let us know. (To other editors) Did the demographics confirm unanamously on this latest survey with the make-up of the respondents?

EDITOR 1: I'm sure it probably did, but we only got, you know ...

EDITOR 7: Yeah. I'd like to know who they surveyed and what time of day they surveyed because that's an indicator. It could be a marker of certain responses if something leaps out at you.

MODERATOR: Is anybody here as an editor attempting to increase the amount of information you get about readers and nonreaders? Is anyone going out and trying to get more information?

EDITOR 7: That's out of our control. A survey like this, other than just talking to people ...

MODERATOR: A survey, or like he suggested talking to people ...

EDITOR 2: Well, at the bottom of our pages on the (name of state-coverage page) and Sports and stuff, they have if you have comments or suggestions e-mail (name) or e-mail me. Little things like that.

(Name) is pretty well known in the community and some of us are. I'm a native (of this city), so people see you and they talk to you. They see you out in public.

EDITOR 6: We all listen.

EDITOR 4: I don't think we solicit it, but we sure make ourselves accessible enough if you have a suggestion, you've got a phone number and address and e-mail. You know exactly where … how to get in touch with us, if you want us you can come find us. Most people know where you live anyway.

MODERATOR: How useful is e-mail in gathering information?

EDITOR 2: I get a bunch of e-mail everyday. A lot of it I throw away. A lot of it's junk, people wanting me to buy a service or something like that. But I get e-mails from KU, a few months ago I turned it into a pretty good story, one of their e-mails. I get e-mails from other people on staff, my boss and stuff. There are story ideas that way, too, that they're getting from readers. So it all gets funneled in one way or another. E-mail is helpful.

MODERATOR: Anybody else here use e-mail or just mail or other sources for information about your readers?

EDITOR 1: Most of us our e-mail address isn't even published anywhere, except for (name) and (name). So nobody knows to e-mail us.

MODERATOR: But you get letters from your readers. Do you find that a useful way of gleaning information?

EDITOR 1: Well, not really. Most of my contact is personal because my name isn't published anywhere in the newspaper. So people who know me out in the community know that I work at the newspaper, and they talk to me and suggest story ideas.

MODERATOR: So physical contact is …

EDITOR 1: Yeah. More so than anything I get in the mail, or occasionally I get a phone message. When I'm doing the (arts and entertainment) section, I'm in touch with different people in the community that are involved in those sorts of issues, and you hear from them. I don't really get any e-mail about work, except for in-house stuff usually.

MODERATOR: What about the telephone? Do you get a lot of feedback from the phone?

EDITOR 3: Most of the time on the news desk, we pass them along to (name) or (name). (laughter from group) Because people that have complaints or story ideas, they are the ones that can deal with them.

EDITOR 2: My phone rings all day. That's what I do, I answer the phone.

MODERATOR: In what ways do you, as an editor, expect to use the information you gain about readers? And that sounds like a question I asked earlier, but basically, in what ways do you expect to use it, all of these different ways.

EDITOR 1: I think the same way we do now. This latest survey, when I looked over it, I really didn't see anything that had changed any of my thinking because the results were so similar to what they had been. And so my thinking remains the same. People are still wanting the same kinds of information that we're already trying to give them.

MODERATOR: So this time you don't see a lot of change. Does everybody pretty much agree with that? That the survey from this time and last time wouldn't make a significant difference?

EDITOR 1: I guess the only issue that did look like there was any difference at all was that people were more interested in money-type issues. I think that we've been recognizing that anyway. There's a growing interest in the stock market and mutual funds and things like that , so we've been already talking about… We've beefed up our Sunday Money section anyway previously. And we're now talking about increasing the number of mutuals that we run in the Saturday paper, but we were already talking about that before I ever saw the survey result thing anyway.

EDITOR 3: It was 85 percent this time. That was one of the biggest jumps. But I find that a little interesting because I've been putting those pages together since April, and one day a week my name's at the bottom of the section, so they can e-mail me or call me. And I think I've gotten something like three calls and three e-mails in 8 months, so I was a little surprised when I saw those numbers.

MODERATOR: At this time, do you think editors should use readership surveys as one ways to get information about readers and nonreaders of their papers? Do you think editors, in other words, should use these surveys as one method of evaluating their constituents?

EDITOR 1: They're one method, but not the only method. I don't think they should be our sole method.

EDITOR 3: I don't think we should ignore them, but I think (editor 4) said it best when he talked about if you just go to a game. On the news side, we don't sometimes … we can't base our stories and ideas and how we play them based on attendance, because a lot of times stuff is happening during the day when people are at work. So it's kind of on our expertise, our experience to help us out.

MODERATOR: So a survey can help an editor to determine that at least?

EDITOR 3: I think so.

MODERATOR: What about that, (name)?

EDITOR 5: Well, I think like I said before, it's just one method to use to determine what you're going to do for the day.

MODERATOR: And I apologize, I know some of these questions seem redundant. In discussing some other things, we've already touched on that. In spring of 1999, the research organization owned by the parent company of this newspaper conducted a readership survey. For the survey, people living in a 14-county area surrounding the newspaper were randomly recruited by telephone and by mail to fill out questionnaires. These questionnaires asked people about themselves, whether they read the newspaper and what news and information interested them. From now on, we're going to talk specifically about that survey. I know some of you have seen it and some haven't. Let me ask you a few questions about how useful you found it, and your participation in it. The research organization prepared a booklet that presented the results of this 1999 readership survey. Who's read the book of the survey results, who here has read the survey results? I know you said you had.

EDITOR 1: Parts of it. We got about a 10-page …

EDITOR 7: We just got an abstract about it.

EDITOR 1: We haven't seen the full survey. The information we had didn't have much of the biographical information about the people who …

EDITOR 7: We weren't involved any way. We just knew of it.

MODERATOR: Have you seen it yet?

EDITOR 7: Just that abstract.

EDITOR 4: We were handed it last night. (giggling from group)

MODERATOR: Has everybody at this table had a chance to look at it or not?

EDITOR 7: Not the whole thing, just the abstract. We haven't seen the thing in full.

MODERATOR: Last night, huh? (unintelligible) … Were you informed of the result of this survey in any other way?

VARIOUS EDITORS: No. (Last night.)

EDITOR 1: I didn't even think there had been a survey done. (laughter from group) until last week.

EDITOR 4: We found out about the survey last night.

MODERATOR: And about your participation in the … (last night)… all in one fell swoop, huh?

EDITOR 4: I knew nothing. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. (giggling from group) until last night.

MODERATOR: OK. All right. … Do you believe the results of this survey are accurate?

EDITOR 7: Yeah, I guess so. I mean … Were the responses … truthful, is that what you're asking?

MODERATOR: Accurate. Yeah.

EDITOR 7: Oh. Well … then who could say.

MODERATOR: Do you think that they … (unintelligible)

EDITOR 7: From just skimming the abstract, it didn't look like anything was out of line.

MODERATOR: You said earlier you thought it was accurate just by going by the …

EDITOR 1: Yeah. I think based on the fact that it didn't change much from 1996. The '96 findings were drastically different from the '93 survey we did, but that was largely because of a situation that had happened shortly before the survey in 1993 that got a lot of people angry with the (this newspaper). We were held in very low esteem at that time.

EDITOR 2 (to other editors): Did we change companies, too, from the '93?

EDITOR 1 and EDITOR 4: Yeah.

EDITOR 2: Wasn't one…

EDITOR 4: It was the Detroit (unintelligible)

EDITOR 2: and then (research organization) did the '96.

EDITOR 4: Because the '93 showed the 31 percent of readers were interested in high school sports, and the number jumped to 68 in '96. So people got more than two times interested in high school sports in that amount of time. I don't think so.

EDITOR 7: There was a case where I think they just talked to the wrong people.

EDITOR 3: I would like to see on these numbers like you see on political polls plus or minus 4 percent or something like that.

MODERATOR: Reporting the way they took it.

EDITOR 3: I'm sure the people answered honest to the best of their ability, but I'm kind of like (editor 8), I'd be very curious as to what time of day they made these calls. Was it a cross-section at 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 8 o'clock at night, or was it all just fit into the caller's 8 to 5 schedule. I think that would make a big determination, especially for sports.

EDITOR 8: I think, too, in this day and age of telemarketers calling 9, 10 times a day, some people just give an answer to get people off the phone, too. If somebody says can I take a couple minutes of your time and 15 minutes later you're still asking questions, I tend to say either I've got to go or just answer yes to everything to hurry up and get it over with. So you don't know. To me, this is a very lengthy thing. If you're asking somebody this over the phone, this isn't a two-minute interview. This is at least 15 to 20 minutes. You can't just gather this information …

MODERATOR: This plus or minus thing he was talking about, that's why they have those tables on political surveys …

EDITOR 3: Yeah. I would be interested. It might be …

MODERATOR: … because some people do just …

EDITOR 6: Was this a phone interview?

EDITOR 8: It was done both ways, phone and letter?

MODERATOR: See, I know nothing about the survey itself. I'm just the moderator. So I'm asking you. I'm trying to glean your opinion of the accuracy. Is it very accurate, moderately accurate, less than desirable…

EDITOR 7: I don't think we can tell.

EDITOR 4: Or none of the above because we just don't know.

EDITOR 7: That's a question you need to direct to the people who conducted the survey.

MODERATOR: As the consumers of this information, though, your opinion is valuable. This is the kind of information that this study is interested in: if you find it valuable, if you believe it, if you think it's accurate …

EDITOR 7: Just skimming the results, it looks like they're doing a good job. There's nothing that I saw that popped out that said we were significantly deficient in any area.

MODERATOR: And you feel like that's an accurate reflection of the kind of …

EDITOR 7: I mean, surveys can't predict. They just offer a snapshot of someone's opinion at that point in time. So having a series of surveys, you can tell if the population they survey is the same.

MODERATOR: So over time it becomes more useful?

EDITOR 7: Well, I think so. If one tells they don't change perceptively from one to the other, and they're asking the same questions. But the problem you get involved in if they start asking different questions, phrasing them differently, or conducting the survey differently. Face to face are generally the most accurate.

EDITOR 5: I would regard reader feedback or word of mouth as more accurate than a survey, if you're looking for whether we regard this as accurate. I wouldn't look at this for accuracy. I would look for reader feedback as being more accurate. I would trust that more.

EDITOR 1: I always take reader feedback with a grain of salt, too, because the people who are going to call you are the ones who are very upset or the ones who are very, very pleased with what you've done. Whereas the vast majority of the people you don't hear from. So in that regard, I think a survey can be valuable, too. I don't think you can do one without the other. I think you have to pay attention to all the different things you hear. Engaging your readers' opinions.

EDITOR 7: Aside from the survey, the one vote of confidence I thought we got, we got in sort of a back-handed way. When the press broke and we didn't have a paper, we had people cursing us at the front door because they didn't get a paper.

MODERATOR: Well, that's a positive way of looking at people yelling.

EDITOR 7: Usually they yell at you after they get the paper.

MODERATOR: Researchers establish goals and objectives for their newspaper surveys. Do you know what these goals and objectives were?

EDITOR 7: We had no input in putting this together. We had no idea …

EDITOR 4: Until last night (giggling from group)

MODERATOR: Did they ask you before they did this what you, as editors, were interested in finding out?

EDITOR 4: No.

EDITOR 7: We had absolutely no input in this at all. None. Zero.

MODERATOR: We knew nothing, huh?

EDITOR 4: We got it last night.

MODERATOR: Last night. And this is the first you knew about it?

EDITOR 4: Yes, ma'am.

MODERATOR: OK. So, I'm going to ask more questions that sound kind of like that. Did the newpaper's 1999 survey results provide you with the kind of information about readers and nonreaders that you now want and need to know? In other words, it's a restatement of the general question I asked you earlier. Did this survey provide you with the kinds of information you need to know or were there other things you would have rather known?

EDITOR 4: I didn't know what I needed to know because I didn't know it was coming. I didn't know what I wanted to know.

MODERATOR: But if you had specific things you wanted to find out, does this survey cover them?

EDITOR 8: It's pretty thorough.

EDITOR 3: I think I'd rather seen them maybe rate like 1 through 10, top to bottom, how they preferred or what they'd rather see us cover.

EDITOR 7: You never get all the information you want, even in a perfect survey. There's more you want to ask. We had input, I'm sure, that would have been …questions that we probably could have offered, but since we didn't, we weren't involved …

MODERATOR: So you had some … you have things in mind that you think …

EDITOR 7: What I'm saying is if they would have come to us and said, should we be asking certain things about our readers, I'm sure we could have come up with some questions that would have been different or maybe we would not have asked some of those, we would have asked some differently.

MODERATOR: That's exactly what I was wondering about. If you felt like there were certain things that, if they had consulted you, you would find more useful to know.

EDITOR 1: I also don't think any of us have had the survey long enough to process it and feel like 'It's not giving me this information.' We never saw the complete survey. We only saw this, and we just saw that recently. So I don't think … We haven't even had time to process what's here, let alone think about what's not there.

MODERATOR: Exactly, and that's another issue.

EDITOR 3: How long have you had the survey?

MODERATOR: I haven't had the survey at all. I'm moderator. I'm not supposed to know much.

EDITOR 4: Then you've got a roomful of moderators. (laughter from group)

MODERATOR: It has to do with a blind study. The double blind study. I don't know anything about the survey, I'm just asking you. At this time, do you believe the information provided by the survey is useful or not useful to yourself and the other editors?

EDITOR 7: I'd say a qualified yes. We haven't had a chance to digest it all. I'm hoping with the amount of money they paid for it, there'd be something useful in there.

MODERATOR: A qualified yes. Does everybody agree with that? Or does somebody else have reservations? … Everybody thinks it's useful? OK. In what ways is it useful?

EDITOR 1: Nobody's had time to look. … But I think the things I've looked at, I think somebody said it earlier, it seems to affirm that we are giving our readers what they want already. The numbers being consistent from 1996 to 1999. I feel like that gives us a pretty good idea that we're kind of on the right track. There might be some minor modifications we need to make. But I think generally, we have a pretty good grasp of what our readers are wanting, and we're hopefully going to give them that.

MODERATOR: Did the survey results provide you with the kinds of information about the readers that you know want and need to know. I think I asked that. Never mind. Did your supervisors at the paper give you any guidelines or directives on how to use the results?

EDITORS: No.

MODERATOR: But again, you just got it last night.

EDITORS: Got it last night. (laughter from group)

MODERATOR: Did you get some suggestions last night?

EDITOR 4: I asked him a question about how to fill the test out, not having anything to study before the test. He showed it to me and he said "here," that was the directive I got.

MODERATOR: "Here?" So, pretty much, no one has said, "here's how we're going to use it." It doesn't mean that at a later date they won't, right? This hasn't …

EDITOR 1: I have a feeling that if this meeting weren't going to take place, we might never have seen the results of this survey. That's kind of …

EDITOR 4: I was told that in '96 when they put the quote dog and pony act on, when they presented it to us, I was also told that there quote would be no dog and pony act this time.

EDITOR 1: I think basically the survey was done, the department heads reviewed it, and that was the end of it. I don't think there was any intent to do anything with it, as far as we know. I have no idea how long they've had the results in hand.

MODERATOR: Not very long, that I know. They just got it back … (unintelligible)

EDITOR 1: … It takes (research organization) 9 months to process a survey and get it back.

MODERATOR: Did anyone here have any specific plans or general plans to use the survey now at this point? Do you have like 'When I get hold of the full survey, I'm going to do this?'

EDITOR 7: None of us individually have the power to do that. Our story selection is going to be the same. Nothing is changed. …Nothing there is telling me that story selection …(unintelligible)

MODERATOR: Is that pretty much how everybody feels?

EDITOR 8: I don't see what we cover sports-wise changing. I don't see our assignments or what people cover changing from what this shows at all.

MODERATOR: What about news and feature stories?

EDITOR 1: I think news, really the only number we saw that changed was the interest in money things, and I think we've already pretty much addressed that before we even saw the results of the survey. I

mean, our Sunday money section has gotten bigger anyway in itself. We were planning on adding another page to the mutuals to add moremutual fund listings.

MODERATOR: How did you get the information that your readers were interested in that?

EDITOR 1: I think it's just the general sense, I mean the general sense of the country is that people are more interested in money. People have more money in mutual funds, so people are more interested in following mutual funds. The stock market, I mean it's been going through the roof lately, and everywhere you go, people are talking about the stock market. I think it's just part of everyone's general sense of trying to .... I mean, we live in this world, too, we kind of know what's going on without reader surveys.

EDITOR 3: We just received a memo that 89 percent of the employees here invest in the 401K plan, so that's a pretty good indicator right there.

MODERATOR: So partially you use your own news sense and your personal information. That's still an old reliable method , isn't it, in determining what goes in. What about features? I believe that you're a features person. Do you have any plans at this time to use the survey in any specific way?

EDITOR 5: Not in any specific way. I'll look it over just because it's the first survey I've been here for. It's my first year, so I'll look it over. But that's just for my own personal use. I'm not going to sit and say, oh, OK, this is what I'm going to do with it now that I've read it. It's just basically information for me to have to know.

MODERATOR: And you'll take that into consideration. Do you have any plans to use this survey in any way after it comes in? I understand you guys just got an outline.

EDITOR 7: Not unless some directive comes down from on high. If the readers say that they don't want western Europe news or southeast Asia news or something like that. It didn't look like to me anything of substance had changed. The readership was (unintelligible).

MODERATOR: OK. Actually, I've gone through all of the questions. Does anyone have anything they'd would really like to suggest as far as the usefulness of a survey like this. As an editor, what would you find the most useful? Would you find a survey, would you find a focus group like this more useful? What kinds of information could you use?

EDITOR 1: We did a lot of this 5 years ago when we did the redesign of the paper. And at that time, we did a readership survey, we did focus groups, and we just took copies of the paper. I mean, we asked people out in the community that we knew, sources, friends, acquaintances, anybody that we could, to take a paper and mark what they read and how far they read and all that kind of thing. And to me, that was much more useful information than just this readership survey because this one is kind of confirming the things that we learned during that process.

MODERATOR: So somewhat redundant, but you don't think all those kinds of things need to be done each time.

EDITOR 1: No, I don't think so. To me this one was a confirmation that we're doing a pretty good job. I mean there might be some minor things we need to be doing differently, but I think overall, it lets us know we're doing what people want us to do.

MODERATOR: So it helps you understand or serve the readers better?

EDITOR 7: I think one of the strong desires in there, I didn't see any difference in that from the previous surveys, is for local news and local features in the life department. It's very local, newspapers (unintelligible). That's obviously a strong component of what readers want.

MODERATOR: So surveys like this do help you better serve those people in this community because you do at least hear a trend, is that what you're saying?

EDITOR 7: Definitely.

MODERATOR: Do you feel like the other editors expect you to know about what's in the survey and to use that information the readership survey provides?

EDITOR 1: Apparently not …

EDITOR 4: since they don't know it exists.

MODERATOR: Does it help you know what issues are important in the community? I mean surveys specifically.

EDITOR 7: I don't think it's that specific.

MODERATOR: OK. Well, thank you so much.

APPENDIX C

Researcher's informed consent form

Researcher's interview questions

Transcription of researcher interview

Informed consent for Kansas State University research study

Subject orientation: You are asked to take part in a research study designed to explore the readership survey conducted in spring 1999 for this newspaper and how it provided its news department with information about its readers and nonreaders. In order to do this, it is necessary to gather information from you by conducting a focused interview. The researcher will orally question you and transcribe your replies. The researcher will ask you questions focusing on the methods used in conducting the newspaper's 1999 readership survey. It is expected to take one hour to one hour and 30 minutes to complete the interview. You will not be required to participate in the study in any other way. There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study. Foreseeable benefits of the study are that it could help this research organization evaluate the quality of the survey research it provides to other newspapers in the chain, as well as to other clients. It could lead to improvements in the quality of research the organization conducts. Participants in this study consist of about 12 of this newspaper's decision-making editors, the executive editor, and the lead researcher of the 1999 readership survey. Your name will not be associated with the information you provide. Only records of the information you provide will be maintained until the study is completed, which will be within two months.

Informed consent statement: I have read the foregoing subject orientation and agree to take part in the study. My participation in this study is purely voluntary. I understand that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled and that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

If I have questions about the rationale or method of the study, I understand that I may contact Janice Hume, Assistant Professor, A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications, 105 Kedzie Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1501, at (785) 532-3959.

If I have questions about the rights of subjects in this study or about the manner in which the study is conducted, I may contact Clive Fullagar, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 1 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1501, at (785) 532-3224.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's interview questions

This study's researcher will verbally ask the lead researcher of the newspaper's 1999 readership survey the following questions and transcribe his responses in writing:

1. What were the objectives and goals of the survey? How were these determined? Who determined them?
2. Was it determined what percentage of the population had a chance to be selected for the survey? How was this determined? Why was this method chosen? What was the percentage?
3. Was it determined how those who did not have a chance to be selected were distinctive? How was this determined? Why was this method chosen? In what ways were they distinctive?
4. The survey report states that the call list was purchased from Maritz Marketing Research in St. Louis, Mo. Why was this call list chosen? How was this call list compiled? When and how were additions and deletions made to this call list?
5. Was it determined how those who were omitted from the list were distinctive? How was this determined? Why was this method chosen? In what ways were they distinctive?
6. Were any groups identified that were selected as respondents at different rates than the rest of the population? How were they identified? What were the groups?
7. Were any measures taken to compensate for the different representation of these groups? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
8. How were telephone numbers to call selected? Why was this method chosen?
9. How were respondents from each household selected? Why was this method chosen?
10. Were respondents questioned about the number of telephones and the number of other adult members of the household? How and why was this information used?
11. How was the sample size determined? Why was this method chosen?
12. Were any subgroups of the population identified as important? How and why were they identified? What were the groups?
13. How was the sampling error computed? Why was this method chosen?

