What John Q. Public Wants to Read
(And Doesn't Want to Read)
In the Newspaper

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ....................... 4

Content's Importance in
Newspaper Readership .................................. 4
Local vs. National/International
News ..................................................... 6
News vs. Features ....................................... 9
What Readers Want in Certain
Types of Content ....................................... 12
Local News ............................................. 12
International .......................................... 13
Business ................................................. 14
Sports .................................................... 15
Editorials ................................................. 16

III. METHODOLOGY ......................................... 18

IV. FINDINGS ............................................... 21

V. CONCLUSION ........................................... 27

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................... 30

VII. APPENDIX ............................................... 32
INTRODUCTION

Rarely does a newspaper sit on middle ground. It is either chastized, stonewalled, and told to mind its own business, or it is used by sources to gain favorable publicity. Editors are often accused of publishing stories and photographs simply for the purpose of winning awards at the expense of invading someone's privacy. In addition, the public's image of a reporter is as a persistent, pushy, pain in the neck. This criticism seems equally true on the Ball State campus. People complain about the Daily News but few seem to offer specific reasons for their criticism.

As a professional journalist, the writer feels it is extremely important for a newspaper to know who its readership is and what they think about; what they want in the paper they read, and in some cases, don't read.

The Daily News has a reputation for not backing off a story. But are these investigative stories the ones people want to read and the ones they think should be written at all? If they do read the paper, what do they see as its positive and negative points? If they don't, why not? Even people who are regular readers say newspapers, including the Daily News, sometimes overwhelm them with "bad news," such as
natural disasters, crime, and government corruption. But does being an alleged "bearer of bad news" cause people not to read the paper?

The writer hypothesized that this was not the case. If a survey were conducted among students (the Daily News's main reading audience) the two main factors which would turn up as to why people would not read the Daily News would be lack of time and apathy, the hypothesis held.

However, among regular readers, the writer believed this "bad news" criticism would be cited. The writer also believed a survey would find that most students also thought the Daily News did not cover the issues they wanted to see covered.

The writer expected to find that students wanted to see more feature stories, more national and international news, more pictures and less campus news. They would want to know the latest, however, on the campus issues which directly affect their pocketbooks and college survival, such as financial aid, housing and academics.

The anticipated findings on reasons for non-readership would differ from those found in most other studies because of the basic operation of the Daily News and the people surveyed. The paper is free of charge, so no cost and circulation factors are involved. Also, physical problems and inability/lack of desire to read, three commonly cited reasons for non-readership among the general public, should not be found as often.
on a college campus.

Whatever the results, the writer felt that the Daily News could effectively use them to revise the directions it was taking in its coverage to better serve its readers' wants and needs.
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Content's Importance in Newspaper Readership

It seems a matter of logic that newspapers would print what readers want to read. However, it is apparent that newspapers and readers often miss connections.

One survey released in 1978 found that nearly two-thirds of non-readers with incomes of more than $5,000 per year said content was a major reason they avoided the daily newspaper.¹ Although this survey went on to say that only 4 percent of these non-readers named content as their top reason for avoidance, its results are nonetheless worrisome to newspaper editors.

Thirteen percent of Charlotte, N.C. one-time newspaper readers cited dissatisfaction with content as their major reason for dropping readership. But of those who began regular reading after being non-readers for a period of time, improved content accounted for only 6 percent,² proving that the wrong kind of content can lose readers for a newspaper far more often than improved content will attract them.

Several reasons often surface as to why this dissatisfaction occurs. The Elmer Roper survey in 1961 said the newspaper has "suffered the fate of the messenger who brought bad news."\(^3\) Indeed, some people have never read or have stopped reading the newspaper because they dislike the content.

However, several surveys have shown that content is often a minor or "after the thought" reason and not the primary one. The common content complaint is that news coverage is biased. In one survey, nearly one of every eight non-readers cited biased news coverage as the top reason they avoided reading the paper, and nearly 5 percent insisted that newspapers are altogether untruthful.\(^4\) "Political bias has infected print media; most reporters are liberals" was the inference of readers as drawn by the Roper survey.\(^5\)

However, some readers are sick of reading "bad" news, although stories on crashes, disasters and crime have been rated near the top of a list of most-read stories in many readership surveys.\(^6\) Researcher Ruth Clark of the American Society of Newspaper Editors said readers want to see more positive community

\(^4\)Poindexter, op. cit., p. 3.
\(^5\)Edelstein, loc. cit.
reporting, some happy endings, and successful human dramas.  

One survey asked the readers, simply, what they remembered reading in that day's newspaper. Seventy percent could remember something in the news that was upsetting while only 50 percent could remember something that made them feel good.  

In addition, 10 percent of non-readers surveyed in 1978 cited too much bad news as a major reason they avoided their newspaper. The Muncie newspapers also had several requests for more "good news" in their 1970 readership survey.  

All this could make one wonder if readers as a whole are hypocritical, but these critical findings prove that newspapers must continue to strive to please the readers contentwise or risk losing them.