14. Were any procedures used to attempt to increase the response rate? What procedures were used? Why were these procedures chosen? What was the result?
15. Were screening methods used to find respondents? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
16. At what time of the day were households telephoned? Why? What would happen when there was no answer? Were callbacks made? How many? At what time of the day?
17. How were survey questions determined? Were any guidelines used to write the survey questions? What guidelines were used? Where did the guidelines originate? Why were they chosen? What were the guidelines?
18. Were questions matched to research objectives? How and why?
19. Were proxy respondents or self-respondents used? Why?
20. Were efforts made to ensure that all respondents understood the meaning of questions and that these meanings were the ones researchers intended? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
21. Were efforts made to reduce the social desirability effect, in which distortion arises from respondents' attempts to make themselves look good and avoid looking bad? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
22. Were methods used to stimulate respondents' recall abilities? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
23. Were efforts made to ensure confidentiality of responses? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen? Were they communicated to respondents? How were they communicated to respondents?
24. Were respondents required to make any commitments to accuracy of responses? How was this accomplished? Why was this method chosen?
25. Were methods used to increase the respondents' perceptions that questions were appropriate and necessary? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
26. Were methods used to decrease the respondents' perceptions that responses would be judged negatively? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?

27. Were any methods used to deal with sensitive questions? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
28. Were any different variations of the questionnaire used? How and why?
29. How were categories for rating questions determined? How were they chosen and why?
30. How was information from open-ended questions analyzed?
31. Were surveys pretested in any way before the full-scale survey was conducted? How were they pretested? Why was this method chosen? What information did this yield about the survey? Were any changes made to the survey based on the pretesting?
32. Were any guidelines used to determine the order of questions? What guidelines were used? Why were these guidelines chosen?
33. Were any problems encountered in conducting the survey? What problems were encountered? Were they resolved? How?

27. Were any methods used to deal with sensitive questions? What methods were used? Why were these methods chosen?
28. Were any different variations of the questionnaire used? How and why?
29. How were categories for rating questions determined? How were they chosen and why?
30. How was information from open-ended questions analyzed?
31. Were surveys pretested in any way before the full-scale survey was conducted? How were they pretested? Why was this method chosen? What information did this yield about the survey? Were any changes made to the survey based on the pretesting?
32. Were any guidelines used to determine the order of questions? What guidelines were used? Why were these guidelines chosen?
33. Were any problems encountered in conducting the survey? What problems were encountered? Were they resolved? How?

Transcription of researcher's interview

INTERVIEWER: Well, the first question I had was about what the goals and objectives of the survey were, but I didn't have the whole report when I wrote these up, and I have now, so I realize that those are already on there, but I did need to know from you who actually set those. Who determined what the goals and objectives were going to be?

RESEARCHER: Well, really the goals originated from 1993 when Clark, Martire and Bartolomere did this, essentially this study.

INTERVIEWER: OK, and this was a different research organization?

RESEARCHER: Exactly. And their goals may have modified somewhat based upon meetings we had with the publishers in a group. Jan. 11, 1996, we had a meeting with the publishers, and we really kind of went through the whole questionnaire, both the methodology and the questionnaire itself to determine how satisfied the publishers were with all areas of the process. What complaints they had about … every (newspaper group) newspaper did this study by CNB back in 1993.

I.: And they all used basically the same …

R.: Almost exactly the same questionnaire with relatively minor changes.

I.: So you then took that one and showed it to the publishers and said, "What do you want to change?"

R.: Let's talk about that process. Some publishers were relatively dissatisfied with the 1993 results for a variety of reasons. Others were relatively happy, and that probably continues to this day. (The newspaper group) was really the driving force for wanting to see the studies done on an ongoing basis. At that time, they thought they would do the study every 3 years, so we started in '96. Then it was decided to go ahead and do three studies in '96. Since there are eight papers, we did three in '96, and these are in our fiscal year, which goes from October to October, three in '96, three in '97, three in '98. Then last year, we actually ended up doing a total of five, but part of it was some markets' new publishers had come in and wanted to update the information sooner than previously. And then other … this year for example, we're not expecting to do, but I think one, or just start one, but not really do it until next fiscal year.

I.: So at some time, you're pretty well always working on one of these with one of the papers. (Interruption) So this organization set out the original objectives, and when you took over, you maybe modified from what the publishers told you they wanted.

R.: Right, well, we may have made some recommendations. But in particular the publishers agreed that the most important aspect in the priority that they wanted in the program, was to ... this first objective, which is to determine and compare the current measures of reader satisfaction and editorial and circulation service levels with the previous measure. So that was the most important aspect, and the rest of these sort of fall from there. So the relative strengths and weaknesses that might be within the paper would be the next thing. This third thing, this strategy for a circulation growth based, linked to reader interests and needs, that was in the original. This part about illuminating any perceived barriers to circulation growth, that's something we sort of added. The idea ... The Clark ... CNB model that they used is one of what topics, let's say, are people interested in and how well does the newspaper perform in those topics. And then they do a sort of analysis to identify what topics should you ... are important or at least of high interest or a high proportion of interest and therefore should be given more consideration. I'm not sure that's a viable method, but we've continued to use that analysis. I think there are some inherent problems with it because I don't think it measures intensity in terms of ... You may have a relatively small people, and sports, I think, is a particular example, who like and want sports intensely, but they don't represent a very large percent of the marketplace compared to maybe national news, which everybody wants to know about. Ninety-nine percent of the people would like to know what the national news is. And then how they grade you on that. The people who aren't interested in sports could care less about rating you on sports, or they may give you some sort of score based on some perception they've formed, and that may or may not be ... if you make changes in your sports coverage, it may or may not influence those people because they don't read your sports anyway.

I.: So you think that the way you're doing it now still doesn't give you intensity, it mostly just focuses on topics?

R.: It gives you a sense of what proportion of the marketplace is interested in any particular topic. A slight sense of intensity in that there are three rating scales: the not at all interested, somewhat interested and very interested. So there's a small ... I mean with only three scale points, we can't ... It's hard to

determine just how much intensity there is. Certainly, if a greater proportion says they're very interested on one topic, it may tell you something, versus another topic. The analysis they did and that we do is we tend to lump together the somewhat interested and the very interested and call them the interested and provide that analysis. Now some of the publishers have come back and asked for, "Well, could you just tell me what proportion of the market is very interested in a particular topic," and we've provided that on request, but it's not necessarily part of the … In a large part, we had to build what we did on what they did in order to maintain some sense of consistency. We weren't always … we didn't always recommend that that's the way it should be, but that's the way the clients decided that they would prefer to see it done. Sort of the research reality that hits the road.

I.: Do you feel like the publishers had a lot of input into changing? I mean, did they have a lot of ideas for changing the objectives, or did your organization have more or was it kind of … ?

R.: I think the main thing … they pretty well followed some of our suggestions, and some suggestions have worked and some suggestions haven't over time. And we sort of eliminate things because we don't feel like they accomplish the goal that we were looking for. But as far as … for example, perceived barriers to circulation growth, one of my concerns coming into the project was that I felt that Clark, Martire makes great claims about, "Well, you can increase circulation if you just provide these topics." I wanted to add something about ... to ask people in a rather straightforward way, what could the paper do that might allow you … that might encourage you to subscribe. And I think although that's an open-ended question, so it's your ability to …. It's a coded type of question, so it's limited in its analysis ability, but it does, I think, fairly well illustrate that oftentimes people's response in a particular market is, "There's nothing the paper could do to get me to read that paper, I don't care what they cover, I'm not going to read it." Now that … there are some limitations in that because, obviously, when you ask somebody what could you do, and they say nothing, that may or may not be totally true. Obviously, they could be wrong about that, and there are probably other ways to get underneath that. But … this study already tries to be all things to all groups, and I think that … that's as far as we could go with it at that point. There were limitations to what we thought the study could and should do. In fact, we were highly concerned in the original study. One of the changes we suggested, and were eventually made, they apparently did this study completely over the phone, and it was at least a … as far as we could tell, it must

have been at least a 35-minute, but probably as much as 45 minutes- to an hour-long survey. We felt that the chance for response bias on that was extremely high. We couldn't understand, necessarily, how they could get that kind of a cooperation rate. And they didn't report what their cooperation rate was.

I.: Oh, they didn't have a response rate?

R.: Uh-uh (no). So we didn't know. One of the things I've noted over time is that, in general, we tend to in, in our studies, we tend to have a greater proportion of higher-income individuals and a higher level of affluence, or I just said that, or a higher level of education, and also a younger mix to some degree. They tend, and some studies are a little different, they tended to have more retired people. So what I suspect, in some degree, is that in the original 1993 study, as would naturally happen with a very long telephone study, that in some cases, they got a disproportionate amount of retirees with nothing to do other than sit and talk to you on the phone. And I think that that influenced their results in ways that I wasn't too happy about. Also in at least, I'm going to say, I'd have to go back and check, but out of eight markets, I think, in at least four, they made errors in the way they weighted the data. In some cases, I was able to figure out why that was, even though I didn't have the data. In other cases, I don't know why they made those errors. I think (this newspaper) one in particular was one where I couldn't figure out exactly what the error was. Well, I'm pretty certain that at least part of the error was that they only included part from (county), but they weighted the data as if it was the whole county. And so that would tend to … decrease the effect of your core county and increase the effect of your outside core county and the results that you found. But that would only partially explains it, so that's not everything.

I.: Were you able to determine what percentage of the population had a chance to be included in the survey, like what your sample frame was?

R.: Well, in general, I didn't go out and literally calculate this, because I think in most research organizations, at least in my experience, and I've been working in market research now since '89, for most business applications they just don't go out and do that. They don't go out and calculate what percentage … obviously, the people who were … they had to be an adult, and they had to have a phone. So it was households with phones. I mean, generally, anymore since phones are nearly pervasive, they're not quite pervasive, I would say, but nearly pervasive, but everyone in the market research industry accepts that as everyone because that's all that we can do unless we go door-to-door. So it would be households with

phones. We did use a screener and ask for the person with the most recent birthday in an effort to randomize male-female selection.

I.: I saw that in there, and I was a little confused by what it was that you were asking on the screener sheet when you asked for the female or male head of the household with the most recent birthday. So, were you saying it could be whoever had the most recent birthday was who you took or at some times did you ask for the male and sometimes the female?

R.: We never asked for either a male or female. We only asked for whoever had the most recent birthday. And that's just a technique. It's not important in and of itself other than as a technique to randomize male-female response. Despite using that technique, the study is disproportionately female. The only other way to overcome that would have been to assign a quota for males and females to seek that out. But that would have added a complexity to the study that I didn't see in the original, so I wasn't necessarily interested in doing that. The reason it's disproportionately female is that the response rate among females is higher. A. They answer the phone, so if you really need the male, you're talking to the female, and she's got to go get the male and bring him to the phone, and he's got to agree to do it. And it just doesn't happen as much. Most of the time, the female answers the phone, and then it's an effort to get the male to the phone and to get him to do it. And then if he says he'll do it, there are ultimately … because we mailed them the surveys and called them back to collect the answers, they don't … they didn't complete the study as readily as the females. They're busy, or they're watching sports or whatever the situation is. So as a consequence, after the interview is completed, or when all the studies are in, what I do is I look at the census information by county for males versus females and then weight the data based on the male or female proportions per each county.

I.: OK, that's kind of related to some of the other questions later on I was going to ask you about. Was the data weighted in any other way, other than for keeping male and female proportional?

R. Back in '93, just to keep it the way Clark, Martire did it, in the actual data tables, I didn't have the data, but I had print-outs, data tables. They weighted the data up to the total population, and I'm sure they weighted it male and female, because they had 50 percent male, 50 percent female respondents at that time. And I saw nowhere in their information that they had established a quota for male and female, and since I know it's nearly impossible to get 50 percent male and 50 percent female for a phone survey, I just

assumed they had to have weighted males versus females. And they weighted it up to the total population in that area.

I.: So they didn't take it by county, is that what you're saying?

R.: I do think they … I'm not sure, they never explained. I took it county by county for the most part. For (this paper's) study, I did it county by county. I haven't done it that way at every paper. I think in '96 for (this paper), I actually weighted it county by county for all the larger population counties, and then for the real small population counties, I combined about three counties, and then weighted it to that. Because I knew I wasn't going to analyze by the individual counties anyway, because I didn't have the sample size to do that, particularly a small county. So I think I did that, but then in later papers, as I was going through, I was going, "Well, if it's a small county, and the population's not that high and I go ahead and weight it, its net effect on the total data is real small. So why not just do it by county." So I tried that out, and I thought the results were fine, so I just left it that way.

I.: So for '99, is that what you did also?

R.: By county, yeah. So for example, I don't know what the counties are, but if say Smith County has 2,000 total people in it, and a thousand of them are males, and we got 10 surveys for males, the weight I would have applied is 10 into a thousand, which is a hundred, so it would have counted as a hundred surveys in essence when I ran my tables. And then the proportions would have fallen out from there.

I.: Then …

R.: But I didn't use that if I needed to do any sort of statistical testing or whatever, but … that's a different issue.

I.: Were there any other groups besides just males and females that were…

R. No. The study tends to be a little weak in the youngest age group, particularly if you just compare to the population, but that's not really the affected population you want to compare to. You want to compare to the 18-24-year-olds that are head of households. And when you look at it there, it's not too bad. But they are a hard group to get a hold of and to secure their agreement to do a study, generally. I mean it's just sort of an accepted fact in the industry. And certainly, if this was a bigger survey with more total surveys and a greater need for statistical certainty, particularly among that group, we could have "overquotaed" for that group, but again, it wasn't done originally, so it wasn't really a consideration.

I.: Now, I want to ask some questions basically about the whole calling method. So, first you started with this list that you purchased from this

R.: Maritz Marketing.

I.: ...Marketing... OK, was this just a list of all the random numbers that were available in ...

R.: Not all. What I generally purchase is 3,000 random listings spread out over the, I think 9- or 10-county area, whatever the number of counties that were assigned to the ...

I.: So you did know that they came from those counties that you were studying?

R.: The Maritz knew which counties, but when they send it to us, it's randomized. So as we're calling, we're just calling whatever the next number is on the list, we don't really know... I mean, I know the interviewers get to the point where they know, "Well, this prefix is (nearby town)." Things like that ...

I.: So what they sent you was a random listing of 3,000 numbers that covered the whole ...

R.: I tell them which counties I need, and I believe they actually pull the list, and they know what the total population count is for that area, then they pull based on a random of the whole group. Then they go back and give me a little sheet that says, you know, (this county) is supposed to be 50 percent of the total, or ... it's supposed to have x total of the population, or... they give me some kind of thing like that, .. or no, (this county) according to population data is 50 percent of this total area, and the sample we pulled showed that we got 49 percent randomly selected for that area. They're basically trying to show this should look like this. Then they'll put a little footnote on there that says for a very small county, it's a possibility we wouldn't include any numbers for it if it doesn't represent, let's say, more than 2 percent of the total thing. It's possible. But I've never seen them actually do that, where we didn't get some phone numbers from a county that we needed.

I.: And the list that they gave you, then, only includes residential numbers or does it also have some nonworking and business numbers?

R.: It has all that. It has nonworking and businesses and things. I don't know for a fact if they do anything at all. I think all they do on a random number listing, and I'm speaking for them, it's been a long time since I've talked to them about this, so I could get this wrong, but my understanding is that they just keep track of the prefixes that are assigned in particular areas and then they randomize the last four digits, and that's what they provide you.

I.: I see. And why was this list chosen?

R.: There's no particular reason for Maritz. There's a number of companies out there that provide random samples for market research firms. They're relatively inexpensive to buy. The thing is if I had to create my own random list, I'd have to get all the prefixes together and just sort of do the same thing. But if I skipped a prefix, then I might inadvertently leave out (a nearby town) when I wanted them included. So there's a certain amount of security in buying it from someone whose sole business, it's not their sole business, but it's a division of their organization that sells lists. They have random list options, and then they have listed list options, if you want to buy a listed list, which wouldn't be appropriate in this case. The only reason you might buy a listed list is if you had an extremely low incidence study, and random lists are just not practical.

I.: Do you know how they compiled their list, I mean do they just get information from the phone company or …?

R.: That's my assumption. I don't know that I've ever had that exact conversation with them, but that's always been my assumption that somehow they have a relationship, and all these list providers where it's survey sampling, Maritz, or there's others, that they make an effort to work with all the phone companies to make sure they have the most up-to-date prefixes in use. And they may even go so far as to … obviously if you have a county, if an area like (nearby town), which only a population of, I don't know what the population is, but if it's only 2,000, it would be my assumption that they'd find out what the block of numbers are that are generally in use somehow. Because otherwise you'd end up getting nothing 80-90 percent of the time, and that doesn't happen, so they must have some system to only … I know they don't … I know it's random, but I think it's like the phone company tells them these are all the numbers, and then they mix those numbers up and give them back to you. There's some relationship there, but I don't know how it's done.

I.: OK. I don't know …

R.: I could give you a number ..

I.: Well, that's what I was going to ask, I don't know how, I'm just working with my committee, and I'm not sure how specific they're going to get on this, so if you have a number for them, I would take it just in case they do want me to contact them.

R.: Or they're in any directory of market research firms. Either look through St. Louis, I believe it's St. Louis where they're headquartered, but they'll be in there under Maritz, and they're relatively large market research firm, and this is just one area of expertise that they provide. They're big competitor is Survey Sampling, which is … you can… it's the same thing, there's no difference.

I.: So maybe I could get that number from you later on ?

R.: Sure.

I.: Were you able, then, in any way to determine how people who were left off their list might be distinctive?

R.: There's no way for us to tell. If there is a response bias in that the people who participate in the study are statistically in some way different from those who decide not to … it's a limitation of a telephone study like this. Again, I have seen, more I think in a law, court of law-type situation, where you might try to call back the people who refuse and get them to redo the study and then compare those results to the people who actually did it and make sure that they're both consistent. But, generally in most market research ... well, first of all, the clients just won't pay for it. They're not going to pay to make sure those people who chose not to respond are different or the same in essence as the people who chose to respond. They barely pay to find out what the people who respond say, so I could see trying to convince them that we need to check on the people who don't respond to make sure they're not different. It wouldn't wash.

I.: OK. And then were there any groups that were selected at different rates from the rest of the population?

R.: Well, not on purpose, except, like I say, we were looking for those with the most recent birthday as a consequence, just because of the way people respond on the phone, we got more females. Other that that, we didn't try to purposely try to select anybody. There were a couple screeners, just having to do with, we wanted to exclude individuals who worked for the paper or the radio or TV or advertising or market research. That's standard, what we call the standard security question.

I.: Since you did have more females than males, like you said before, they were weighted to compensate, right?

R.: Right. Bring the male response up. They would have had a higher weight variable and in most cases, most of the counties that we're talking about the male-female split is pretty close to 50-50. It's

within 1 or 2 percentage points either way. So generally what that tended to do was, at least on the male-female side, is make that equal when we're reporting overall. Then oftentimes in our data tables we did separate out what the men said versus what the women, and of course at that point the weighting doesn't …reporting by male or female doesn't make any difference.

I.: Once you got your list, how did you select which telephone numbers would be called?

R.: Well, 3,000 listings is just sort of a … I have a whole sheet that says, OK, if you … it's just a little spreadsheet that I've developed over the years, and I used to work at a market research firm, really they probably gave it to me. But we start with how many surveys do we want to accomplish, what's the incidence, then we look at, sort of an industry standard is that half the people will say no, and then there's x percent that won't be available, and this and that, and anyway, you end up with you're going to need 3,000 names, you know basically. It's sort of a cheat sheet for how many names do we need to buy in order to get the 400 surveys we need. In general, we took the 3,000 listings, and we attempted our first call-through, we went through the whole 3,000, then we moved back to the beginning, and we just started over everything that wasn't already either initial refusal or completed survey, or obviously a business or fax or whatever, not a good number, those things were not called, then everything else was attempted again. We made it all the way through, then went back and did one more time. We tried at least three times. And generally, by the time we're in the middle of the third attempt, and things like that, we would generally get … we would recruit 500 people to tell us that they would do the survey, then we mailed them the questionnaire along with a $2 incentive because the questionnaire was so long. And we just didn't feel like it was fair to ask them with no incentive to just, "Here, let's just do this survey." So we sent it to them, and because of that change in methodology from what these guys did, we also changed some of the questions slightly because… and in some cases, some of the questions didn't work the same as they had done it, so the data became … you couldn't compare the two, really. And in some ways you can't compare the two, but we did anyway. The methodology really changed so significantly that it's… the questions are basically the same or at least similar, but the methodology, statistically you can't compare the two. But I never had this data anyway, so I didn't have to worry about that.

I.: But the publishers wanted to see a comparison?

R.: They wanted to say, "Well, Les, back in '93 we had x percent that read our paper, and now we have y percent." And so, or at least based on this methodology, and they either took .... Sometimes I would caution them that the margin of error since the end result was 400 surveys, for each, the margin of error would be the same, about 4 point something percent, almost 5 percent. Even if you went up one or two points, it probably didn't mean anything, just a statistical aberration.

I.: So when you say that you needed to call 3,000, and your original list was of 6,000?

R.: There were 3,000 on our list.

I.: There were 3,000 on your list. OK. So you just called everybody on your list that you got.

R.: We attempted everybody on the list.

I.: OK. And then went back at least three callbacks.

R. And obviously, not everyone on the list wasn't everyone. There were lots of disconnected numbers, and I probably have that tallied somewhere. I generally keep track. The publishers never seem to care. Clients never care about that stuff. But, I would have the interviewers tally each call and what was the outcome. And then I would just keep a little tally, and cumulative tally on those things. Mostly I'm making sure the list company didn't do something wrong, and that I've got an extremely high percent of disconnected numbers that are slowing us down and going to cost more and things like that. Or I'll look at the initial refusal rates to make sure that we're generally getting as many surveys as we get refusals, if not .... And generally, we do. Even though I plan that we get about 50 percent refusal, I think we usually end up getting less refusals than we actually get those who say yes, so that generally is reassuring for me. And I'll sort of keep track of what the relationship of males versus females is just to make sure that we don't have a real unusual case where it really gets extremely out of whack in terms of the percent that are recruited and ultimately the percent that do the survey. And I look at individual interviewers to make sure also that any particular interviewer isn't sort of playing by their own rules and try to head those kind of things off.

I.: What time of the day were the calls made?

R.: All calls were made from 5 to 9, except for Saturdays, sometimes from 10 to ... there were only a couple of interviewers interested in working on Saturday, but I would generally open up the door at 10 and let them work as long as they wanted to work on Saturdays. Now, when we actually collected the data, again, most of the information actually was recorded in the evening, but some people called and said,

"well, let me give you your information now," so we just, "OK, go ahead." And we wrote it down, or had the receptionist write down their information. And there were probably a handful of people that before we could get a hold of them to get the information, they mailed us back the survey with their responses, and I just threw them in. I tried to encourage the interviewers to discourage respondents from mailing the information in. It's been my experience that when people fill out a long, relatively complicated survey like this they don't fill out everything correctly, and if they screw up too much stuff then I have to throw the survey out, and it doesn't do me any good. And so we try to … but for the most part, over time the way we laid out the survey and stuff, most people who mailed it in did a fairly reasonable job. There's only a couple of times that I thought, "This is really strange, throw that out." I don't know if there were any in particular for (this newspaper's) '99 study that I threw out, because I don't recall that.

I.: Then you said then that the method of how you selected the respondent from each household is to ask which one had the most recent birthday. And you accepted them. And you just chose that because just a method of getting …

R.: Yeah, especially in … I've seen that technique used most often in media research. There's a big outfit we used to do data collection for when I was in Kansas City. I think the name is Belton research.

I.: Oh, yeah, I've heard of them.

R.: Right, Belden Research. They basically use that technique, and I've seen it over time. I mean, there are probably other ways you could publish a ... you could basically have your computer just randomly do a list, male-female, male-female, and as the interviewers call, they'd have to go down the line and say, I want the male from this one, I want the female. You could apply different techniques, but that one works reasonably well. The only problem with it that someone might argue from an academic viewpoint is that the people might misunderstand. But, I also think in practice people misunderstand one way just as much as they misunderstand the other way. They just sort of … In any phone research, it's nearly impossible to prevent people from misunderstanding. So you just sort of have to take what you get.

I.: And were the respondents asked about how many phone lines they had in their home?

R.: No.

I.: And were they asked about how many other adults there were in the home?

R.: No. Only about whoever had the most recent birthday. And there were occasions where there might be more than the two primary adults, and so the interviewer would take whoever was an adult that had the most recent birthday, if that person was available and could take the call. And if that person wasn't available, then generally we'd try to call back sometime.

I.: And you said once you got your 3,000, you kept calling until you got 400?

R.: Five hundred recruited.

I.: Five hundred. And why did you choose that? Why was that chosen as your sample size?

R.: Well, it's not truly my sample size. It's my recruited size, is what I would call that. That's the group of people who … That is probably a seat-of-the-pants judgment, I would say. And that has to do with … my experience has been that if I need 400 surveys, and I'm going to mail it out and I'm going to call back and collect the answers, if I do less than 500, I won't get 400, is really what happens. I usually barely get 400 before it really starts to get difficult. We're trying to chase down a handful of people, and they're not around, and they went on vacation, they died, all these things happen and it like we're just scratching for the last 20 out of the 500.

I.: Then why was 400 the number chosen?

R.: Well, 400 was the number … Well, 400 in general in market research is like the most common survey number there is. More companies do, whether you're Sprint or whoever, will do 400 surveys than anything. And the only reason is it's become almost an industry standard that you want to be 95 percent confident with a margin of error of 5 percent. That seems to be the sort of accepted industry norm that's OK, we can live with that, those statistics for most studies that we do. On an overall study basis. Now if you … if a company wants to then look at, let's say, regions or … in fact, I think it could be argued for (this newspaper's) study, for all the newspapers' studies, that it would behoove them to increase the sample size in terms of their analysis of their core versus their noncore areas because in some of the markets the core area may only represent 40 percent of the total survey results, which therefore is under 200, like 180 surveys or 160 some figure like that, and then of course then the margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level goes up to 7, 8 percent and then if you're splitting that into the males versus the females in the core, or the age groups in the core, then your margin of error even increases from there. You can get relatively tentative very quickly in terms of anything that you're likely to report to these folks. But on other

hand, they didn't want to pay any more. They started with 400, and like I say, 400 is really a very common overall number. I've seen literally hundreds of surveys in my experience, that were 400 surveys, whether nationwide or in a small area. And it's only for that reason. Now, with political polling, for example, 400 is considered inadequate in most cases. Or nationwide opinion researches, like you see Harris polling and things, they'll generally go to sample sizes like 1,000 or 2,000 because they want to report a margin of error like 1 percent or 2 percent margin of error. In like political polling, you want to have a relatively small margin of error so that you can tell the candidate you're doing the survey for that whether they're really going to win or not. But in business, that level of precision is generally considered to be a lot of extra expense for not much gain.

I.: And you said there weren't any subgroups of the population that you were specifically trying to target or that were identified?

R.: In no way. We purposely did not want to do that. We wanted it to fall out as in a random … as nearly randomly as we could.

I.: And was your sampling error computed by simple random sample?

R.: Uh-uh (yes).

I.: And there was no deviation that you noted from that, from that process?

R.: When you say the sampling error, we're speaking of the confidence interval with the sampling error that we reported?

I.: Right.

R.: Really all I did was used … you can look in a statistics book, or I have a little sheet that I created in Excel using the true formula, and I just have it broken down at 20 …N sizes, increments of 20N, going from 60 on up to about 2,000 or something, and what the sample margin of error would be at each of those levels. So I probably just consulted my chart for 400 and said, "OK, that's what it would be." And that represents the sampling error on a question that might have come out at 50 ... it's sort of a hypothetical, if it came out 50-50 on any particular question, then the sampling margin of error would be 4.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Obviously, any particular question using the real data would have its own sampling error based on the percentage that said yes, no or whatever you were looking at and the number of true respondents that answered that question.

I.: But you didn't compute for each question, you just did the overall?

R.: No, because the clients' eyes glaze over when you start talking to them about that.

I.: Well, I can understand that. I've been studying this for a couple of years now, and I'm still trying to figure it out.

R.: Generally, although there's a ….(interruption) As a researcher, I think it's our responsibility to try to do the study using accepted random sampling techniques and to understand our margins of error, and also to understand what's to report back to the client when something appears, and I'm going to say appears, to be statistically significant versus when something is more likely a directional or could be simply chance. But in reality, clients, that just goes around them, and so you make that little speech, and then you go report what it says and then they make their own conclusions. And what I try to do is stick to the information I felt pretty secure on, secure in, when we look at any recommendations or observations that we would like to focus on.

I.: And then what procedures did you use to try to increase your response rate?

R.: I think the whole effort to recruit individuals with a relatively short screener; obviously, mail them a $2 bill; and that they would get the whole questionnaire in advance so they could feel comfortable with what questions were they being asked was all an effort to increase response rate. And it did. We recruited people at a very quick … relatively, once you got a hold of somebody that was the right person, our response … people said yes, no problems, it wasn't tough. Then, of course they get the questionnaire, and it is kind of long, or whatever, and there is a percent who then say, "I don't want to do this." And they keep your money, or sometimes they send it back. That's why we recruit 500 of them. And whether the people who refuse once they get the survey are different than the people who say yes, we don't have any way of judging that. And, again, it's sort of a cost practicality. It's definitely a limitation, in the sense of … what we do as a pseudo stand in for that is try to look at, well, among the people we got how well does that sort of look like the distribution of, let's say, age and gender to census information for this area. And we hope that some of those look pretty close, and then we decide, "Well, OK, we probably got a representative sample." I want to say, it's all the statistical techniques and things that you can use to test, statistical difference and things, that … there are so many other things that can introduce bias into a questionnaire that sometimes I have to laugh about the way we researchers want to report that as if it was some kind of

scientific fact that there's only this much error possible here, and there's no way it can be outside that. We're dealing with human beings who are calling human beings, and they don't all follow the rules, and so we have … And I can't monitor five people on the phone at once all the time. So, I think there are lots of potentials for bias in survey research. I always describe it to clients as a foggy mirror, but it's the best mirror we got. So we gotta use it that way.

I.: And, then, what was the response rate then that you got?

R.: Among the people recruited or …

I.: Yeah, the ones that …

R.: Among the people we actually talked to?

I.: I guess it would need to be the ones that you … Actually, I guess you have it in there. It was like 412, wasn't it, that you got …

R.: Oh, the actual number of surveys?

I.: The surveys that you …

R.: In this case, yeah, 412 total interviews ended up being completed.

I.: Out of 500 that were mailed. And those 500 were mailed started with your 3,000 on the list.

R.: uh-huh (yes)

I.: And why did you choose those methods of trying to increase your response rate?

R.: Well, again, the study is so long, it has so many questions, to try to do it straight over the phone, we just thought that it would tend to bias toward older people or people with nothing to do. Or, I even suspected that some of the data was false in the Clark, Martire, that it's just made up. I just found some stuff that I just … that didn't … I just had a … My history, I started out in the data collection business with Market Institute Research in Kansas City, and we literally did hundreds of surveys. If I'd have seen this survey come across my desk to an employee in my group, and some of the Belden studies we did were pretty bad, but I'd be like, "You gotta be crazy to do this survey strictly over the phone." It's too long. There's too much of a chance for people to just start giving you any old answer just because they're tired, respondent fatigue. I just didn't like the system, so I felt that it would be much better to tell people, it's a little bit of a long survey, but we're going to send it to you, give you a chance to look it over, have you fill it out, which still took them a certain amount of time, pay you for your time, which I think helps

them to feel like they're getting something out of it, sort of like J.D. Power does, they mail you the survey and give you a $5 bill or whatever. Particularly, I wanted us to call back and collect the answers. That way the interviewer can … if there are questions, the interviewer can manage that process and make sure the information is complete and all accurately filled out. That they don't reverse the scales and mean to say good, but actually put in poor. And so that the questions themselves, if they need to be read to the respondent, they can be read in the same way.

I.: We talked already about the screening methods, about how you got people .... So then, when you made your calls in the evening, and there were no answers, then they …

R.: They would just recall it as no answer, and then the next time when we made our way through the list, it would be tried again. If we called somebody and they said call back later that evening or the next night, generally the interviewers managed that process themselves by keeping that sheet, making a little note, call back at 6 p.m. or … Particularly if it was the same night, they'd keep track of that. But if it was the next night, then generally all the samples go back in the box and they'd come back the next day, if they were lucky enough to get the same sample, then they'd know what that note meant. They had sort of a standard form, a callback was a c.b., and a a.m. was an answering machine and a n.a. was no answer. They all used the same thing, and what time they called and what time the person said to call back. So they tried to do that. Pretty standard. If we'd have had a really sophisticated computer system to do it, we could have routed all the busies back in 15 minutes, and all the no answers in 45 or something like that is usually what you do with a computerized (unintelligible) system, as it's known, but we did it all on paper.

I.: And then there were three callbacks made to each?

R.: As many as three, pretty much was the maximum, by the time we'd usually have our 500 recruited by them, probably wouldn't even make it all the way through the third attempt.

I.: So just whenever you got the 500 …

R.: we stopped.

I.: You stopped, OK. And then all of those, unless someone specified a specific time they wanted to be called, they were all made in the evening?

R.: Right, well even if they wanted to be called in the daytime, we didn't have anybody available to make the call then, unless it was at the data collection stage. So that really wasn't done. So I suppose

those people who worked at night were excluded from the survey. If they worked nights and Saturday, there was no chance they were going to be in this survey. I don't really like making calls during the daytime during business hours because you generally then start skewing the data toward retired people, and I just don't think it's a reliable way to do it. In fact, that's what I suspect they did, and I don't agree with that.

I.: As far as the questions they asked on the survey themselves, how were those determined?

R.: Well, the original survey was done by Clark, Martire, and they … I think this is sort of standard product that they've been doing at newspapers across the country. I mean, it's just something they do. We took that survey, and we went through it question by question and asked the … we gave the publishers our opinions as to whether we thought the question was worded the way we would word it or not, but we allowed … in some cases, we might have recommended, "Well, if we'd have asked this question originally, we would have changed it this way, but if you want the results to be compared to last time, we have to keep it this way, so it's up to you, which is more important to you, to change the question maybe slightly to this or to keep it the same and compare the information." And I think in general, they tended to keep the information the same, but that's not universally true. For example, the customers … well, for one thing the customer satisfaction scales changed from '96 to '99. The Clark, Martire group used a scale where overall customer satisfaction was, I believe it was, not at all satisfied, somewhat satisfied, a little satisfied, very satisfied and extremely satisfied. Well, I had a lot of problems with somewhat satisfied and a little satisfied, what's the difference between those two, to any real degree? To me, they were interchangeable. And so, I didn't feel that the scale was sort of, there's a term for it, but it slips me right now, but it didn't seem to be equally representative, it didn't seem to be a fair distance between different possible ratings. So I just went to a one to five scale, with one being, I think it was, completely … I'd have to look … anyway, it dramatically changed the results, so really you can't compare it to, we shouldn't ought to compare it, even though we do, to the previous results. … Yeah, completely satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, neutral, somewhat satisfied, completely satisfied, more of a balanced scale. We actually started that … well, actually we started (this newspaper's) in '96, when … We did two studies, one in (nearby town) and one in (another city), using their Clark, Martire scale. When I got down to analyzing it, it was like, "Oh, this is kind of screwy." And then when we did (this newspaper's), I mentioned that as we were

(person's name) taught market research at Louisiana State, and he has his MBA in business, with a particular emphasis on research, I believe. And he started this firm as a market research firm. So in a large part, although I was the lead person in terms of suggesting alternatives when necessary, I would often take it to him and get the professor's opinion about some of the changes that we might consider doing. But, I think, again … I can only point to some rather broad things. We wanted the respondents to generally do the survey without knowing who the sponsor was in an effort to collect honest information. We, generally, if somebody were to tell us in our recruitment process, "Well, I just don't read newspapers," I think we would probably … and the reason they were telling us is that they didn't want to do the survey, we didn't tell them it was about newspapers, but they just would figure that out. What we would say was, "That's OK, we need opinions of people who don't read as much as we need opinions of people who do read. It doesn't make any difference to us whether you read or don't read, we just want you to give it your best shot. If a question doesn't apply to you, then you won't need to answer that question, or it will naturally skip you out of that area." Because I was concerned, particularly, I think early on, I don't think in '99 it was a concern, but it was a concern early on that as we do this, maybe nonreaders would not do it. And the interviewers were coming to me and asking me that question, "Well, what if they say they don't read newspapers?" And that's why we formulated that strategy of, well, we need to make sure we include them. If we only include the readers, we're not going to get an accurate picture of what's going on. The questions themselves… I don't think … I've have like all these notes … way back when …. They had all these things that they reported on. I was looking just of just like you did, well, what's that methodology, where did that come from. They reported here something about, for example, "You combine good market coverage with a mobile population, and compared to major city papers, an attractive rate structure."

I.: And you were just like, where did they come up with that?

R.: Yeah, there were things they said that were like, well, I didn't see that in the data. Things that were kind … And I suppose, we, over time, we may be guilty of some of those things too, because as you sort of … we've done 13 of these studies now. And you sort of start … you see these patterns again and again. And it's just endemic in newspapers anyway, that newspapers' job is to please as many people as they can, but that's impossible, in essence. There's always a percent … there's always somebody that's left out, no matter what you cover, you left somebody out. And then the other problem is that people will say,

"I want all the national, I want all the world and international, I want all this, and I want all the local, too." And generally, most of the so-called experts keep reporting that it's the local that makes the difference, baa, baa, baa. But I think it's much more complex than that. I don't think a single survey can … I think it can provide you some basic information, but I don't think it can capture the complexity that a newspaper market faces. It's more of a gestalt picture that comes over time, both their interactions with their market and … information like this, I think, is helpful, but I don't think … I think it would be an error to rely on this to too much of an extent. And I think there are papers who have relied on research like this and made errors. I think there's a paper down in … I read an article about a paper that really went to the sort of USA Today format and really …

I.: I think you're talking about the Boca Raton.

R.: That may be, where ... and it just failed, because despite what people said, what people … There's so much wrapped up in the newspaper that is undefinable. My son and I have started delivering the newspapers as of this year, and the other day the paper was not published until three. We didn't receive it until 3 in the afternoon, when it's suppose to be at our house at 5 in the morning. And I understand that … I mean, we got a lot of calls at our house. There were people circling the (newspaper's) parking lot, where's my paper? The whole thing had broken down, and they had to go down to (nearby town) to publish.

I.: They didn't tell me about that.

R.: They didn't?

I.: Well, I haven't really been around that much anymore.

R.: It was a big deal.

I.: I'm glad I wasn't around when things like that happen. … Were the questions matched to the research objectives?

R.: In the original Clark, Martire section, it wasn't well matched, the way that they put it together. So I had to make assumptions about which questions were really supporting which research objective. I think, I could probably point to any particular question and say I think that this is trying to do this part. But it has been used so much now, I mean I can't go in … I'd have to go pull out the questionnaire and say, well this does this and this does that. Probably the most obvious part, obviously, the whole shopping and advertising section is really self-serving. Sort of data that they collect and meets objective number five

there, but it's highly … It's useful for them. It's sort of a tool. It's not something I would recommend they go out and make decisions about their newspaper about based on that information. But they use the information to help sell advertising. So it's not … if x percent shops at Wal-Mart, x percent shops at Wal-Mart, it doesn't make any difference to the paper. The paper is wanting to go out and say to Wal-Mart, or whoever that retailer is, "We understand the marketplace, and we know x percent shop at your place, and they look like this." They want to look like experts. So it's a whole section that really is at odds in a way with the purpose of the rest of the study. So I don't concentrate much on it, other than to deliver that data to them. Top of (unintelligible) studies that are done for newspapers all the time. They're really self-serving. Their purpose is to sell more advertising.

I.: Now if someone said, when they were asked on the phone, "I need to speak to the person with the most recent birthday." If the person on the phone said, "Well, that person is not available, I can answer for them." Did you let them do that? Did you let them answer for them?

R.: We discouraged that. Now that's what … what we told people was, no, we need to talk to so-and-so, and we called them back. Now I'm not going to guarantee that there weren't people who either lied and told us they were the person or that the interviewer did it absolutely correctly every time, because I have no way of really knowing that. But my instructions to the interviewer were, and I think they followed this pretty faithfully, ask for that person, if they're not there, call someone else and we'll try to catch that person another time. If … now after we mailed them the questionnaire, and we stressed to the person we recruited, "We really want your answers, even if your spouse, you think, would be more knowledgeable about the questions than you, we're not interested in their opinions, we're interested in your opinions, so please fill it out yourself." Now there were occasions when we collected data, I don't know, it probably wasn't more than a few actual surveys, where we actually got the information from the spouse, but most of those cases, I'm going to say, were a case where the spouse filled it all out, and then we called and spouse wasn't there, but they left it there all filled out, so they … if we recruited a man, then the woman's reading us the information that the husband filled out. Now that definitely occurred. And then there were probably, for example, like for example the mailed surveys. If they mailed that thing back in to me, that's one of the reasons I didn't like them mailing it back to me, I would have no man of knowing whether it was the man that filled it out that was suppose to or the woman. I just had to assume that it was indeed the person that

we sent it to. The way I was able to track who it was that we sent it to was that we numbered the surveys on the back with the number that we assigned to the screener. Then when they would mail it back, we would go get the screener and put them together. And I think there was at least one person, I don't know if it was (this newspaper's) study, but I've seen this, where they tore the little number off because they wanted to be anonymous. I've had to throw away a few of those, but then a couple of them, because of where their postage came in or they might have put their return address on it, I was able to track it down.

I.: Were there any efforts that were made to ensure that all of the meanings of the questions were understood by all the respondents?

R.: That's a tricky area. It's sort of standard industry practice is to tell interviewers, "If somebody doesn't understand a question, your job is to reread the question the way it's written, and then let the respondent decide what it means." I don't generally try … obviously, there are some questions where over time or in the briefing process in the beginning, I try to explain what the purpose or intent of a particular question is, but then I go about saying, "But I don't want you to tell the respondent all of that. I only tell you that if you think the respondent is like totally off in left field, answering these questions in a way that you … it's just way out there, then I think it's appropriate for you to say, well, let me reread that question to you a little bit. And then go back read it slowly, read it verbatim, and let them answer. Don't try to influence their answer in any particular direction. If they're still out in left field, record whatever they say, and then let me make the decision after the fact whether I think the answer is not appropriate." In which case, we would exclude them from the survey and become (unintelligible) for that particular question. But that's the instructions, and that's what we try … I think the interviewers were all aware that's what they were supposed to do. Again, whether they always did that, I don't know. I know they did it quite a bit that I heard. I would spend some time here in the evening and listen to them, at least my side. I didn't have a way to get on the phone and hear the other side.

I.: So were there other people who were monitoring the interviewers or you were just …?

R.: Just me. We don't really have a phone room sort of set up here, which we would might have had. I've had in other locales. So I don't have true monitoring capabilities. But on the other hand, the interviewers that I employed were, pretty much without exception, and particularly this last time, as far as I could tell, just exceptional. I mean, they were well educated. One gentlemen is a former owner of a car

dealership, retired. Another gal sold insurance for years, now is retired, an older lady just excellent on the phone. Part-time schoolteacher or schoolteacher types. They were just really very … any data collection facility in the nation would give their right arm to have people like we are able to recruit to do the surveys that we have. There's really, you know, Midwestern values and all that. We don't have much …I've never had a problem with anyone putting in anything that I even suspected of being false.

I.: Were there any efforts to reduce the social desirability effect?