Local vs. National/International News

"People respond much more strongly to local stories than to national and international news." This has been the backbone of newspaper editorial judgment in news content for many years. However, more and more research is showing this proposition to be a fallacy.

7Ruth Clark's interim report on readership for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1979.


9Poindexter, loc. cit.

be wrong. 11

Many newspapers have increased their ratios of local/state to national/international and features to hard news. 12 But was this what readers really wanted to read?

International and national news stories scored higher on many interest scales than the average local story, 13 particularly among younger readers. Tampa Tribune subscribers, in 1972, rated stories about national government and military/war as the two types most read in the newspaper. News of local and state government came in third, just ahead of accident and crime stories. 14 Even among readers of the K unknow newspapers, there were written-in requests for more national and international coverage in their 1970 survey. 15

A survey of readers of four small-town dailies in Tennessee indicated that 49 percent felt that national and international news was of "great" importance to them in their newspaper, while only 41 percent


13 "Public Buys Newspapers...," loc. cit.


said the same of local coverage.16

Even in specific packages such as news capsules, international and national news was most popular. Thirty six percent of adults surveyed in Charlotte, N.C. said they regularly read national/international news capsules. "People" columns, medical and health, consumer and sports capsules were also read more often than local news summaries, which included police and fire action summaries, court cases, and listings of government agency meetings.17

Yet, when it came to editors having to cut out stories, cutting wire-service hard news is the third most popular area to cut after syndicated and wire-service features.18

Readers of both sexes, in another survey, agreed that too much space was given to local and state news and not enough given to military/war and international news.19

However, some researchers insisted that local coverage was still the thing readers want to see most. Researchers at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public

16Shaw, loc. cit.
17Steverson, op. cit., p. 5.
Communications at Syracuse University, after a series of 15 surveys in a two-year period, concluded that good local coverage, along with features, is what people liked best about their newspapers. In addition, a readership survey of a medium-sized Indiana daily newspaper (about 20,000 circulation) in 1975 had four local news columns atop their "most read" list. And in the Muncie newspapers' survey, some readers were particularly concerned with what they felt to be a lack of coverage in the county and surrounding towns.

Whether local or national and international news should have been the top priority in content seemingly depends on the size and location of readership area and who the readers are. However, these survey results also show that a balance of both categories of news is necessary.

**News vs. Features**

An argument advanced in the changing journalism world was that readers want entertaining and useful features from their newspapers more than hard news.

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21 Readership survey in Knightsville, IN as reported in American Communications Network Bulletin, No. 45, Nov. 10, 1975.


One survey noted that as far as stories being noticed in the newspaper, 37 percent of readers read a feature story, as opposed to 34 percent for a typical straight news story.24

Not everyone looked to the newspaper as a source of information. Those people who did not use the newspaper to satisfy news needs are most likely to use it for entertainment.25 In fact, personal entertainment was classified as one of the four main patterns of readership.26

As mentioned previously, syndicated and wire-service features were the first things to be cut when editors have to eliminate something. Also, the small-town Tennessee survey revealed that crossword puzzles, horoscopes, and society news were the three least-read items in the entire newspaper. Other features, such as religious and cultural news, wedding and engagement announcements, advice columns, and health, hobby, and repair features were also read considerably less than hard news items.27

The Muncie newspapers' survey also showed that feature articles are in demand than quality news, editorial, and sports content.28 In the Syracuse University study,

24Mauro, op. cit., p. 7.
25Stevenson, op. cit., p. 3.
26Mauro and Weaver, op. cit., p. 2.
27Shaw, loc. cit.
general human interest and popular amusement stories were rated least interesting among all types of stories regularly found in the newspaper.29

Most people expected and wanted news from their newspapers. In one survey, the public was asked how they would choose between a paper that was all news and one that just gave a news summary and consisted mostly of entertaining features. Fifty-nine percent said they would prefer an all-news paper. This survey also asked which categories they would give the most space in the newspaper. Apart from local and national/international news, these readers considered news on best food buys most important, followed by health and medical news, then human interest and "people" features. On the other hand, these readers would give little or no space to old newspapers standbys such as fashion, advice columns, travel, comics; movie, music, record, and book reviews; beauty tips, animal stories, and crossword puzzles.30

This proved there are discrepancies between the features papers carry and the ones readers want to read. One survey found that 85 percent of surveyed papers carried society news, 75 percent had regular games, and 57 percent carried a bridge column, yet only 28 percent had consumer features and 16 percent

29"Newspapers are No. 1...", loc. cit.
30"Public Buys Newspapers...", op. cit., p. 7.
carried environmental news. Meanwhile, the survey of the 20,000 circulation Indiana daily indicated that bridge and games were among the least-read items in the paper. Other surveys have indicated that consumer and environmental stories are fourth and fifth in order of what people most want to read.

It turned out that the preference for a feature-heavy newspaper was highest among young people who were the heaviest magazine readers and made up the lowest level of newspaper readership.