R.: Well, I think the primary place where that's a potential problem is in the readership questions, well maybe even in some of the topics and things, "Are you interested in this or not?" In general, again, because it was written this way in the past, to whatever degree there is a socially desirable effect … I mean, I think some of the questions are purposely written in a way to minimize that, but it's not … to my knowledge, I don't know if Clark, Martire ever conducted focus groups and asked people, "Does this tend to make you want to answer a certain way?" or whether they originally did any of that. We certainly did not. But I think just from a … experience with research perspective, we tried to minimize that. I think having the questionnaire in people's hands and to … The way it was laid on readership, all answers were equally valid. We didn't … I think we say at one point, "There's no right or wrong answers, we're just interested in your opinions." Those kinds of things were done. The only question that had, and always does have a little bit higher refusal rate is the income question, and it wasn't bad at all. I doubt if it was even 4 percent refused. I'm not sure what it was, but it wasn't much. Some people refuse race, if that was in this particular one. I started taking that out because I never did any analysis by race. So I … and these counties, it's so heavily not … it's so homogeneous. It's not a question … If you can't analyze by it, then why ask it is what I … I may have left it in because some people want to know what is the percent.

I.: Were there any methods used to recall, to stimulate the respondents' recall?

R.: Not in a specific way. In fact, I was … I asked the interviewers not to try to … don't probe, particularly when it comes to readership and things like that. We're not interested in trying to make them, "Now are you sure you didn't read any other papers?" or things like that. We just took the answers that they told us, their top-of-mind perceptions of what they had read in the previous week because we're … I mean it can be argued that what we're really measuring is not so much whether they actually did read the paper in the past week, but whether they think they read the paper in the past week. But I don't think that you could

ever measure, unless you actually studied the true behavior of people some way, set up cameras or something, I don't think you would ever get any other answer other than their perception of whether they read or not.

I.: And then, what methods did you use to ensure the confidentiality of responses or were there any methods?

R.: Well, I think we specifically told the respondents that all their information was confidential. We told them at the beginning that we did not … as we were recruiting them, if they asked, "Well how did you get my name?" or whatever, "It's random numbers, and we don't have your name, we don't know your address, we don't know anything about you, other than we have this random number. But we would like you to participate and we would like to mail you the survey, so in order to do that, we do have to take your name and your phone number and your address down and make sure that we get that right so we can collect the information later." The respondents were generally told that … I don't think the respondents really had a concern about confidentiality, but as the market research firm we did not provide (the newspaper) any names or addresses of anyone who completed the survey.

I.: So it was the screener or people who originally contacted the respondents who told them they would be confidential.

R.: Yes. I believe that's part of the screener script … but that's off the top of my head. Yeah, (reading) "We're not selling anything and all your answers will be remain strictly confidential." So they were told that. They pretty well read this little blip here. And then the question you had earlier. (reading) "It's very important that only you answer the questions, not anyone in your household, even if you suspect that they may have more knowledge about the questions. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We're interested in your opinions." So these things were read to them, and that's the effort that was made.

I.: And then did you take any steps then to make sure that the … you said that you didn't communicate it to the (newspaper) was there anything else that was done to make sure that it was confidential?

R.: No, I think that's the only source for the information of who did the survey would have been my records, and I do have those records, but they were never released to the (newspaper.)

I.: Did anyone else have any access to the records other than you?

R.: The data entry person, which is a longtime employee of ours, would have had access to the records in an Excel file, so she had that, but she's a 10-year veteran of working for (this organization) so … I mean, she would have had it off-site while she data entered things, and she came in an Excel file and then I put it in (another program,) and then I'm pretty sure she just killed the records. And she did that on her own computer.

I.: Anyone else then?

R.: Well, I suppose anyone in our organization would have access to that file if they wanted to load up (the program) on their computer. They could get to it. Again, I … our organization, as you sort of found, our policy is that all employees sign a confidentiality agreement when they come to work here. We don't share any information about any clients unless the client gives us permission.

I.: Were the respondents required to make any kind of a commitment to accuracy of their responses?

R.: Not in the sense that I think you're implying there.

I.: Like there was no statement that they signed or anything?

R.: No. Well, I mean … again, I just don't think … It's like the research manager at Sprint that I worked under one time said, "It's not brain surgery, so …" I've used a technique like that, for example, going into a focus group or something and these were supposed to be people who maybe have used a particular product, and you might want them to sign and say, "Yes, I definitely used this product," or something, but in this case we were interested in anyone's opinion that would have would be normally randomly selected that didn't fall out from screener. And even if they lied about the security, I wouldn't have been able to know, but I don't think it would have affected the data all that much. If they said really odd things in their questionnaire, and I looked at it, I might have thrown it out … or if they only completed half for example, I just threw it away.

I.: And then were there any methods that you tried to use to increase the respondents' perception that the information was appropriate information to be asking them?

R.: Again, I think it's the whole methodology. I think people responded … well, actually we got lots of comments from people that said, "This is a great survey, I enjoyed doing it. I wish all surveys were

done this way, rather than interrupting me at dinner and making me do all this." They liked the fact that it was sent to them, and they could fill it out. And I think they took it seriously. I think they were truly trying to convey a message to someone. Like I say, I think they ultimately figured out it's their newspaper in their area. But a message of what they're interested in, what they're not interested in, and what they like and don't like about the paper. I don't know that we particularly looked at it … again, since we sort of inherited the project and the questions and things like that. There were some questions taken out, for example, that we thought were … tended to bias things. For example, they have, they asked the question whether people are, consider themselves conservative or liberal, and then they use that information in making comparisons between those who are conservative and those who are liberal. But I think that's sort of a strange question in the middle of a questionnaire about newspapers. And also that's highly likely to be biased because anymore whether you're conservative or liberal are highly connotative. So some things like that are taken out. Both maybe because we recommended or the publishers themselves recognized it as potentially something people would lie about.

I.: How about the respondents' perceptions that their answers might be judged negatively? Was anything done to try to decrease that?

R.: Only again in the sense that we tried to encourage, "It doesn't matter to us one way or the other what you say, we're just collecting the information." I instructed the interviewers to be relatively clinical in their approach to people to try to …if you need to phrase a question, you just phrase it and go on, you don't try to imply a lot of personality into it or … "Wow, you read (this newspaper) don't you?" We don't do that. "Which of the following do you read … which of the following categories does your income fall into?" and just read the little responses, and let them answer the way they're going to answer, OK, fine, and just go on, you don't get involved in their answers. So it's more of an instruction to the interviewers, but it's not anything beyond that.

I.: And then how about dealing with sensitive questions? Were there any methods …

R.: Only in the sense that if someone indicated any sensitivity, they were allowed to not respond. And it was perfectly acceptable for the interviewer … If the person either said, "I'm sure I want to answer that" or "I don't want to answer that," or anything like that, then the interviewer, "Oh, that's OK." And write down that and go to the next question. So we allowed for that.

I.: Were there any questions that, I know you mentioned the income and the race, were those really the only ones then that seemed like people had a …

R.: I would say that those are the … I could look them over, but I think those are the ones that people sort of tend to … they definitely did … I had a space at the end of the questionnaire where the interviewer could write a comment. And sometimes the comment … I didn't necessarily pass this on to (this newspaper), but sometimes the comment would be "I don't understand why they have to ask this question." And they refused it, and they might tell me that. I generally just ignore that unless I'm getting a real high percentage of people refusing the question, which usually … in my experience means my interviewer is nervous about that question. And if my interviewer is nervous about the question, then it's transmitted to the respondent, and the respondent doesn't want to answer the question. And so usually at that point, if I have that problem, which I don't think I had that problem with (this newspaper) study. But in the past when I felt like somebody was having a problem with that, then I'd go and listen to them and instruct them, "OK, you're being nervous about the income question, and people are picking that up, and then they're refusing to answer that question. So you just need to read it like it's any other question, just read the responses." I usually stress total household income because I think that really reassures people. I'm not asking the person how much they make. We're asking how much the whole household makes, and I don't know how many people make money in that household. And generally that kind of instruction would tend to drop … then the people would start to respond to that question. I really don't think … most people are so used to doing surveys anymore, they'll tell you anything. I mean, there are surveys on X-rated videos, for pete's sake, and people will tell you stuff you wouldn't believe.

I.: I can imagine. And then were there any other variations of the questionnaire used?

R.: The questionnaire was always the same.

I.: And then there were those one questions that you were talking about for the ratings. How did you determine what the categories for those rating questions would be?

R.: Well, most of the ratings were developed by Clark, Martire. (This newspaper) … OK, the question 9 here where there's the whether they agree or disagree with these attributes of the paper. This sort of evolved over time. Originally, Clark, Martire had asked these questions. Basically they presented them one at a time over the phone and said, "Will you agree or disagree that this describes the paper?" And what

they reported was that x percent agrees that it's growing in popularity, and that's how they reported it. Well, the first time we launched this and put it out to the market, we had all of these, and we had them check yes or no for each one. But what tended to happen because the respondents saw the whole list in a group, instead of marking yes or no for each one and making a decision about that, what they would tend to do is only tell you yes for the ones that they felt most described the paper as opposed to whether any individual one, so I got really odd results. What I intended to get is much lower percentage of people agreeing to any particular phrase overall. They might have reported 80 percent agree you're growing in popularity, where I was reporting only 40 percent of the marketplace told us, "Yes, you're growing in popularity," and it would be dispersed out across all these different things. So what we ended up doing to force them to answer this … I didn't want to leave it as a yes or no, but I decided to do was to make it an agreement or disagreement scale, which needs to be filled out. And then I reported the percent that agree versus the percent that does not agree. It's still not exactly the same as Clark, Martire does, but it's the closest we can do in a paper version, I think, and create sort of the same sort of sense of results. And that's how that was derived. This scale here about, five-point scale how would you feel that the news reported in (this newspaper) represents yesterday's news, fresh up-to-date news, that was (name of newspaper's circulation director) idea as we were putting this particular round together. He wanted to know whether people think the news is old or not. And so he sort of suggested this scale, and then (newspaper's publisher) said, "That sounds good," so I said, "Oh, well, OK, if you want that in there, I'll put it in." I don't think it's necessarily great research technique, but it was of interest to the client, and in order to do what the client wanted, we went ahead and did it. I've already talked to you about the satisfied versus dissatisfied scales. The excellent, good, fair, poor scales on the delivery were left over from the Clark, Martire. I'm not sure exactly why they didn't do a satisfaction versus dissatisfaction there, but everybody seems to be satisfied with an excellent to poor system there. The topics, this is exactly the way they did it, so that hasn't changed at all.

I.: And that's number …

R.: All these topics. The only thing that may have changed is there're more topics now than there were then, and maybe a few topics that were taken out. Normally, if we were to present these over the phone, we would rotate them and start at different places. But, obviously, these people had this right in

front of them, so they rotate the situation or whatever, you couldn't really do it, so we didn't. And those are the main scales that are used, and I think everything else they enter yes, no. … There was one other thing we modified. I think we modified the income question and broken it down into slightly different categories than Clark, Martire did because we thought it was more relevant. They tended to use a different scale. They were reporting only those under $15,000 and then those $15 to $35, I think, and then over $35. We thought there was more interest in a scale that could reflect a little more affluence, so we changed that. That's about it.

I.: OK, then your open-ended questions, basically, how did you analyze that? I know you just listed verbatim responses, basically. Is that what you did with all of them that had open-ended questions?

R.: Yeah. Well, I listed them in alphabetical order, but then I generally took them and also coded them. For example, this first impression is a coded of question 3 here. And all I did is, I took them and put them in alphabetical order, and as I'm going down, I start making a list of … well, I've been doing this long enough that I know pretty much what the list is going to pretty much … the categories they're going to fall into unless I get some strange response. If I'm getting that more than once or twice then I'll add that as a category, and say, OK, let me see … and then in the (program name) file, I'll have it listed alphabetically. Once I have this list alphabetically, I'll sign … and I really only code based on what I think the primary message of that open-ended is. I could have made an effort to do a multiple-response question from it, so if they say, "Why do you feel this way about the delivery service/" and they say, "Well, it's always on time," and it's something else. I could have recorded each of those as a response, and then I would have … but, there's only so much time to put into a project, and it already is more time than we charge them for, so there's only so much we can do. And it wasn't done that way in here that I can tell, so this is sort of stuff that we added to ask a few open … in fact, there were no open-ended, I don't think there were any open-ended in theirs. For example, "Why do you feel this way about the delivery service?" I'm certain that one wasn't … they were asking are you happy with the service, then someone was like, "Well, I'd like to know why they think it's poor, what's the problem," and so we said, "Well, why don't we ask why did you rate …" and rather than just rate the ones who said … just get the responses from those who said it was poor to fair, I said it would just be easier since it's a paper survey to just everybody, and that way I don't have to put all these little instructions on the paper and confuse people. And so that's what we did, but the coding

for that in the open-ended question is really just based on … it is subjective, whatever I think that particular person is trying to say in the open-ended based on open-endeds I've seen and open-endeds I've heard because I have done these surveys. I have collected data for some of the respondents. I've heard the way they answer, and I have a sense of what they're trying to say, most of the time. Sometimes our interviewers are a little cryptic with some of the things they write. Even though they're instructed to write down verbatim what people say, that's very, very difficult to do in actuality. Sometimes I get messages that … and generally, if I didn't understand what the person was trying to say, I just wrote another and just left it. That's why I give them the actual open-ends, so they can read through them, and if there's something there that makes them think, then that's probably a good thing.

I.: So you just put them into different categories?

R.: Yes, just categorize them. Particularly on the first question having to do with sort of a top-of-the-mind impression of (this newspaper), and that was a question we added. And I added it because I've used it … I generally use it for ads, as a means to establish whether the brand positioning is out there or not. If you say, General Electric, "What's the first thing you think of when you say General Electric?" and a lot of people come back to you with "We bring good things to life," then you're saying that's a message General Electric broadcast to the marketplace and now it's being reflected back as what they're known for. Or if they're saying things like reliability and it sort of implies a certain amount of brand equity or brand consciousness. What I find, generally in most newspapers, because most newspapers traditionally have not seen themselves as a product or as a brand, so they don't do a lot to reinforce good perceptions in their marketplace, so generally they're known more for what they do than what they … than any sort of positioning or any sort of motto or logo or tagline or something. So, "What do you think of when you think of (this newspaper)?" -- news. It's not very complicated. But to me it suggests that most of the papers have no strong position that they, for good or bad, are taking in the marketplace, unless it's a bad thing. Certainly (this newspaper) over time as been known as a very liberal environment, and I think particularly in '96. I think the open-endeds that they got there were extremely strong. Well, in '93, as a matter of fact, they did that survey just after they did the big article about the gay marriage and all of their readings are terrible compared to all the other (newspaper group) papers at that time. In '96 when we came back and measured again, generally the perception had improved, but there's still a lot of rancor involving (editorial page

editor), who is now a neighbor of mine, and (reporter), and then in '99 with the addition of (new publisher) and sort of a change in the wind from (old publisher), there's … it doesn't seem to be as much of an issue. But it still seems to have a lingering perception that it is liberal, but it's not quite as strong as it was. Or at least in these open-endeds, I don't see it as much as it was before. That's the kind of thing, I'm just trying to get more of a qualitative feel of what do people think of the paper. And that's where I'm going with that. It also helps support when you see data and raw information. For example, here in Clark, Martire, if they'd of done at least one of these open-ended questions, they may have discovered that all the ratings for (this newspaper) were way off because they just did this thing that sort of riled up the whole community. And everybody was sort of upset with them. And they would have been able to interpret the data somewhat differently. But they didn't ask that question, and it isn't mentioned in here. And so then that's one of the dissatisfactions in a way that the publishers had that Clark, Martire would simply gather the data, report it and leave. And there wasn't much interaction, and there wasn't much in the sense of what is it that each paper wants to know, more or less interest to them, or any of the questions unhappy with them or not, is the area we're studying the appropriate area, it doesn't seem to me … it sort of just shows up.

I.: It kind of seems like a cookie-cutter kind of thing that they did before with every paper the exact same thing.

R.: Oh, definitely, a highly cookie-cutter approach. Now that's definitely true.

I.: And was there any pretesting of the surveys?

R.: Not that we did. Obviously, before this '99 version, of course we did eight, nine other studies, so it … and these guys did it, and continue to do surveys exactly like this all the time. So they would have done this survey if (newspaper group) hadn't bought three quarters of (this research firm) and figured they could save a buck by having (this research firm) do it.

I.: So this is like a national organization?

R.: Yeah, Clark, Martire is like Belden. They're well-known market research firm, that really, I don't know if they have any other niches that they serve, but certainly the newspaper niche is a big-time niche for them. And you'll see them quoted in articles and things all the time when newspaper research is mentioned or the future of news is mentioned. Oftentimes they're quoted as experts.

I.: I'm surprised I haven't come across anything of theirs.

R.: The only other complaint I have about them is that they don't do their data collection themselves. They hire it out for somebody else. That's why I suspect, not that they intended to collect it in the daytime, but if you hire somebody else to collect data, it's very easy for a data collection firm … and I started working for a data collection firm in 1980 in the mall in Denver, Colorado, and I know for a fact that data collection firms don't always follow the rules, unfortunately, so …

I.: And then we talked already about the order of the questions, is there anything else you followed in determining the order of the questions?

R.: No. There were some minor changes. I'm going to look at this questionnaire. There was one thing we did change, I know, for (another newspaper), and I had a reason for it.

I.: But you didn't change it for (this newspaper)?

R.: I can't remember.

(End of tape recording. The one remaining researcher's answer is taken from the interviewer's notes)

I.: Were any problems encountered in conducting the survey?

The researcher reported that there were no problems, and that the data collection went smoothly. He stated that the newspaper is charged based on the amount of time it takes to complete the study, and that this year the newspaper only wanted him to report an executive summary of the results and was not willing to pay for a more detailed report. They report the data according to what material the publishers are interested in. He feels that the survey covers very broad objectives, which is a weakness, and that it would be better to split it into smaller surveys, but the publishers are not willing to pay for more, smaller surveys. He also feels it only includes a small percentage of young people.

APPENDIX D

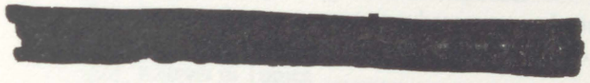
Newspaper's 1999 readership survey report

Newspaper's 1999 readership survey questionnaire

Newspaper's 1999 readership survey screening sheet







1999 Market Study

1999 Market Tracking Study III
Executive Summary
June, 1999

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[redacted] Market Study

1999 Tracking Study

Background

[redacted] in conjunction with its subsidiary newspapers, conducts comprehensive research on each of its eight newspaper markets as part of a continuation of market tracking studies started in 1993. [redacted] market study was measured in 1993, 1996 and 1999.

Among other things, these studies supply information useful to news and editorial departments to determine the interest levels for a wide selection of news topics and articles. Circulation departments use the results to determine strategies to increase readership and subscription levels. Advertising departments use the shopping behavior data to support sales efforts to a diversity of clients.

At a publisher's meeting conducted on January 11, 1996, core elements of the previous research were identified to be continued in future studies. Other improvements to the study were discussed and approved as well. This report includes the objectives, methodology, executive summary, and key findings for 1999 [redacted] market. A complete set of data tables was also provided under another cover.

Objectives

The objectives for this research have been refined and prioritized from the previous research objectives. They are:

1. To determine and compare current measures of reader satisfaction, and editorial and circulation service with previous measures.
2. To obtain current product positioning information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the newspaper.
3. To identify a strategy for circulation growth linked to reader interests and needs and to illuminate perceived barriers to circulation growth.
4. To create a current profile of the marketplace, readers, non-readers, subscribers, and newsstand readers.
5. To provide a variety of advertising/shopping pattern measurements for sales support activity.

6. Internet

Methodology

Due to concern regarding the original questionnaire's length and tendency to induce respondent fatigue, interviewer bias, and non-cooperation bias, the methodology was changed from a telephone study to a pre-recruit/mail/phone methodology in 1996.

For the 1999 study, potential respondents were randomly recruited by telephone, mailed questionnaires[1], and then called back to collect answers. A $2 honorarium was mailed along with the questionnaire.

Five hundred participants were recruited from the [redacted] area market. A total of 412 interviews were completed. Most of the data was collected in the follow-up phone calls, although a few respondents chose to mail in their responses. The recruitment and interviewing phase was conducted from 3/23/99 to 4/20/99.

The interview was timed at 12 to 15 minutes for respondents who had completed the questionnaire at home prior to the follow-up call. For respondents who had not completed the questionnaire before being recontacted, the interview was as much as 35 minutes long.

The call list was purchased from Maritz, Marketing Research, St. Louis, Missouri, and consisted of random-digit phone listings of the 14 county area. The geographic area surveyed was modified from the earlier two studies in that three counties were added for 1999. The following counties were included:

[redacted]

[redacted] ZIP only)

*Added Counties for 1999

The data collected was tabulated and weighted to 1999 adult population projections available for the market area.[2] A complete set of data tables was produced which includes weighted and unweighted percent tables per question, and cross tabulations including tabulation by [redacted] County, [redacted] County, regions, readers, subscribers, gender, age, education, and income.

[1] See questionnaire in Appendix.

[2] Population projections were purchased from Claritas for each county. For a detailed explanation of how the data was weighted see Appendix.

This Executive Summary along with the companion presentation document compares the current data with previous measures from 1996 and 1993[3] where appropriate.

Additionally, a multivariate predictive analysis (CHAID) was conducted to identify demographic segments with mathematically significant differences for [redacted] readership, subscription, and overall satisfaction variables. This analysis also prioritizes these significantly different segments in order of their predictive power.

The overall maximum margin of error for 412 interviews is plus or minus 4.8% at the 95% confidence level. This means that if this study were conducted an infinite number of times, the overall responses should vary a maximum of plus or minus 4.8% of the values originally measured, in 95% of the studies conducted.

[3] [redacted] discovered an error in the 1993 data. The total population for the area studied at that time was projected as 110,700. Based on the census data available, it appears that CMB overestimated the adult population in the study area by 16,200 (17%). For the most part, [redacted] did not adjust 1993 figures for this error as the source data was unavailable. The reader should consider the effect of this error whenever comparisons with 1993 data are made.

Key Findings

Market

- According to population projections provided by Claritas, the adult population for the market area surveyed remains essentially unchanged since 1990 at 108,620. [redacted] County accounts for 35% of the market with 38,526 adults.

Readership

- 77% indicated reading [redacted] in the past week vs. 83% in 1996 and 67% in 1993.
- 93% of [redacted] County and 68% of [redacted] County residents reported reading the paper in the past week ([redacted]-96% in '96; [redacted]-75% in '96).
- 66% said they read [redacted] yesterday versus 68% in 1996.
- In [redacted] County, the percent subscribing to [redacted] fell slightly from the 1996 readings to 69% versus 75%, previously. Outside [redacted] County, the percent of subscribers was slightly higher increasing to 44% versus 41%, previously.[4]
- Pass-along readership slipped to 21% of those who read [redacted] versus 26% in 1996 (16% in 1993). TMC residents were particularly likely to obtain their paper from someone else (37%).
- Primary competitors in the market area experienced a slight weakening in their readership levels, and no other single paper was read in the previous week by more than 11% (USA Today) of the respondents.
- Readership of "other" papers was recorded at similar levels to 1996 with 58% of non-Saline County respondents indicating having read an "other" paper in the past week.

Satisfaction, Perceptions, and Position

- While [redacted]*s* reputation for improvement in the last year or two remained stable (31% "improved" vs 30% - 1996), only 7% indicated that they thought the paper had "gotten worse" compared to 19% in 1996 and 23% in 1993.
- Overall satisfaction scores were up slightly as one in five (25%) said they were "completely satisfied," compared to 21% in 1996. 64% indicated being somewhat or completely satisfied (the top two answers) versus 56% in 1996.
- Dissatisfaction scores were down from 19% in 1996 to 13% in 1999 ("completely dissatisfied" combined with "somewhat satisfied").

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[4] This increase may be especially notable given the addition of three outlying counties to the surveyed area that would most likely have had a lowering effect on subscription percents.

- Although [redacted] County respondents were less satisfied than respondents from outside of [redacted] County (60% versus 65%), they were much more satisfied as a group in this study wave compared to 1996 (46%).

- Additionally, satisfaction varied significantly depending on attitudes and perceptions of respondents. Respondents who completely agreed that the paper was "fun to read" and that it "does a good job of covering this part of [redacted]" had significantly higher satisfaction ratings. Also respondents that were "very interested" in "national news" were significantly more satisfied.

- When asked for the first word or phrase thought of when thinking of [redacted] 22% said positive statements like "good paper," "informative," "enjoyable," etc. Only 7% thought of the paper as "liberal," "biased," or specifically mentioned the editorial content in a negative context compared with 12%, previously.

- 1999 respondents were much more likely to agree with all of the positive attribute phrases measured compared to 1996 respondents (the question was changed to an agreement rating scale to force an answer). The phrases receiving the highest ratings were "Easy to find things in" (75%) and "Does a good job of covering this part of [redacted]" (74%).[5]

- 1999 respondents were also more likely to agree with negative phrases describing [redacted]. [redacted] County continues to be more critical of the paper compared to those who live outside of the core county. Half or more of [redacted] County respondents agreed with statements that [redacted] "Is kind of dull," "Doesn't have enough good news," and "Misses a lot of important local news stories."

- Delivery satisfaction remained high as 91% rated [redacted]'s delivery service as "good" or "excellent." 62% rated delivery service as excellent compared to 57% in 1996.

- While a majority (65%) of the non-subscribers who responded indicated that there was nothing the [redacted] could do to get them to subscribe, 14% suggested that they might be interested in subscribing, if coverage would be improved through specific suggestions.

- Only 3% of non-subscribers specifically mentioned that the paper would have to become more politically conservative in its editorial content and/or reporting procedures to get them to consider subscribing versus 13% in 1996.

- 11% of [redacted] County non-subscribers had specific suggestions to improve service which might lead them to subscribe.

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[5] We suspected that lower ratings in 1996 were due to the changes in methodologies. 1996 respondents were able to see all phrases at once and tended to select only those responses they felt most accurately expressed their actual thoughts or feelings about the paper compared to other phrases. In the original version, respondents had limited ability to evaluate the phrases collectively as each question was asked independently with a yes or no response expected.

- 43% of respondents tended to see [redacted]'s news as "Fresh and Up-to-Date," while 17% tended to indicate that it was "Yesterday's News." 40% were neutral on this evaluation.

Interests and performance

- Interest in news from specific geographic areas remained about the same as in 1996. The top two areas were again "the State of [redacted]" at 73% and "your own community" at 48%.

- Interest levels for all of the news and feature topics measured were generally unchanged to slightly higher in 1999 compared to 1996. Nearly all respondents said they were interested in *News from around the state*, *News about local people*, *National news*, and *State government news*.

- Interest in business topics grew the most with interest in *Local Business Coverage* up 10 points to 85%, *Stocks, bonds, commodities, and futures prices* up 13 points to 57%, and *Mutual fund prices* up 11 points to 54%.

- Performance scores were also generally higher compared to 1996 measurements for many topics. No performance measures fell to any consequential degree, while a few were up at least 10 points including:

  Weddings, anniv. and engagements
  News from around the state
  National news
  World & international news

- Overall, [redacted] had above average performance scores on 7 of the top 10 topics in terms of broad based interest. Meanwhile, below average performance scores tended to float relatively near the average line as opposed to any dramatic fluctuations in performance evaluation, thus indicating that the market generally has a strong regard for [redacted]'s coverage of topics with the broadest levels of interest.

- Topics with above average interest but below average performance scores ("good" plus "excellent") included the following in descending order of interest:

  News about local people
  World & international news
  Local business coverage
  Health and fitness news
  Gardening and home improve news
  Places to go, things to do
  Local church and religion news
  Food and recipes
  Articles for parents and families
  Agriculture & farm business news
  Comics
  Coupons
  Editorials and political commentary

- [redacted] county respondents were more critical of the paper in terms of their topic performance ratings. They rated [redacted] at below average levels on 7 of their top 10 topics of interest. Nevertheless, their below average performance ratings were usually within 10 percentage points of the average score of 71%.

Internet Access and Usage

- Half of [redacted] County residents have access to the Internet at home or work, while 2 of 5 have access outside of [redacted] County.

- As income and education increase, so too does access to the Internet. 64% of college graduates and 86% of households with incomes over $50,000 have access at home or work.

- Despite growing Internet capability, only 6% of respondents had ever visited [redacted]'s Web site and less than 2% had viewed the site in the previous 7 days.

- Most respondents with Internet access did not have any news sites that they had visited in the past 7 days (82%). Respondents that had visited a news site in the past 7 days mentioned 36 different sites.

- The two most often mentioned sites were cnn.com (6 mentions) and usatoday.com (5 mentions).

Implications and Recommendations

Solid Ratings for Readership, Subscription, Satisfaction, And Performance

[redacted] continues to dominate its entire market area and has little in the way of active competition. In fact, all primary competitors had slightly lower to static readership measures compared to 1996. (More localized papers, such as [redacted], are highly competitive within their core areas, but they do not appear to have a regional influence that compares to [redacted].)

Meanwhile, [redacted] had very similar ratings on all of the key measurements compared to 1996. Overall readership and core county subscriber numbers were slightly lower, but within error margins indicating no significant changes.

Subscriber numbers outside [redacted] County were recorded at slightly higher levels despite the addition of three outlying counties, which one might have presumed would have weakened the Outside [redacted] readings. [redacted] appears to be continuing its aggressive and effective circulation efforts noted in 1996 with a strong effort particularly outside [redacted] County.

[redacted]'s image is still mixed, but appears to be improving as there were far fewer negative comments regarding liberal bias and editorials and a few positive comments regarding editorial changes.

Meanwhile, customer satisfaction and topic coverage ratings were slightly higher on top of already strong performances from 1996. [redacted] received higher evaluations on its coverage of news from around the state and "this part of [redacted]" which may have effected overall satisfaction positively.[6]

This year, respondents gave a more paradoxical message on how to improve overall satisfaction from this point. Those that regard the paper as "fun to read," are "very" interested in *national news*, or rated the paper good or excellent on *Police log and local crime news* were significantly more likely to be satisfied with [redacted]. Consequently, if [redacted] can improve its abilities or the perception of its abilities in these disparate areas, they may again be able to improve satisfaction.

Again this year, [redacted] received a more critical evaluation of its performance from its home county compared to outlying areas. [redacted] County respondents were more likely to agree to negative attributes, they were less satisfied, and they rated the paper lower on many of their top topics of importance compared to their neighbors.

[redacted] recommends [redacted] develop a promotional effort to overcome perceived weaknesses within the home county. A likely start is to sustain a campaign message of strong coverage on topics of highest importance to [redacted] County such as:

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[6] It was suggested in 1996 by [redacted] that improvement or the perception of improvement in these two attributes might influence overall satisfaction. The suggestion was the result of a multivariate analysis (CHAID) that suggested that these attributes had the greatest influence on overall satisfaction at that time.

News from around the state
News about local people
Community/neighborhood news
National news
State Government news
World and international news

The Future Of News? Continued…

Probably the most serious *potential* threat to [redacted] (and probably all newspapers) reflected in this year's study are the surprisingly high figures captured for Internet access at home or work. Particularly troubling is the strength of Internet access among younger, affluent, and well-educated respondents – a valuable consumer niche.

If a competitive news entity, such as traditional competitors like other newspapers or radio, or an independent organization such as an Internet service provider (ISP), were to offer local Internet news in a viable format, the paper might lose affluent readers, subscribers, and, ultimately, advertising revenues.

The most logical means to deliver Internet news to those with access is through email. (This is why we suspect that an ISP would be a likely provider of email news as they have access to databanks of email addresses through their subscribers.)

The **good news** here is that *reliance* on the Internet for news, local or national, is not yet well established.

[redacted] recommends further research among consumers with Internet access and among likely advertisers to determine interest in email/Internet news.

Open-ended Verbatim Responses

When you think about [redacted], what word or phrase first comes to your mind?

Verbatim Responses:

- *A GOOD NEWSPAPER BUT THEY NEED MORE PROOFERS*
- *ADEQUATE*
- *ADVERTISEMENT*
- *ALL-AROUND GOOD COVERAGE*
- *ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE STOCK QUOTES*
- *ALWAYS ON TIME*
- *ANTI-BUSINESS; LIBERAL-THINKING; WE ONLY TAKE IT FOR THE COUPONS*
- *AREA NEWS*
- *AREA NEWS*
- *AREA NEWS, LOCAL*
- *AVERAGE*
- *BAD DELIVERY SERVICE*
- *BARELY ADEQUATE*
- *BEST NEWS COVERAGE*
- *BIAS*
- *BIAS, LIBERAL, LOCAL INTEREST*
- *BIASED*
- *BIASED LIBERAL*
- *BIGGEST*
- *BORING*
- *BROAD COVERAGE*
- *COMICS*
- *COMMUNITY*
- *COMPLETE*
- *COMPLETE*
- *COMPLETE AND EASY TO READ*
- *COMPLETE COVERAGE*
- *COMPLETELY SATISFIED; EXCELLENT SERVICE*
- *CONSISTENT. IT IS SURE TO BE IN THE STORE.*
- *CONVENIENT*
- *COSTS TOO MUCH*
- *COUPONS*
- *DAILY*
- *DAILY NEWS*
- *DAILY NEWS SOURCE*
- *DAILY PAPER SUPPLIES NATIONAL AS WELL AS LOCAL NEWS*
- *DAY-LATE NEWS*
- *DELIVERED DAILY*
- *DEPEND. [redacted] DULL.*
- *DO NOT READ*
- *DO NOT TAKE*
- *DOES NOT READ [redacted]*
- *DON'T KNOW*
- *DON'T READ*
- *DON'T READ [redacted]*
- *EARLY DELIVERY*

- *EARLY MORNING DELIVERY VERY DEPENDABLE*
- *EARLY MORNING NEWS. RECEIVE AT 5:30 AM*
- *EASY TO FIND THINGS IN*
- *EXPENSIVE*
- *EXPENSIVE*
- *EXPENSIVE*
- *EXPENSIVE*
- *EXTREMELY POOR TASTE*
- *FAIR*
- *FAIR*
- *FAIR*
- *FLYERS*
- *FOR WHAT I READ IT'S JUST TOO HIGH-PRICED*
- *FOUNTAIN OF INFORMATION*
- *FRUSTRATION*
- *FYI*
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- *GOOD*
- *GOOD*
- *GOOD*
- *GOOD ALL-AROUND PAPER*
- *GOOD AREA COVERAGE*
- *GOOD BUT NOT NEEDED*
- *GOOD COOKING SCHOOL & GOOD RECIPES*
- *GOOD COVERAGE*
- *GOOD COVERAGE*
- *GOOD COVERAGE*
- *GOOD COVERAGE*
- *GOOD FOR SMALL TOWN PAPER*
- *GOOD HEADLINES*
- *GOOD INFORMATION*
- *GOOD LOCAL SPORTS COVERAGE*
- *GOOD PAPER*
- *GOOD PAPER*
- *GOOD PAPER*
- *GOOD PAPER TO READ TO START THE DAY*
- *GOOD SPORTS*
- *GOOD SPORTS COVERAGE*
- *GOT RID OF JOURNAL BECAUSE OF BIASED EDITORIALS*
- *GOTTEN BETTER*
- *HAVEN'T READ IT*
- *HIGH SCHOOL*
- *HOMETOWN PAPER*
- *HOMETOWN PAPER*
- *HOROSCOPE*
- *HOW THEY MESSED MY SON AROUND WHEN HE WAS A DELIVERY BOY FOR THEM-HAVEN'T SUBSCRIBED SINCE.*
- *I DON'T KNOW*
- *I DON'T KNOW BECAUSE I DON'T READ IT.*
- *I DON'T READ IT*

- *I DON'T READ IT VERY OFTEN*
- *I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT*
- *I ENJOY THE PUZZLES, OBITUARIES & ALL THE GOOD NEWS.*
- *I ENJOY* [redacted]
- *I GET PROVOKED SOMETIMES*
- *I HAVE LIVED IN WESTERN PART OF* [redacted]
- *I JUST LIKE IT*
- *I LIKE* [redacted]. *IT IS A GOOD OVERALL PAPER*
- *I LIKE THE COMICS*
- *I LIKE THE* [redacted]
- *I REMEMBER DELIVERING THE* [redacted] *& HELPING OUR DAUGHTER DELIVER.*
- *I THINK IT IS PRETTY COMPLETE. HAS A LOT OF VARIETY.*
- *I THINK IT IS PRETTY GOOD*
- *I THINK OF THE* [redacted] *AS VERY LIBERAL, PRO-DEMOCRAT*
- *I THINK THE* [redacted] *IS TRASH*
- *I THINK THEY ARE KIND OF BIASED TO* [redacted] *COUNTY*
- *I WOULD FEEL LOST IF I DIDN'T HAVE THE PAPER*
- *IN EARLY MORNING*
- *INCONSISTENT*
- *INFORMATION*
- *INFORMATION*
- *INFORMATION*
- *INFORMATIVE*
- *INFORMATIVE*
- *INFORMATIVE*
- *INFORMATIVE*
- *INFORMATIVE*
- *INFORMATIVE*
- *INFORMATIVE, UP-TO-DATE*
- *INFORMATIVE. I GET A WIDE VARIETY FROM* [redacted]
- *INFORMATIVE-GOOD BALANCE OF OPINIONS*
- *INTELLIGENTLY DONE*
- *INTERESTING*
- *IT DOES A NICE JOB OF COVERING CENTRAL & NORTHERN KS*
- *IT IS A GOOD NEWSPAPER*
- *IT IS A GOOD PAPER*
- *IT IS A GOOD PAPER*
- *IT IS A GOOD PAPER BUT I CAN AFFORD ONLY ONE PAPER*
- *IT IS A VERY NECESSARY PART OF MY LIFE AND I READ IT EVERY MORNING*
- *IT IS WHERE I GET MOST OF MY NEWS*
- *IT SEEMS THEY HAVE A LOT OF CORRECTIONS*
- *IT WAS AN OK PAPER*
- *IT'S A PAPER*
- *IT'S GOOD OR I WOULDN'T TAKE IT*
- *KINDA DOWN HOME*
- [redacted] *NEWS*
- *LARGER THAN* [redacted] *BUT LACKS LOCAL*
- *LATE ON REPORTING NEWS; HEARD ON TV BEFORE PUBLISHED.*
- *LET'S READ IT A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE AREA.*
- *LIBERAL*
- *LIBERAL*
- *LIBERAL*
- *LIBERAL*

- *LIBERAL*
- *LIBERAL*
- *LIBERAL*
- *LIBERAL VIEWS. MOST DON'T SUIT THIS COMMUNITY*
- *LIKE OPINION PAGE*
- *LIKE THE NEWS*
- *LIKES LOCAL COVERAGE OF* [redacted]
- *LIMITED*
- *LOCAL*
- *LOCAL*
- *LOCAL*
- *LOCAL*
- *LOCAL & STATE NEWS*
- *LOCAL & STATE NEWS*
- *LOCAL ADS*
- *LOCAL COVERAGE*
- *LOCAL HAPPENINGS*
- *LOCAL HAPPENINGS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS*
- *LOCAL NEWS & ADS*
- *LOCAL NEWS & OBITUARIES*
- *LOCAL NEWSPAPER*
- *LOCAL NEWSPAPER*
- *LOCAL PAPER*
- *LOCAL PAPER. HAS WEST CENTRAL* [redacted] *NEWS*
- *MISPRINT*
- *MOMMY WHY COULDN'T THEY HAVE USED THE TREES FOR SOMETHING ELSE?*
- *MONOPOLY*
- *MORE LOCAL NEWS*
- *MORNING NEWS*
- *MOVIE LISTINGS*
- *MY DAILY INFO*
- *NARROW*
- *NECESSARY*
- *NEED*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*

- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS*
- *NEWS & ADS*
- *NEWS & SPORTS*
- *NEWS AS THE [redacted] SEES IT*
- *NEWS CLOSER TO HOME*
- *NEWS COVERAGE*
- *NEWS COVERAGE*
- *NEWS FOR THE DAY*
- *NEWS FOR TODAY*
- *NEWS FROM NEARBY HOME*
- *NEWS FROM NORTH CENTRAL [redacted]*
- *NEWS IN [redacted]*
- *NEWSPAPER*
- *NEWSPAPER*
- *NEWSPAPER*
- *NEWSPAPER*
- *NEWSPAPER*
- *NEWSPAPER*
- *NEWSWORTHY*
- *NICE*
- *NO COMMENT*
- *NO COMMENT DO NOT READ THE [redacted]*
- *NO MORALS*
- *NO NEWS*
- *NO WEEKEND DELIVERY W/OUT DAILY DELIVERY.*
- *NONE*
- *NONE*
- *NONE*
- *NOT ALWAYS ADEQUATE NEWS COVERAGE*
- *NOT FAMILIAR*
- *NOT INFORMATIVE ENOUGH*
- *NOT MUCH ADVERTISING; LIKE MORNING PAPER*
- *NOT RELIABLE*
- *NOT WORTH THE MONEY*
- *NOTHING*
- *NOTHING*
- *NOTHING*
- *NOTHING COMES TO MIND*
- *OBIT*
- *OBITS*
- *OBITS*
- *OBITUARIES*
- *OBITUARIES*
- *OBITUARIES & SPORTS*
- *OK*
- *OK*
- *ONLY PAPER AVAILABLE*
- *PAPER THAT COVERS EVERYTHING*
- *POOR*
- *POOR AND SHORT*

- *POOR EDITING-LOTS OF ERRORS*
- *POOR TASTE*
- *REMINDS ME OF MY HOME AREA*
- *RESOURCEFUL*
- *SALE ADS*
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]& [redacted]*COUNTY*
- [redacted]*COMMUNITY*
- [redacted]*NEWS*
- [redacted]*NEWS*
- [redacted]*ONLY*
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]*NEWSPAPER*
- *SATISFACTORY*
- *SENSATIONAL*
- *SISTER WHO LIVES IN* [redacted]
- *SKIMPY*
- *SMALL HOME TOWN*
- *SMALL PAPER*
- *SO SO*
- *SO SO*
- *SOMETHING YOU DON'T NEED*
- *SORRY*
- *SPECIAL EVENTS*
- *SPORTS*
- *SPORTS*
- *SPORTS*
- *SPORTS*
- *SPORTS PAGE*
- *SPORTS, TV GUIDE*
- *STATE & LOCAL NEWS*
- *STUPID HEADLINES*
- *THE ADS*
- *THE FRONT PAGE*
- *THE NEWS*
- *THE PAPER*
- *THE PAPER IS HERE*
- *THOROUGH*
- *THOROUGH*
- *TIMELY*
- *TOO EXPENSIVE*
- *TOO HIGH*
- *TOO HIGH PRICED*
- *TOWN OF* [redacted]
- *TRADITION*
- *UNBIASED*
- *UP TO THE MINUTE*
- *UP-TO-DATE NEWS*
- *VERY INFORMATIVE*
- *VERY INFORMATIVE*
- *WANT ON INTERNET*

- *WANT THE [redacted] & THINKING ABOUT GETTING IT, BUT NOT YET.*
- *WEAK*
- *WEATHER*
- *WEEKENDS*
- *WELL ROUNDED*
- *WESTERN [redacted]*
- *WHAT'S NEW*
- *WIDE SPREAD & UNSUBSTANTIAL COVERAGE ON SOME ARTICLES*
- *WISH WE HAD ANOTHER DAILY PAPER TO CHOOSE FROM*
- *WORLD*
- *WORLD ISSUES, [redacted] CRIMES*

Why do you feel this way about the delivery service of [redacted]?
Verbatim Responses:

Excellent	•	*5:00 AM EVERY DAY*
Excellent	•	*95% OF THE TIME HE OR SHE IS ON TIME. I SEND BACK THE RUBBER BANDS & PLASTIC COVERS AND THEY TAKE THEM*
Excellent	•	*ALMOST ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS AT THE DOOR ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS BY FRONT DOOR BY 6:00 AM*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS DELIVERED BY 6 AM*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS GET PAPER ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS HAS ON THE DOOR STEP*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS HAS PAPER BY 5AM*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS HERE BY 7:00 AM - VERY GOOD CARRIER.*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS HERE EARLY*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON PORCH ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON THE PORCH WHEN I GET UP IN THE MORNING*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON THE STEPS WHEN WE GET UP*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME & NEVER MISS A COPY*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME & PROTECTED*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME AND AT THE DOOR*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME VERY EARLY*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS PUT BY THE DOOR*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS PUTS IT ON OUR PORCH*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS THERE*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS THERE IN THE MORNING*
Excellent	•	*ALWAYS THERE, ON STEP, ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*BECAUSE IT IS USUALLY IN FRONT OF MY APT DOOR BY 5:30 AM*
Excellent	•	*BECAUSE OF EXCELLENT PAPER BOY*
Excellent	•	*BEST CARRIER EVER*
Excellent	•	*CAN COUNT ON IT BEING ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*DELIVERED EARLY ON THE DOORSTEP*
Excellent	•	*DELIVERED RIGHT TO THE DOOR*
Excellent	•	*DELIVERY COMES ON TIME.*
Excellent	•	*DELIVERY PERSON IS VERY GOOD*
Excellent	•	*DELIVERY SERVICE IS VERY GOOD*
Excellent	•	*DELIVERY SERVICE VERY GOOD*
Excellent	•	*DEPENDABLE*
Excellent	•	*EVERY DAY RIGHT BY THE DOOR*
Excellent	•	*FOR THE PAST YEAR IT'S BEEN ON TIME & PLACED WHERE I WANT IT.*
Excellent	•	*GOOD*
Excellent	•	*GOOD CARRIER*
Excellent	•	*GOOD CARRIER*
Excellent	•	*GOOD CARRIER*

Excellent • *GOOD JOB*
Excellent • *GOOD SERVICE*
Excellent • *GOOD SERVICE*
Excellent • *GOOD SERVICE*
Excellent • *GREAT*
Excellent • *GREAT SERVICE*
Excellent • *HAS NEVER BEEN LATE*
Excellent • *HAVE HAD GOOD SERVICE*
Excellent • *HAVE HAD SOME PROBLEMS - MISSED SOME DAYS.*
Excellent • *I HAVE THE BEST PAPER LADY YOU EVER SAW*
Excellent • *IS ALWAYS ON MY FRONT PORCH*
Excellent • *IS DELIVERED EARLY ALWAYS*
Excellent • *IT IS ALWAYS ON MY PORCH*
Excellent • *IT IS ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent • *IT IS ALWAYS THERE*
Excellent • *IT IS ALWAYS THERE & ALWAYS ON TIME. I WAS GONE FOR 3 DAYS & FORGOT TO CALL [redacted] BUT WHEN I CAME BACK THE PAPER WAS BETWEEN THE DOOR WHERE NO ONE COULD SEE IT. I REALLY APPRECIATED THEM DOING THAT*
Excellent • *IT IS AT MY DOOR EACH MORNING*
Excellent • *IT IS DELIVERED EARLY*
Excellent • *IT IS THERE EVERY MORNING*
Excellent • *IT'S ALWAYS ON PORCH ON TIME AND IN A BAG IN STORMY WEATHER*
Excellent • *IT'S ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent • *IT'S AT THE DOOR EVERY MORNING*
Excellent • *IT'S BEEN HERE EVERY MORNING.*
Excellent • *IT'S EARLY & IT'S RIGHT AT THE DOOR*
Excellent • *IT'S HERE EARLY EVERY MORNING*
Excellent • *IT'S HERE EVERY DAY.*
Excellent • *IT'S HERE ON TIME & IN GOOD SHAPE*
Excellent • *IT'S ON THE PORCH BY 7 AM*
Excellent • *IT'S THERE BY 6:00 AM EVERY MORNING.*
Excellent • *IT'S THERE EVERY MORNING*
Excellent • *MY CARRIER ALWAYS HAS MY PAPER AT MY HOUSE BY 5:10 AM. THIS WAY I CAN ENJOY MY PAPER & THEN GET READY FOR WORK. HOMER IS MY CARRIER & IS FANTASTIC!*
Excellent • *MY PAPER IS ALWAYS ON MY PORCH. THEY PUT IT IN THE BAGS WHEN IT RAINS*
Excellent • *MY PAPER IS ALWAYS THERE IN THE MORNING*
Excellent • *MY PAPER IS CONSISTENTLY THERE AHEAD OF TIME*
Excellent • *NO PROBLEM*
Excellent • *NO PROBLEM; EARLY EVERY MORNING*
Excellent • *NO PROBLEMS - ALWAYS ON TIME*
Excellent • *ON DOORSTEP EVERY MORNING EARLY*
Excellent • *ON TIME*
Excellent • *ON TIME*
Excellent • *ON TIME*
Excellent • *ON TIME*
Excellent • *ON TIME - GOOD LOCATION*
Excellent • *ON TIME - NEAR THE DOOR - PAPER IS COVERED*
Excellent • *ON TIME & DRY*
Excellent • *ON TIME & REGULAR*

Excellent	•	*ON TIME BY 6:30*
Excellent	•	*ON TIME ON PORCH*
Excellent	•	*ON TIME-DEPENDABLE*
Excellent	•	*ON TIME-NO PROBLEMS*
Excellent	•	*OUR CARRIER CARES & TAKES CARE OF EACH OF HIS CUSTOMERS ON HIS ROUTE. [redacted] IS THE CARRIER.*
Excellent	•	*OUR CARRIER IS VERY EFFICIENT. SHE GETS IT HERE AND PUTS IT WHERE WE WANT IT AT THE DOOR.*
Excellent	•	*OUR CURRENT CARRIERS ARE VERY RELIABLE AND ALWAYS HAVE THE PAPER ON THE FRONT PORCH*
Excellent	•	*OUR DELIVERY SERVICE COULD NOT BE BETTER*
Excellent	•	*PAPER AT MY DOOR EARLY*
Excellent	•	*PROMPT*
Excellent	•	*RIGHT AT FRONT DOOR AND ALWAYS WRAPPED*
Excellent	•	*RURAL DELIVERY USED TO HAVE PROBLEMS. EVERYTHING IS GOOD NOW.*
Excellent	•	*RURAL DELIVERY USED TO HAVE PROBLEMS; EVERYTHING IS GOOD NOW.*
Excellent	•	[redacted] *IS ALWAYS ON MY DOORSTEP EVERY MORNING.. LIANA IS A VERY DEPENDABLE PERSON!*
Excellent	•	*THE PAPER IS USUALLY DELIVERED EARLY & I GET UP EARLY. IN 7 YRS THEY'VE ONLY MISSED A FEW TIMES.*
Excellent	•	*THEY DELIVER IT 365 DAYS A YEAR. I THINK THE DELIVERY PERSON NEEDS MORE MONEY*
Excellent	•	*THEY DO A GOOD JOB*
Excellent	•	*USUALLY DELIVERED SAME TIME EVERY DAY*
Excellent	•	*USUALLY ON TIME*
Excellent	•	*USUALLY ON TIME AND CONVENIENTLY LOCATED BY THE DOOR*
Excellent	•	*VERY DEPENDABLE*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD ABOUT DELIVERY SERVICE.*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD CARRIER*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD DELIVERY*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD SERVICE*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD SERVICE*
Excellent	•	*VERY GOOD-VERY FRIENDLY CARRIER*
Excellent	•	*VERY PROMPT*
Excellent	•	*VERY SELDOM MISS DELIVERY-GOOD SERVICE-ALWAYS ON PORCH*
Excellent	•	*WE HAVE A GOOD DELIVERY MAN - VERY RELIABLE*
Excellent	•	*YOUNG LADY ALWAYS ON TIME & IN FRONT OF DOOR*
Good	•	*ABOUT ONCE A MONTH LATE DELIVERY OR DOESN'T COME*
Good	•	*ALMOST ALWAYS ON TIME*
Good	•	*ALWAYS ABOUT 10 MINUTES LATE*
Good	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Good	•	*ALWAYS ON TIME*
Good	•	*DELIVERED TO OUR DOORSTEP IN A.M. BEFORE WE LEAVE FOR WORK; SOMETIMES LATE.*
Good	•	*DELIVERY BY MAIL IS NOT THE GREATEST. HOLIDAYS BRING THE PAPERS LATE & ALL AT ONCE.*
Good	•	*DOESN'T ALWAYS GET IT DELIVERED ON TIME*
Good	•	*GOOD CARRIER*

Good	• *GOOD DELIVERY SERVICE*
Good	• *GOOD MOST OF THE TIME*
Good	• *GOOD SERVICE*
Good	• *GOOD SERVICE*
Good	• *GOOD SERVICE MOST OF THE TIME*
Good	• *HAVE NOT HAD PAPER DELIVERED AT ALL ON 3 OCCASIONS*
Good	• *I LIKE THE PAPER EARLY AND IT IS HERE EARLY*
Good	• *IN ALL THE YEARS WE HAVE TAKEN [redacted] THERE HAS ONLY BEEN 2 OR 3 TIMES THAT WE DID NOT RECEIVE THE PAPER.*
Good	• *IT IS OK*
Good	• *IT IS USUALLY AT OUR HOME EARLY SO WE CAN READ IT BEFORE WE GO TO WORK.*
Good	• *IT IS USUALLY ON MY DOORSTEP BY 6:30 AM*
Good	• *IT IS USUALLY THERE BY 6:00 AM*
Good	• *IT'S ON TIME*
Good	• *LATE A FEW TIMES. DON'T LIKE THE PAPER HITTING THE FRONT DOOR - DENTED.*
Good	• *LEAVES PAPER ON PORCH AT 5:30 AM*
Good	• *MANY TIMES LATE PAPER*
Good	• *MISSES ONCE IN A WHILE*
Good	• *MY DELIVERY PERSON WALKS OVER THE NEW GRASS I HAVE PLANTED*
Good	• *NEVER HAVE ANY PROBLEMS*
Good	• *NO PROBLEMS*
Good	• *NO PROBLEMS*
Good	• *NO PROBLEMS*
Good	• *NO PROBLEMS*
Good	• *NO PROBLEMS*
Good	• *NO PROBLEMS - ON TIME*
Good	• *NOT ALWAYS IN PLASTIC WHEN IT IS WET OUTSIDE*
Good	• *NOT ALWAYS ON TIME BUT ALWAYS ON PORCH*
Good	• *ON TIME*
Good	• *ON TIME*
Good	• *ON TIME & PLACED CONVENIENTLY. COMPLAINT - FAILS TO BAG SO IS WET SOMETIMES*
Good	• *ON TIME NOW, BUT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN*
Good	• *OVERALL DEPENDABLE*
Good	• *PAPER IS DELIVERED ON TIME*
Good	• *PAPER IS HERE ON TIME*
Good	• *PAPER IS NOT DELIVERED IN A TIMELY MANNER. SOMETIMES WE GET IT AFTER 7:00.*
Good	• *RIGHT BY DOOR*
Good	• *SO SO*
Good	• *SOMETIMES IT'S DELIVERED BEFORE I GO TO WORK & SOMETIMES IT'S NOT*
Good	• *SOMETIMES MISSES THE FRONT PORCH. DRIVES OVER GRASS*
Good	• *SOMETIMES PAPER NOT DELIVERED AND SLOW SOMETIMES*
Good	• *THE CARRIER USUALLY DOES A GOOD JOB.*
Good	• *THERE ON TIME*
Good	• *TIME OF DELIVERY IS ERRATIC*
Good	• *USUALLY ALWAYS GET THE PAPER*
Good	• *USUALLY DELIVERED ON TIME*
Good	• *USUALLY EXCELLENT BUT SOMETIMES BLOWS OUT OF BOX BECAUSE*

		OF NO RUBBER BAND.
Good	•	*USUALLY HERE BY 6 AM*
Good	•	*USUALLY NO PROBLEM*
Good	•	*USUALLY ON TIME*
Good	•	*USUALLY ON TIME*
Good	•	*VERY DEPENDABLE*
Good	•	*VERY GOOD*
Good	•	*WE RECEIVE THE PAPER BY SPECIAL DELIVERY. THE PRESENT PERSON IS GOOD*
Good	•	*WE USUALLY GET IT DAILY. SOMETIMES WE MISS A DAY, DON'T KNOW IF IT'S THE PAPER OR THE POSTMAN.*
Fair	•	*BAD SERVICE AT FIRST - OK NOW*
Fair	•	*DON'T GET SOMETIMES*
Fair	•	*NOT DEPENDABLE*
Fair	•	*ON ROOF OF HOUSE 3 TIMES; PAPER TORN SOMETIMES*
Fair	•	*SOME GOOD - RIGHT NOW*
Fair	•	*SOMETIMES (NOT VERY OFTEN) MISSING PAPER.*
Fair	•	*SOMETIMES IT'S LATE IN GETTING TO OUR HOUSE*
Fair	•	*WE GET SKIPPED THEN END UP WITH TWO THE NEXT DAY (LIKE A FRIDAY PAPER & SATURDAY PAPER BOTH ON SATURDAY).*
Fair	•	*WET - MISSING SECTIONS OF PAPERS*
Fair	•	*WOULD LIKE TO GET PAPER EARLIER DURING THE WEEK*
Poor	•	*COMES AFTER 7:30-8:00 AND I MISS OUT*
Poor	•	*LEAVE HOME AT 6:15 AND IT'S NEVER THERE*
Poor	•	*MISS COPIES OR THEY'RE LATE.*
Poor	•	*STOPPING DELIVERY & RESTARTING DELIVERY WHEN ON VACATION/CARELESS & IMPROPER PLACEMENT OF NEWSPAPER/PAPERS ARE ROLLED TOO TIGHT W/RUBBER BANDS.*
Poor	•	*WE GET TOO MANY LATE PAPERS. BUNDLE COMES ON HOLIDAYS.*

If you are not currently having [redacted] delivered to your home, what could [redacted] do, other than lower its subscription price, to get you to become a subscriber?

Verbatim Responses:

Become more conservative	• *BE MORE OBJECTIVE ON EDITORIALS AND GET SOMEONE THAT IS MORE OBJECTIVE IN THEIR POLITICS*
Become more conservative	• *BECOME NON-BIASED, GET OUT ALL THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BANTER & BE MORE PROGRESSIVE. GET INTO THE NEW MILLENIUM. REACH OUT TO A BETTER-EDUCATED, AFFLUENT POPULATION.*
Become more conservative	• *LOWERING RATES WOULD BE FAIR - ALSO TO BETTER REFLECT THE MORE CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY WOULD HELP*
Improve Coverage	• *BE MORE INTERESTING*
Improve Coverage	• *BETTER RATIO OF NEWS TO ADVERTISING*
Improve Coverage	• *COVER MORE INTERNATIONAL NEWS*
Improve Coverage	• *COVER MORE NEWS FOR* [redacted]
Improve Coverage	• *DO MORE ACCURATE REPORTING; MAKE FEWER TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS*
Improve Coverage	• *EXPAND COVERAGE TO INCLUDE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES*
Improve Coverage	• *HAVE A COMPLETE PAGE OF THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE*
Improve Coverage	• *HAVE A LARGER OUTDOOR ACTIVITY (HUNTING, FISHING) SECTION - RECREATION TYPE THINGS*
Improve Coverage	• *MORE COUPONS-MORE SPORTS*
Improve Coverage	• *MORE INVOLVED WITH COMMUNITY NEWS*
Improve Coverage	• *MORE NEWS*
Improve Coverage	• *MORE NEWS ABOUT* [redacted] *FOOTBALL; MORE STATS ON* [redacted]
Improve Coverage	• *MORE VOLUME ON MON, TUES, THURS & FRI PAPERS*
Improve Coverage	• *NEEDS MORE POSITIVE ABOUT* [redacted] *& MORE ABOUT* [redacted] *SPORTS*
Improve Coverage	• *NEWS NOT OF INTEREST IN THIS AREA*
Improve Coverage	• *NOT INTERESTED BUT MORE LOCAL NEWS MIGHT HELP*
Improve Coverage	• *PRESENT MORE ACCURATE & UNBIASED NEWS*
Improve service	• *BETTER DELIVERY SERVICE*
Improve service	• *CONNECT INTERNET ARCHIVES TO GOVT. SOURCES*
Improve service	• *DELIVER TO THE COUNTRY*
Improve service	• *GIVE BETTER SERVICE*
Improve service	• *GOOD DELIVERY*
Improve service	• *IF THEY WOULD PUT IT IN THE NEWSPAPER HOLDER OR MAILBOX I WOULD TAKE IT.*
Improve service	• *NICE COUPONS & OFTEN*
Improve service	• *SAME DAY DELIVERY*
Lower price/cost	• *CHANGE PRICE*
Lower price/cost	• *JUST CAN'T AFFORD IT*
Lower price/cost	• *OFFER A PACKAGE DEAL. SUBSCRIPTION SPECIAL WOULD BE NICE.*
Lower price/cost	• *OFFER TRIAL DEAL*
Lower price/cost	• *TELL ME MORE ABOUT IT AND A WEEK OF FREE DELIVERY*
Lower price/cost	• *TOO EXPENSIVE*
Lower price/cost	• *TOO HIGH*
Lower price/cost	• *WANT TO GET A SUBSCRIPTION BUT DON'T HAVE THE MONEY NOW.*
Nothing	• *A NEIGHBOR & I SHARE THE COST OF THE PAPER & GET ALONG FINE WITH THAT.*
Nothing	• *DOESN'T READ THAT MUCH*

Nothing	• *DON'T HAVE TIME*
Nothing	• *DON'T HAVE TIME TO READ*
Nothing	• *DON'T HAVE TIME TO READ THEM ALL-JUST READ THEM AT WORK.*
Nothing	• *DON'T KNOW*
Nothing	• *DON'T KNOW*
Nothing	• *DON'T READ ENOUGH TO SUBSCRIBE*
Nothing	• *I CAN'T AFFORD TWO PAPERS & MY EYES ARE NOT VERY GOOD SO I CAN'T READ MUCH*
Nothing	• *I GET IT AT WORK -- SEE EVERYTHING I NEED FROM THE PAPER THERE.*
Nothing	• *KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THIS PAPER*
Nothing	• *LIKE [redacted] FEATURES BETTER*
Nothing	• *LIVE ON RURAL ROUTE & WOULDN'T RECEIVE IT IN THE MORNING*
Nothing	• *NO APPEAL*
Nothing	• *NO INTEREST*
Nothing	• *NO TIME TO READ*
Nothing	• *NO TIME TO READ THIS PAPER*
Nothing	• *NO, DON'T HAVE TIME TO READ IT*
Nothing	• *NOT ENOUGH TIME TO READ*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED - HUSBAND GETS IT AT LIBRARY*
Nothing	• *NOT INTERESTED AT ALL*
Nothing	• *NOT SURE*
Nothing	• *NOTHING* (67 mentions)
Nothing	• *NOTHING - I HAVE AN EYE PROBLEM*
Nothing	• *NOTHING - LIVE TOO FAR OUT IN THE COUNTRY*
Nothing	• *NOTHING - TAKE LOCAL PAPER. USED TO TAKE BUT WANT TO STICK WITH LOCAL PAPER.*
Nothing	• *NOTHING. DO NOT HAVE TIME TO READ IT*
Nothing	• *NOTHING-GETS IT AT OFFICE*
Nothing	• *NOTHING-TOO COSTLY*
Nothing	• *NOTHING-WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO READ IT*
Nothing	• *TOO FAR AWAY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SALES*
Other	• *MAIL AN ADVERTISEMENT*
Other	• *NEEDS COUPONS TO HELP RECOVER THE COST OF THE PAPER. YOU NEED TO BE CREATIVE IN GETTING HELP TO COVER COST-OFF INCENTIVES.*
Other	• *SATISFIES ME COMPLETELY*
Sunday only subscription	• *BE ABLE TO SUBSCRIBE ONLY TO SUN PAPER & HAVE IT DELIVERED ON SUN AND NOT MON*
Sunday only subscription	• *HAVE SUNDAY PAPER DELIVERED ON SUNDAY*
Sunday only subscription	• *IF WE COULD HAVE SUNDAY ONLY DELIVERY*
Sunday only subscription	• *TO HAVE WEEKEND DELIVERIES WITHOUT WEEKDAY DELIVERIES.*

Comments

Verbatim Responses:

- *ABOUT 10 YEARS AGO WE QUIT SUBSCRIBING TO [redacted] CAUSE OF THE VERY POOR SERVICE. THE PAPER WAS LEFT OUT IN THE RAIN, SNOW, AND SOMETIMES WE DIDN'T EVEN GET IT.*
- *ALL THE NEWS IN [redacted] HAS ALREADY BEEN HEARD ON THE TV*
- *ANNOYED W[redacted] USE OF SPACE W/SECTION "CONNECTIONS"-THINK IT'S DISGUSTING. CONGRATULATE [redacted] FOR GETTING RID OF [redacted]. I WISH THEY WOULD GET RID OF [redacted]. [redacted] ALSO TOO FREQUENTLY USES THE SAME PEOPLE WHO WRITE IN TO THE EDITOR*
- *BELIEVE THERE ARE TOO MANY NEGATIVE STORIES. KNOW A PERSON WHO WAS QUOTED IN THE PAPER & [redacted] PUT QUOTE IN WRONG & MADE THE PERSON SOUND BAD.*
- *DO NOT LIKE [redacted]. DON'T LIKE HIS IDEAS AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT*
- *DON'T FEEL LIKE WE'RE GETTING OUR MONEY'S WORTH COMPARED TO OTHER NEWSPAPERS LIKE [redacted]*
- *ENJOY [redacted] & DELIVERY AT DOOR*
- *ENJOY THE PAPER AND HAVE GOOD DELIVERY*
- *ENJOYED DOING SURVEY.*
- *ENJOYS THE [redacted] VERY MUCH*
- *GLAD TO HAVE [redacted]*
- *HAPPY WITH THE PAPER. THINK IT'S A GOOD PAPER*
- *I DO LIKE THE [redacted] VERY MUCH*
- *I ENJOY [redacted] WHEN I HAVE A CHANCE TO READ ONE*
- *I LIKE THE FACT [redacted] IS BACK*
- *I WOULD LIKE TO SEE BIGGER ARTICLES ABOUT THE WEDDINGS*
- *I WOULD SURE MISS [redacted] BUT I THINK THEY HAVE AN AWFUL LOT OF CORRECTIONS*
- *IT IS A WONDERFUL PAPER AND I ENJOY READING IT EVERY DAY.*
- *IT WOULD BE REALLY HELPFUL TO US IF [redacted] WOULD EXPAND THEIR COVERAGE TO INCLUDE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.*
- *I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY HAPPY WITH [redacted]*
- *[redacted] DOES A REAL GOOD JOB. MORE INTERESTING THAN [redacted] PAPER*
- *[redacted]-NOT ENOUGH LOCAL*
- *KEEP ATTENTION ON LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS. DO NOT USE PICTURES FROM OUT OF STATE. WRITE FACTS, NOT OPINIONS.*
- *KEEP [redacted] RETIRED FOREVER*
- *LIKE TO READ [redacted]. WOULD FEEL LOST WITHOUT IT.*
- *LIKES THE NEWSPAPER, FINDS IT INTERESTING, BUT WISHES THEY WOULD LOWER THE PRICE.*
- *MY HUSBAND DOESN'T LIKE THE NEW EDITOR; THINKS IT'S ONE-SIDED.*
- *MY HUSBAND WOULD LIKE BETTER COVERAGE OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS. IT'S NOT EXTENSIVE ENOUGH. THE ONLY TIME I HAVE READ [redacted] IS IN THE SUMMERS.*

- *NEED MORE AGRICULTURAL NEWS & MORE NOTICES ABOUT THE EVENTS AT [redacted]*
- *NEED TO HAVE A BIGGER PAPER - MORE NEWS*
- *NEEDS MORE COMIC STRIPS*
- *NEEDS MORE LOCAL NEWS - NEEDS MORE COUPONS*
- *NOT ENOUGH COVERAGE ON AG NEWS & WORKING SENIORS.*
- *NOT ENOUGH LOCAL COVERAGE*
- *NOT VERY DECISIVE. GAVE CONFLICTING ANSWERS AND WOULD CHANGE MIND WHILE SPEAKING.*
- *OVERALL I THINK [redacted] IS GOOD*
- *PAPER MORE IN DEPTH IN EVERYTHING NEEDED*
- *PHOTOGRAPHIC PEOPLE COME UP WITH THE MOST FAR OUT PICTURES FOR THE FRONT PAGE. SOMETIMES THERE IS SOMETHING VERY NEWSWORTHY GOING ON IN THE WORLD AND THE [redacted] PUTS SOME ABSTRACT PICTURE ON THE FRONT PAGE RATHER THAN A PICTURE AND STORY REGARDING THE WORLD*
- *PLEASED WITH [redacted]*
- *PRICES KEEP GOING UP - TOO MUCH ADVERTISING, NOT ENOUGH NEWS*
- *RE [redacted] WEBSITE-WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO IF YOU CAN'T GET ANY INFORMATION EXCEPT HEADLINES - COULDN'T ACCESS OBITS.*
- *REALLY ENJOYS IT. LIKES THE WAY OBITUARIES ARE LISTED.*
- *SHE SAID THIS WAS THE BEST SURVEY SHE HAD EVER DONE. LAST WEEK SHE COMPLETED A SURVEY RE CARS BY PHONE WHICH TOOK ABOUT 30 MIN. SHE SAID SHE WISHED EVERYONE WOULD DO SURVEYS THE WAY [redacted] DID THIS ONE - MAIL THE SURVEY & THEN CALL BACK FOR ANSWER*
- *SHOP MOSTLY [redacted] & [redacted]*
- *SOMEONE CALLED ON A SPECIAL OFFER FOR [redacted] BUT I NEVER RECEIVED IT.*
- *SURVEY WAS VERY INTERESTING TO DO*
- *TERRIBLE QUALITY OF PHOTOS TAKEN BY [redacted] STAFF ESPECIALLY SPORT PHOTOS*
- *TERRIBLE QUALITY OF PHOTOS TAKEN BY [redacted] STAFF, ESPECIALLY SPORT PHOTOS.*
- *THE COMICS STINK. GET THE SUNDAY FUNNIES BACK IN SYNC WITH THE WEEKDAYS.*
- *THE FRONT PAGE IS GOOD*
- *[redacted] DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH GOOD NEWS BUT I HAVE HAD GOOD SERVICE*
- *[redacted] COULD DO A LITTLE BETTER REPORTING BUSINESS NEWS IN THE SURROUNDING AREAS. EXAMPLE-THE MANUFACTURING PLANT IN [redacted] IS EXPANDING. WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE OUR PAPER DELIVERED BY 6:45 AM.*
- *THEY MAKE SO MANY ERRORS!*
- *TOO MUCH SPORTS COVERAGE. [redacted] NEEDS SOME COMPETITION. BAD PICTURES, TERRIBLE COMICS.*
- *VERY NICE SURVEY. VERY PLEASED WITH IT.*
- *WANT THE SCRAMBLED WORDS AND OTHER PUZZLE IN SUNDAY'S PAPER. DON'T LIKE BEING ASKED RACE - BAD QUESTION.*
- *WANTS THURSDAY ARTICLE ON NASCA BACK.*

[redacted]

- *WE DON'T RECEIVE THE [redacted] SECTION BUT WOULD LIKE TO.*
- *WE QUIT TAKING [redacted] WHEN WE DIDN'T GET OUR PAPERS DELIVERED THAT WE PAID FOR*
- *WHAT HAPPENED TO MAUREEN DOWD? GET RID OF MOLLY. I APPRECIATE THAT [redacted] IS NO LONGER WRITING. I GOT MY HEART ATTACK FOR THE DAY AFTER I READ HIS ARTICLES. SOMETIMES I THINK WE DON'T GET ENOUGH NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS*
- *WHEN I WAS A SUBSCRIBER I HAD REALLY TERRIBLE DELIVERY*
- *WHEN WE ARE INTERESTED IN A MAJOR EVENT SOMETIMES WE SEE IT IN THE [redacted] PAPER THE NEXT DAY, BUT WE DON'T SEE IT IN [redacted] FOR 3 OR 4 DAYS.*
- *WILL PROBABLY LET SUBSCRIPTION RUN OUT AND NOT SUBSCRIBE ANY MORE.*
- *WOULD LIKE MORE ON AUTO RACING LIKE YOU HAD LAST YEAR IN [redacted]*
- *WOULD LIKE THE COMIC STRIP "BABY BLUES" ADDED TO THE SUNDAY COMICS.*
- *WOULD LIKE TO GET [redacted] ON SUNDAY BUT NO ONE WILL DELIVER IN THEIR AREA ON SUNDAY.*

Interest and Performance

Which of the following topics and advertising ads are of particular interest to you personally?

Topics with above average interest: [7]	1993	1996	1999	% Change from '96
News from around the state	79%	95%	97%	2%
News about local people	84%	92%	95%	3%
National news	82%	94%	94%	0%
State government news	80%	91%	93%	2%
Community/neighborhood news		89%	92%	3%
World & international news	74%	89%	91%	2%
Local government news	84%	88%	90%	2%
Obituaries	58%	84%	89%	5%
School and education news	53%	82%	86%	4%
Local business coverage	**71%**	**75%**	**85%**	**10%**
Health and fitness news	60%	81%	83%	2%
Discount store ads		79%	79%	0%
Gardening and home improve news	56%	77%	79%	2%
Police log and local crime news	69%	75%	77%	2%
Grocery store ads		75%	75%	0%
Restaurant and entertainment ads		71%	75%	4%
Places to go, things to do	64%	76%	75%	-1%
Local church and religion news		68%	74%	6%
Weddings, anniv. and engagements		73%	74%	1%
Food and recipes	53%	68%	72%	4%
Classified advertising		77%	71%	-6%
Articles for parents and families	51%	74%	71%	-3%
Agriculture & farm business news	41%	68%	70%	2%
Comics	58%	72%	70%	-2%
Editorials and political commentary	57%	66%	70%	4%
Coupons		72%	70%	-2%
Hardware, building supply ads		70%	70%	0%
Retail clothing ads		71%	69%	-2%
High school sports	31%	67%	69%	2%
Average Interest		**66%**	**69%**	

Bold topics have a 10 percentage point or more change.

- 1999 respondents had very similar interest topic ratings compared with 1996 respondents. The only topics with a net percentage point change greater than 10 were *Local Business Coverage; Stocks, bonds, commodities, and futures prices*; and *Mutual fund prices*.

- Nine of the top 10 topics with the broadest interest levels were "bread and butter" news topics.

[7] Percent who indicated they were "somewhat" or "very" interested in the topic.

Topics with below average interest:[8]	1993	1996	1999	% Change from '96
[redacted] University sports*	79%	63%	68%	5%
Professional and college sports	41%	66%	67%	1%
Movie listings and reviews	57%	66%	67%	1%
Consumer and financial advice		56%	65%	9%
Furniture, home furnishing ads		63%	65%	2%
Retail appliance ads		61%	62%	1%
[redacted] football*	75%	63%	62%	-1%
Local college news	36%	57%	61%	4%
[redacted] sports*	90%	61%	59%	-2%
Banking and financial services ads		53%	58%	5%
Daily TV listing	61%	57%	57%	0%
Saturday TV week booklet		61%	57%	-4%
Stocks, bonds, comm., and futures prices	**30%**	**44%**	**57%**	**13%**
Auto dealership ads		53%	57%	4%
[redacted] baseball*	81%	52%	54%	2%
Mutual fund prices		**43%**	**54%**	**11%**
Real estate news	38%	50%	52%	2%
Fashion and style news	45%	46%	52%	6%
Hunting and fishing articles		51%	52%	1%
Computer news and software reviews		47%	46%	-1%
[redacted] sports*	56%	40%	42%	2%
Auto racing news		37%	39%	2%
[redacted]'s football*	62%	34%	39%	5%
[redacted] baseball*	90%	32%	32%	0%
Average Interest		**66%**	**69%**	

Bold topics have a 10 percentage point or more change.

* See footnote.[9]

[8] Percent who indicated they were "somewhat" or "very" interested in the topic.

[9] Interest in sports topics were only included among respondents who were interested in professional or college sports in 1993. Interest was rated by all in 1996 and 1999. See further analysis of "Sports Interested" respondents in following pages.

How would you rate [redacted] when it comes to coverage of these items -- would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

Topics with above average performance:[10]	1993	1996	1999	% Point Change
Weddings, anniv. and engagements		**80%**	**90%**	**10%**
Obituaries	74%	85%	88%	3%
[redacted] sports	83%	78%	80%	2%
[redacted] sports	81%	75%	80%	5%
[redacted] football	76%	78%	79%	1%
Classified advertising	69%	80%	79%	-1%
Discount store ads		78%	78%	0%
Professional and college sports	74%,76%	73%	78%	5%
School and education news	71%	71%	77%	6%
State government news	61%	70%	77%	7%
Hardware, building supply ads		77%	77%	0%
News from around the state	**63%**	**64%**	**76%**	**12%**
Saturday TV week booklet		77%	76%	-1%
Police log and local crime news	72%	72%	76%	4%
Grocery store ads		81%	76%	-5%
Retail clothing ads		75%	76%	1%
National news	**65%**	**64%**	**75%**	**11%**
Local government news	71%	73%	75%	2%
Retail appliance ads		70%	75%	5%
Daily TV listing	72%	75%	75%	0%
High school sports	80%	71%	74%	3%
Movie listings and reviews	70%	75%	74%	-1%
[redacted] baseball	79%	74%	74%	0%
Furniture, home furnishing ads		70%	73%	3%
Auto dealership ads		77%	73%	-4%
Restaurant and entertainment ads		72%	72%	0%
Community/neighborhood news	66%	66%	72%	6%
Banking and financial services ads		68%	71%	3%
Average Performance:		**68%**	**71%**	

Bold topics have a 10 percentage point or more change.

- Generally, 1999 respondents gave [redacted] performance ratings that were equivalent to somewhat higher compared to 1996. In fact, no performance measures fell to any consequential degree, while a few measures were up at least 10 percentage points including:

  Weddings, anniv. and engagements
  News from around the state
  National news
  World & international news

[10] Percent who indicated [redacted] was "good" or "excellent" on this topic.

Topics with below average performance:[11]	1993	1996	1999	% Point Change
News about local people	65%	63%	70%	7%
World & international news	**62%**	**57%**	**70%**	**13%**
Food and recipes	68%	68%	70%	2%
Real estate news	64%	67%	69%	2%
Comics	75%	70%	69%	-1%
Agriculture & farm business news	72%	62%	69%	7%
Mutual fund prices		66%	69%	3%
Local church and religion news		65%	68%	3%
Stocks, bonds, comm., and futures prices	58%,69%	64%	68%	4%
Coupons		71%	67%	-4%
Local business coverage	64%	64%	67%	3%
Places to go, things to do	66%	67%	65%	-2%
Articles for parents and families	66%	56%	65%	9%
Gardening and home improve news	68%	64%	65%	1%
Health and fitness news	64%	67%	65%	-2%
Hunting and fishing articles		60%	64%	4%
Editorials and political commentary	71%	54%	63%	9%
[redacted] baseball	77%	61%	63%	2%
Local college news	73%	55%	62%	7%
Consumer and financial advice		58%	62%	4%
[redacted] sports	77%	65%	62%	-3%
[redacted] football	74%	63%	61%	-2%
Fashion and style news	70%	62%	61%	-1%
Auto racing news		58%	61%	3%
Computer news and software reviews		50%	55%	5%
Average Performance:		**68%**	**71%**	

[11] Percent who indicated [redacted] was "good" or "excellent" on this topic.

Interest Versus Performance

[redacted] analyzed interest levels and performance scores for each topic to compare the gap between the level of interest in a topic and its performance score. To provide a base measurement to evaluate the relative importance of each topic, an average interest and an average performance score was calculated. These averages were simply the sum of the top two box[12] percents divided by 53.

Topics with above average interest and below average coverage performance scores represent areas wherein [redacted] should prioritize its efforts to improve actual coverage or perhaps, at least the perception of coverage.

[12] i.e., "somewhat interested" plus "very interested" percents.

Above Average Interest versus Performance:	Interest	Performance
News from around the state	97%	76%
News about local people	**95%**	**70%**
National news	94%	75%
State government news	93%	77%
Community/neighborhood news	92%	72%
World and international news	**91%**	**70%**
Local government news	90%	75%
Obituaries	89%	88%
School and education news	86%	77%
Local business coverage	**85%**	**67%**
Health and fitness news	**83%**	**65%**
Discount store ads	79%	78%
Gardening and home improvement news	**79%**	**65%**
Police log and local crime news	77%	76%
Grocery store ads	75%	76%
Restaurant and entertainment ads	75%	72%
Places to go, things to do	**75%**	**65%**
Weddings, anniv., engagements	74%	90%
Local church and religion news	**74%**	**68%**
Food and recipes	**72%**	**70%**
Classified advertising	71%	79%
Articles for parents and families	**71%**	**65%**
Hardware, building supply ads	70%	77%
Agriculture and farm news	**70%**	**69%**
Comics	**70%**	**69%**
Coupons	**70%**	**67%**
Editorials and political commentary	**70%**	**63%**

Bolded topics indicate topics with above average interest and below average performance.

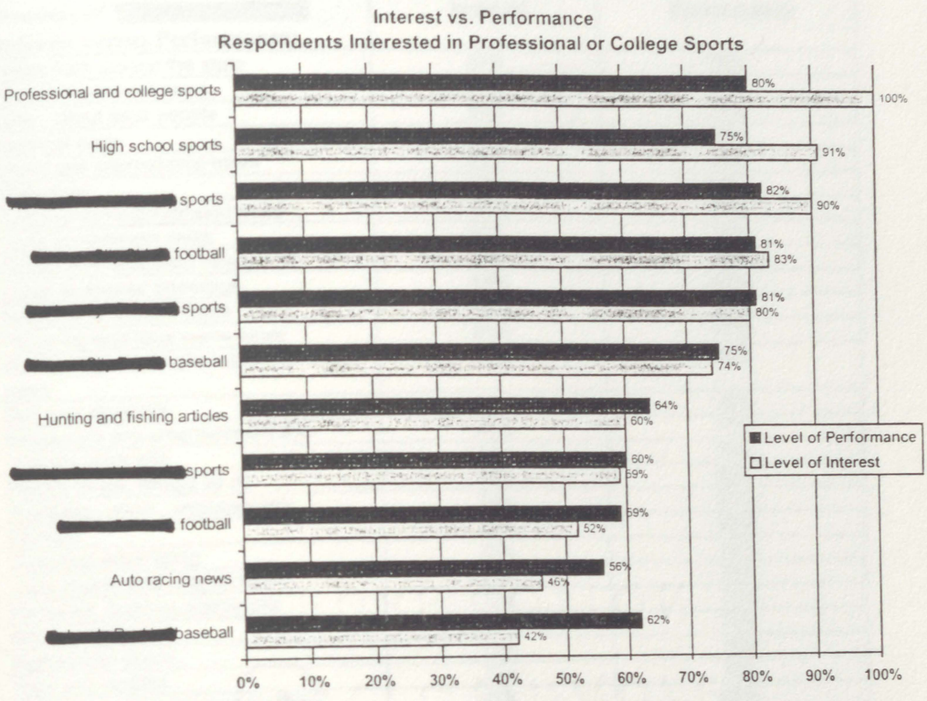
- By prioritizing the topics from high to low interest levels and comparing interest levels to performance scores for the same topics, it becomes clear that [redacted] has performance gaps in the following topics:

  News about local people
  World and international news
  Local business coverage
  Health and fitness news
  Gardening and home improvement news
  Places to go, things to do
  Local church and religion news
  Food and recipes
  Articles for parents and families
  Agriculture and farm news
  Comics
  Coupons
  Editorials and political commentary

- However, most of the below average performance scores were not far below the average line, indicating relatively strong performance for the top topics of interest.

[redacted]

Below Average Interest versus Performance:	Interest	Performance
Retail clothing ads	69%	76%
High school sports	69%	74%
[redacted] sports	68%	80%
Professional and college sports	67%	78%
Movie listings and reviews	67%	74%
Consumer and financial advice	65%	62%
Furniture, home furnishing ads	65%	73%
Retail appliance ads	62%	75%
[redacted] football	62%	79%
Local college news	61%	62%
[redacted] sports	59%	80%
Banking and financial services ads	58%	71%
Daily TV listing	57%	75%
Saturday TV booklet	57%	76%
Stocks, bonds, commodities, and futures prices	57%	68%
Auto dealership ads	57%	73%
[redacted] baseball	54%	74%
Mutual fund prices	54%	69%
Real estate news	52%	69%
Fashion and style news	52%	61%
Hunting and fishing articles	52%	64%
Computer news and software reviews	46%	55%
[redacted] sports	42%	62%
Auto racing news	39%	61%
[redacted] football	39%	61%
[redacted] baseball	32%	63%


Interest vs. Performance
Respondents Interested in Professional or College Sports
Professional and college sports
80%
100%
High school sports
75%
91%
[redacted] sports
82%
90%
[redacted] football
81%
83%
[redacted] sports
81%
80%
[redacted] baseball
75%
74%
Hunting and fishing articles
64%
60%
[redacted] sports
60%
59%
[redacted] football
59%
52%
Auto racing news
56%
46%
[redacted] baseball
62%
42%
Level of Performance
Level of Interest
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%

Readers of [redacted] Interest versus Performance:	Interest	Performance
News from around the state	97%	78%
State government news	95%	77%
News about local people	95%	71%
National news	94%	75%
World and international news	93%	70%
Obituaries	92%	88%
Community/neighborhood news	92%	71%
Local government news	90%	75%
School and education news	87%	77%
Local business coverage	**86%**	**67%**
Health and fitness news	**85%**	**64%**
Police log and local crime news	81%	77%
Gardening and home improvement news	**81%**	**66%**
Discount store ads	80%	78%
Restaurant and entertainment ads	78%	72%
Grocery store ads	77%	76%
Places to go, things to do	**77%**	**66%**
Weddings, anniv., engagements	76%	91%
Comics	**75%**	**68%**
Classified advertising	73%	79%
Local church and religion news	73%	70%
Hardware, building supply ads	72%	77%
Retail clothing ads	72%	76%
High school sports	72%	75%
Food and recipes	72%	70%
Articles for parents and families	**72%**	**65%**
Editorials and political commentary	**72%**	**64%**
[redacted] sports	71%	81%
Professional and college sports	71%	79%
Coupons	**71%**	**68%**
Movie listings and reviews	70%	74%

- Topics with a below average performance score (70%) and an above average interest score (70%) among readers included:

  Local business coverage
  Health and fitness news
  Gardening and home improvement news
  Places to go, things to do
  Comics
  Articles for parents and families
  Editorials and political commentary
  Coupons

Non-Readers [redacted] Interest versus Performance:	Level of Interest	Level of Performance
News about local people	**96%**	**65%**
News from around the state	**95%**	**64%**
National news	94%	78%
Community/neighborhood news	93%	81%
State government news	89%	77%
Local government news	87%	73%
World and international news	**84%**	**64%**
School and education news	83%	76%
Local business coverage	**81%**	**66%**
Obituaries	78%	81%
Local church and religion news	**78%**	**56%**
Discount store ads	77%	74%
Health and fitness news	**75%**	**67%**
Agriculture and farm news	74%	72%
Gardening and home improvement news	**74%**	**64%**
Food and recipes	**71%**	**64%**
Grocery store ads	70%	72%
Articles for parents and families	**68%**	**66%**
Coupons	**67%**	**63%**
Weddings, anniv., engagements	66%	82%
Classified advertising	66%	75%
Places to go, things to do	**66%**	**62%**
Police log and local crime news	**65%**	**68%**
Editorials and political commentary	**64%**	**56%**
Restaurant and entertainment ads	63%	72%
Hardware, building supply ads	62%	70%

- Non-readers were slightly more critical of [redacted] in their performance scores compared to readers and are generally less interested in many of the topics.

[redacted]

Interest versus Performance by Gender and Age	Male Int'st	Male Prfrmc	Female Int'st	Female Prfrmc	Under 34 Int'st	Under 34 Prfrmc
News from around the state	98%	69%	96%	83%	98%	83%
School and education news	83%	74%	89%	80%	97%	80%
News about local people	**95%**	**64%**	95%	76%	97%	78%
Community/neighborhood news	**89%**	**65%**	95%	79%	93%	82%
Classified advertising	70%	76%	72%	81%	92%	85%
Articles for parents and families	64%	57%	78%	73%	91%	70%
Obituaries	85%	86%	92%	89%	90%	90%
National news	94%	71%	94%	79%	90%	83%
State government news	96%	72%	91%	81%	90%	81%
Local business coverage	**84%**	**62%**	85%	71%	**90%**	**69%**
Police log and local crime news	74%	73%	80%	78%	89%	75%
Health and fitness news	**78%**	**56%**	86%	72%	**89%**	**61%**
Restaurant and entertainment ads	70%	71%	79%	74%	**88%**	**68%**
World and international news	**93%**	**65%**	90%	74%	87%	76%
Places to go, things to do	**73%**	**59%**	76%	72%	**86%**	**65%**
Comics	**72%**	**64%**	68%	73%	85%	78%
Furniture, home furnishing ads	54%	69%	74%	76%	85%	74%
Movie listings and reviews	61%	73%	73%	75%	84%	78%
Grocery store ads	63%	68%	86%	83%	84%	73%
Discount store ads	70%	72%	87%	83%	84%	72%
Retail clothing ads	57%	69%	81%	81%	84%	69%
Professional and college sports	75%	77%	61%	78%	83%	81%
Local college news	61%	58%	61%	67%	**82%**	**65%**
Retail appliance ads	54%	70%	70%	79%	81%	79%
Hardware, building supply ads	71%	75%	69%	78%	81%	76%
Local government news	90%	71%	89%	79%	81%	73%
Local church and religion news	**69%**	**65%**	79%	72%	81%	72%
Banking and financial services ads	58%	67%	58%	75%	80%	71%
Weddings, anniv., engagements	64%	88%	83%	91%	79%	91%
High school sports	75%	72%	64%	76%	79%	74%
Gardening and home improvement news	**74%**	**60%**	83%	71%	**79%**	**63%**
[redacted] sports	74%	80%	64%	81%	78%	76%
Auto dealership ads	62%	73%	52%	73%	78%	71%
Coupons	55%	62%	83%	72%	**75%**	**60%**
Computer news and software reviews	43%	47%	49%	63%	**75%**	**51%**
Stocks, bonds, commodities, and futures prices	63%	63%	51%	72%	73%	69%
Food and recipes	50%	58%	91%	80%	71%	68%
Consumer and financial advice	63%	51%	67%	73%	70%	58%
Fashion and style news	33%	53%	69%	69%	70%	58%
Agriculture and farm news	**77%**	**66%**	64%	71%	67%	74%
Editorials and political commentary	**68%**	**56%**	72%	70%	65%	59%

Bold indicates above average interest topics with below average performance scores within this segment.

- Topics with an above average interest and below average performance for younger readers include:

  Local business coverage
  Health and fitness news
  Restaurant and entertainment ads
  Places to go, things to do
  Local college news
  Gardening and home improvement news
  Coupons
  Computer news and software reviews

- Females generally scored the paper higher on performance for most topics compared to male respondents.

Appendix:

Explanation of Weighting Used:

The data for this study was weighted up to 1999 total adult population projections as in the 1993 and 1996 studies.[13] Weighting data in this manner allows for projected counts in the tabulation tables and frequencies that are easily compared to total population figures. In addition, it allows for correction of over-sampling of certain segments that might have occurred in the data collection.

The simplest way to weight the data would have been to divide the actual total population by the number of surveys and multiply the result by each response when tabulating the data. For example, since there are 108,600 adults in the [redacted] market and 412 interviews were conducted, we could have divided 422 into 108,600 and weighted each response by 264. In this case, this method was rejected because it would not have corrected any over-sampling by region or gender.

The results for this study were weighted by county population projections using the above method; however, weights were calculated for female and male populations within each county to correct an over-sampling of females within the data.

28 weights[14] were calculated by taking the total number of adult males or females in each county and dividing it by the number of interviews per county and gender. Each weight was then multiplied by each corresponding response in all weighted tabulations.

[13] As noted earlier, the data in the 1993 study was weighted incorrectly.
[14] See data tables for actual weights used.

[redacted]

Screener version 1, 1/20/99
Screener Number_____
Recruit Date_____
Recruiter Name_____
Interviewer Name_____
Interview Date_____

[redacted]
#1459-190
February, 1999

COMPLETE AFTER RESPONDENT IS RECRUITED

RESP. NAME_____

ADDRESS_____CITY_____

STATE_____ZIP_____PHONE_____

❒MALE ❒FEMALE

PREFFERED TIME TO BE RECONTACTED_____

_____

INTRODUCTION: (SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY)

Hello, my name is _____ with [redacted], a national marketing research firm. We are conducting a research study about how people feel about their local news sources and would like to speak for just a few minutes to the male or female head of your household who has had the most recent birthday and is over 18 years of age.

(ONCE CORRECT RESPONDENT IS ON LINE)

Hello, my name is _____ with [redacted], a national marketing research firm. We are conducting a research study about how people feel about their local news sources. We are not selling anything and only need to ask 5 questions at this time. We would like to speak to the male or female head of your household who has had the most recent birthday and is over 18 years of age.

Would that be you?

	Yes	1
(ASK TO SPEAK TO CORRECT PERSON)	No	2
(TERMINATE & TALLY) INITIAL REFUSAL		3_____

A. Are you or is anyone in your household employed by an advertising agency, a newspaper, a TV station, a radio station or a market research company?

(TERMINATE & TALLY)	Yes	1
	No	2

[redacted]

Screener version 1, 1/20/99

B. To make sure we obtain a representative sample of respondents from your area, please tell me what county do you live in?

[redacted]
01
02
03
04
05
06

[redacted]
07
08
09
10
11
12
13
14

Other (TERMINATE) 99_____

C. And what is your zip code?

_____#

IF [redacted] COUNTY AND NOT [redacted] ZIP, TERMINATE_____

The reason we asked you these questions is that we would like you to participate in a study to determine how people in your area feel about their local news sources. We would like to mail you the survey and, once you have reviewed the questions, we will call you back to obtain your answers.

Again, we are not selling anything and all of your answers will remain strictly confidential. As a token of appreciation for agreeing to participate in the study, we will also include a $2 bill with the survey. When we call you back, we estimate it will take between 15 and 25 minutes to record your responses.

D. Could we mail you the survey and the $2?

	Yes	1
(THANK, TERMINATE & TALLY)	No	2_____

IF YES:

E. What is your mailing address? (ACCURATELY RECORD ON FRONT, INCLUDE NAME, STREET OR PO BOX, CITY, AND ZIP AND PHONE)

You should get the survey within the next couple days. Please review it and wait for us to call or if you wish, fill out the answers to speed up the process. We suggest keeping the survey near your phone so that it is easy to refer to.

It is very important that **only you** answer the questions and not anyone else in your household even if you suspect they may have more knowledge about the questions. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, we are interested in your opinions.

Although we cannot guarantee an exact time we will call back due to potential scheduling conflicts, we would like to call at a time that is convenient for you. What time of day would you like us to call, if possible? (RECORD CALL BACK PREFERENCES ON FRONT)

Thank you very much.

[redacted]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study. We have included a $2.00 bill in this package as a token of our appreciation. We will call you in the next couple days to collect your answers to the questions or you may call us at [redacted] to schedule a convenient time. Please contact us if you have any questions. We suggest completing the survey now and leaving it near your phone. This will speed up the process of collecting your answers when we call. Again, thank you for your help.

1. Which of the following places are of particular interest to you when it comes to news coverage? **(Please check all that apply.)**
   - ☐ The State of [redacted]
   - ☐ Western [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted] County
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ Your own community

2. Thinking only of **local news in your own community**, which **one** of the following sources do you rely on **most** for the local news that interests you? **(Select one answer only.)**
   - ☐ Television
   - ☐ Radio
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ A weekly newspaper
   - ☐ The Internet
   - ☐ None
   - ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

3. Which of the following papers have you read in the last 7 days? **(Please check all that apply.)**
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ *The Wall Street Journal*
   - ☐ *USA Today*
   - ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

4. Which of the following papers did you read yesterday? **(Please check all that apply.)**
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ [redacted]
   - ☐ *The Wall Street Journal*
   - ☐ *USA Today*
   - ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

5. How many of the last five **weekday** issues, that is Monday through Friday papers, did you read during the last week for each of the papers you mentioned above? **(Record a number of 5 or less for all that apply.)**
   - _ [redacted]
   - _ [redacted]
   - _ [redacted]
   - _ [redacted]
   - _ [redacted]
   - _ [redacted]
   - _ *The Wall Street Journal*
   - _ *USA Today*
   - _ Other (Please specify)_____

6. Of the papers you have mentioned above, are the papers you read usually delivered to your house during the week, purchased from a rack or store, or do you usually read copies supplied by someone else?

Papers:	Delivered	Purchased from a rack or store	Read someone else's
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐
The Wall Street Journal	☐	☐	☐
USA Today	☐	☐	☐
Other (Please Specify)_____	☐	☐	☐

7. If you usually read copies of [redacted] supplied by someone else, who do you obtain your copies from?
   - ☐ Your place of work

[redacted]

- ☐ Friend, neighbor, or relative
- ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

8. When you think about [redacted] what word or phrase first comes to your mind?

_____

_____

_____

9. Would you say you completely agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or completely disagree to each of the following words or phrases that might be used to describe [redacted] based on what you have seen or heard, or your own experience?

	Completely Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Completely Disagree
• Growing in popularity	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Kind of dull	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Does a good job of covering this part of [redacted]	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Has good coverage of sports	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Is fun to read	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Often has stories that are too long	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Easy to find things in	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Carries ads for the stores where I shop	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Fair and impartial news coverage	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Has good business coverage	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Accurate	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Is a good value for the money	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Misses a lot of important local news stories	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Has too few features of interest to men	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Has too few features of interest to women	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Covers people my age and activities of interest to me	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Arrogant	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Has a good variety of coverage	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Has good coverage of my community or neighborhood	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Cares about my community	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Is attractive	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Is my local newspaper	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Carries important stories first	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Doesn't have enough good news	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. In your opinion, do you feel that [redacted] has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse in the last year or two?

- ☐ Improved
- ☐ Stayed the same
- ☐ Gotten worse

11. Using a five point scale, please tell us how you feel about the news reported in [redacted] where a 1 represents "it's yesterday's news" and a 5 means its "fresh and up-to-date news?"

- ☐ 1. "It's Yesterday's News"
- ☐ 2.
- ☐ 3. Neutral
- ☐ 4.
- ☐ 5. "Fresh and Up-to-Date News"

[redacted]

12. If you read [redacted], taking everything into consideration, how satisfied are you personally with [redacted] overall?

- ❒ Completely satisfied
- ❒ Somewhat satisfied
- ❒ Neutral
- ❒ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ❒ Completely dissatisfied

If you do not currently have [redacted] delivered to your home, skip to question 16

13. How would you rate the delivery service of [redacted]

- ❒ Excellent
- ❒ Good
- ❒ Fair
- ❒ Poor

14. Why do feel this way about the delivery service of [redacted]?

_____

_____

_____

15. How long have you had [redacted] delivered?

- ❒ Less than 6 months
- ❒ 6 to 11 months
- ❒ 1 to 5 years
- ❒ Over 5 years

If you currently have [redacted] delivered to your home, skip to question 19

16. If you do not currently have [redacted] delivered to your home, what could [redacted] do, other than lower its subscription price, to get you to become a subscriber?

_____

_____

_____

17. If you do not currently have [redacted] delivered to your home, were you ever a subscriber to [redacted]

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

18. If you do not currently have [redacted] delivered to your home, did you happen to read the most recent edition of *Applause* delivered each Wednesday to some homes in the area?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

19. What weekly papers or shoppers have you read within the last 7 days?

- ❒ The weekly [redacted]
- ❒ [redacted]
- ❒ Other (Please specify)_____

20. Each week [redacted] publishes a community news section called [redacted]. This section appears in Monday's [redacted] – do you usually read this section?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

21. Did you read or shop in [redacted]'s classified ad section yesterday?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

22. Did you read or shop in [redacted]'s classified ad section in the last 7 days?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

[redacted]

23. Which of the following news and advertising topics are of particular interest to you personally?
24. How would you rate [redacted] when it comes to coverage of these items – would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

Topics	Q23. Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not at All Interested	Q24. Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
• Local government news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• State government news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• News about local people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• News from around the state	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• National news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• World & international news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Community/neighborhood news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Editorials and political commentary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Local college news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Weddings, anniv. and engagements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Police log and local crime news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Obituaries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• School and education news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Local church and religion news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Local business coverage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Agriculture & farm business news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Health and fitness news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Movie listings and reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Mutual fund prices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Stocks, bonds, commod., and future prices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Consumer and financial advice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Food and recipes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Gardening and home improve news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Real estate news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Saturday TV week booklet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Daily TV listing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Places to go, things to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Computer news and software reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Articles for parents and families	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Fashion and style news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Comics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Hunting and fishing articles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• High school sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Professional and college sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted]s football	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted] football	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted] baseball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted] baseball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted] sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted] sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• [redacted] sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Auto racing news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Coupons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Grocery store ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Classified advertising	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Discount store ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Retail clothing ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Retail appliance ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Furniture, home furnishing ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Restaurant and entertainment ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Hardware, building supply ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Banking and financial services ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Auto dealership ads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[redacted]

25a. Which radio stations, if any, did you listen to yesterday for more than 15 minutes?

- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted] public radio
- ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

25b. Which radio stations, if any, have you listened to in the last seven days for more than 15 minutes?

- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted] public radio
- ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

26. Which of the following statements best describes you when you listen to radio?

- ☐ I change the station frequently when advertisements come on.
- ☐ I sometimes change the station when advertisements come on.
- ☐ I almost never change the station because of advertisements.

27. Do you subscribe to basic cable service, expanded cable service, or have a satellite dish?

- ☐ Basic cable (example: 22 channel @ $11.85 per month in [redacted])
- ☐ Expanded cable (example: 52 Channels @ $34.32 per month in [redacted])
- ☐ Satellite dish service
- ☐ None of the above

28. If a local retailer wanted you to notice its advertising, which of the following sources would be the best place to put it? **(Choose one only.)**

- ☐ On the local cable television channel
- ☐ In [redacted]
- ☐ In [redacted]
- ☐ On the Radio
- ☐ On a billboard
- ☐ Send me a letter by mail
- ☐ Other (Please Specify)_____

29. How many times did you shop, whether you bought anything or not, at each of the following places in the past 3 months? **(Please write in one number each.)**

- _ Downtown [redacted]
- _ [redacted] Mall
- _ [redacted] Plaza
- _ [redacted]
- _ [redacted]
- _ [redacted]
- _ [redacted]
- _ [redacted]
- _ [redacted]

30. In the past month, which of the following [redacted] stores have you shopped at whether or not you bought anything?

- ☐ Wal-Mart
- ☐ Kmart
- ☐ J.C. Penney
- ☐ Dollar General
- ☐ Alco Discount Store
- ☐ Big Lots
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ Target
- ☐ Dillards
- ☐ Sears
- ☐ Stage
- ☐ Sam's Club

31. In the past month, which of the following grocery stores have you or other members of your household shopped at?

- ☐ Dillons
- ☐ Food 4 Less
- ☐ Sam's Club
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ Aldi's
- ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

32. Which of the following building supply, hardware or farm supply stores have you shopped at in the past 12 months?

- ☐ Payless Cashways
- ☐ [redacted] Supply
- ☐ Sutherland's
- ☐ TSC (Tractor Supply Co.)
- ☐ [redacted] Lumber
- ☐ [redacted] True Value
- ☐ Other (Please specify)_____

[redacted]

33. Which of the following car dealerships have you or members of your household shopped at in the past 12 months whether or not you bought anything?

- ☐ [redacted] Ford
- ☐ [redacted] Motors
- ☐ [redacted] Auto
- ☐ [redacted] Autoplex
- ☐ [redacted] Ford
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted] Auto
- ☐ [redacted] Automotive Center
- ☐ [redacted] Motor Co.
- ☐ [redacted] Motors
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted] Motor Company
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]
- ☐ [redacted]

34. In the next 12 months would you say your household would be likely or unlikely to buy . . ?

	Likely	Unlikely
A brand new car, truck, or van	☐	☐
A used car, truck or van	☐	☐
Tires for a car, truck, or van	☐	☐
A major appliance	☐	☐
A new home	☐	☐
TV, stereo, major consumer electronic purchase	☐	☐
Furniture	☐	☐
Fine jewelry	☐	☐
Lawn and garden equipment	☐	☐
Carpeting	☐	☐
Computers or computer equipment	☐	☐
New cell phone service	☐	☐
New Internet access service	☐	☐
Vacation tours or packages	☐	☐
New IRA or other investment services	☐	☐

35. In the past 12 months, have you shopped in a city other than [redacted] for any of the following items and where did you shop?

	New or Used Automobile	Clothing	Computers Stereos or Home Electronics	Major Appliances
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐	☐
[redacted]	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (Please Specify) _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

36. Which of the following activities do you participate in a minimum of once per year? **(Check all that apply)**

- ☐ Hunting/Fishing
- ☐ Sailing
- ☐ Jet skiing
- ☐ Boating/Water Skiing
- ☐ Snow skiing/boarding
- ☐ Softball/Baseball
- ☐ Vacation travel
- ☐ Reading (books)
- ☐ Running/Walking for exercise
- ☐ Bicycling
- ☐ Motorcycling (on/off road)
- ☐ Lifting weights
- ☐ Tennis
- ☐ Golf
- ☐ Crafts/Sewing
- ☐ Casino gambling
- ☐ Computer-based hobbies

37. If you live outside of [redacted] County, how often do you visit [redacted] each year . .

To shop	#_____
For entertainment or dining	#_____
For professional or legal services	#_____
For healthcare services	#_____
And stay overnight	#_____

[redacted]

38. Which one source of advertising information do you rely on most when it comes to shopping for each of the following...?

	[redacted]	Other daily newspaper	A weekly shopper	Mailed Advertisements/ Catalogs	Radio	TV
• Groceries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Clothing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Auto service/repair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Tire, batteries, auto access	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Stereo, TV, VCR, CD players	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Major appliances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New & used cars, trucks, vans	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Furniture, home furnishings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Hardware, building and home remodeling supplies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Restaurants and dining out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Employment opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Travel information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Banking and financial services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New homes and real estate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Health and beauty aids	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Garage sales	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Computer equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Classification data:

39. How long have you lived in this part of the state?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to less than 3 years
- ☐ 3 to 5 years
- ☐ Over 5 years

40. Which of the following categories includes your age?

- ☐ 18-24 years of age
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 or over

41. Are you...?

- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced/separated

42. Do you have any children under 18 living at home?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

43. Which of the following categories best fits your employment status?

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Not employed
- ☐ Disabled
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

44. If employed full or part-time, what is your occupation?

- ☐ Professional
- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Business owner
- ☐ Sales
- ☐ Clerical
- ☐ Farmer
- ☐ Craftsman/foreman
- ☐ Operative/laborer
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

[redacted]

45. What is the highest level of education you've completed?
- ❒ High school
- ❒ Some college
- ❒ College graduate
- ❒ Post graduate

46. For statistical purposes only, which of the following income groups does your total household income fall into?
- ❒ Less than $15,000
- ❒ $15,000 to less than $25,000
- ❒ $25,000 to less than $35,000
- ❒ $35,000 to less than $50,000
- ❒ $50,000 or more

47. Do you or your family own or rent your home?
- ❒ Own house
- ❒ Own condominium/apartment
- ❒ Rent house
- ❒ Rent apartment/condominium

48. Has anyone asked you to subscribe to or have a newspaper delivered in the last three months?
- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

49. If yes, which newspaper/s contacted you? **(Check all that apply.)**
- ❒ [redacted]
- ❒ [redacted]
- ❒ Other (Please specify) _____

50. Are you . . ?
- ❒ White
- ❒ Black
- ❒ Hispanic
- ❒ Asian
- ❒ Other (Please specify) _____

51. Do you have access to the Internet at home or at work?
- ❒ Yes – at home
- ❒ Yes – at work
- ❒ No

52. If you have access to the Internet, have you ever visited [redacted] web site?
- ❒ Yes – from home
- ❒ Yes – from work or other locations
- ❒ No

53. If you have access to the Internet, which sites do you visit for news at least weekly, including [redacted], and how often did you visit each of your favorite news sites in the last seven days? **(Record site name or address and number of visits for any that apply.)**

Site Address or Name	# visits last seven days
[redacted]	

Once more, we thank you for helping us with this study, and look forward to speaking with you soon to collect your answers. If you have any questions, please contact [redacted]

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