B. What Readers Want in Certain Types of Content

Local News

Although even small-town residents expected a wide variety of content in their newspapers, the daily readers among them turned to the newspaper for local coverage and political reporting—the traditional mainstays of most American dailies. Even marginal readers conceded that better local news coverage would get them to return to regular readers.\(^3\)

\(^3\)&. Gloede, loc. cit.

\(^3\)&. Readership survey in Knightstown, Ind., loc. cit.

\(^3\)&. "Public Buys Newspapers," op. cit., p. 8.

\(^3\)&. Ibid.

\(^3\)&. Shaw, op. cit., p. 2.

\(^3\)&. "Researcher: Don't Be Misled by Age," Editor and Publisher, Vol. 109, No. 43, Oct. 23, 1976, p. 74.
Readers wanted to know what was going on in their towns. Public health and welfare stories produced the highest interest and most people liked to see the police beat and a list of upcoming events. Accident coverage, stories on state and local officials, religious and cultural happenings, and city and county council news also rated fairly high in what readers saw as "most important" in content.

Even among college students, local news got good readership. Since most students lived in an unfamiliar community, their reading of local news did decline from its very high level at home.

International

Many people say there is too much violent subject matter in the news about foreign countries. Yet when people were asked to rate a variety of carefully-constructed fictitious news stories, the story with the violent subject matter was considered more interesting than any of the other subjects. When asked simply about the types of foreign news, people reported they found too few stories on culture and social customs. There was also an expressed interest for more news of "ordinary people" and of social problems.

37 "Newspapers are No. 1..." loc. cit.
38 Readership survey in Knightstown, IN, loc. cit.
39 Shaw, op. cit., p. 3.
in other countries, most people surveyed felt there was about the right amount of foreign political news. 41

**Business**

A 1978 survey found that the news media underestimate reader interest in business and financial news. Reporters and editors estimated that only 4 percent of their readers were especially interested in business and financial news, but 26 percent actually expressed a great deal of interest in it. 42

However, very little of this interest was expressed for stock market reports. 43 Readers of the 20,000 circulation Indian daily rated stocks at the bottom of their reading list, 44 and the small-town Tennessee survey also found that stock news was near the bottom in what readers felt was important to have in the newspaper. 45

Stories about local business and industry were what readers wanted to read, and what they found interesting. Young people were particularly interested in business and industry's effects on the environment,


43 Ibid.

44 Readership survey in Knightstown, IN, loc. cit.

45 Shaw, loc. cit.
how business operates in general, and in new products. 46

Sports

Men are more interested in scanning sports pages than are women. However, one survey discovered that although female respondents were less interested in sports news generally, they showed more interest than males in local sports only. Forty percent of women surveyed said they read the local sports news only, as compared to only 18 percent of the men. However, 60 percent of the men said they read both local and national sports news, as compared to 46 percent of women. 47

This interest in local sports was evident in the Muncie newspapers' survey, in which a majority of respondents asked for more coverage of high school sports and summer recreation. 48 This survey also indicated that the sports page was the third most-read page after the front and editorial pages. 49

In addition, 85 percent of males and 74 percent of females in another survey expressed interest in the fine details of sports news: box scores, and agate material (league standings, schedules, statistics). 50

46 Brown and Reuss, loc. cit.
48 Readership survey of Muncie newspapers, op. cit., p. 5.
49 "Readership Survey Provides Impetus..." loc. cit.
50 Winter, op. cit., p. 5.
However, other survey results contradicted the apparent popularity of sports pages. The Tennessee small-town survey respondents rated sports news just ahead of business news, near the bottom of what was considered to be a most important aspect of newspaper content. Another survey found that sports news was the least noticed type of content in the entire newspaper.

However, the majority of newspapers apparently believed the data indicating high sports readership, as 89 percent surveyed said they had a regular sports section, and this percentage was continually on the rise.

**Editorials**

Surveys have indicated that the editorial page was read far more often than many persons in the newspaper business believed, although the Syracuse University study said readers disliked editorial opinion more than any other kind of newspaper content.

The Muncie newspapers' survey discovered that the editorial page was read more often than any other page except the front page, but this turned out to be because letters to the editor were one of the

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51 Shaw, loc. cit.
52 Mauro, op. cit., pp. 6-7.
53 Cloede, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
54 "Newspapers are No. 1..." loc. cit.
most-read items in the paper. This survey and the one conducted by the 20,000 circulation Indiana daily found editorials to be second-highest on editorial page reading lists.\textsuperscript{55}

Though these surveys found that regular readers are attracted to editorials, editorials are also a major reason non-readers avoid the newspaper. A 1978 survey found that 8 percent of non-readers cited disagreement with editorial stands as the number one reason they didn't read the paper any more.\textsuperscript{56}

When put together, the research indicated that people read the editorial page primarily to read articles by their favorite writers—themselves.

\textsuperscript{55} 1970 readership survey results of Muncie newspapers, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9, and Knightstown, IN survey, \textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{56} Tcoindexter, \textit{loc. cit.}
III. METHODOLOGY

Basis for the methodology of this paper was taken from "predictors of Newspaper Readership," by Judee and Michael Burgoon (Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1980, pp. 589-596.) Questions 4, in which readers were asked to choose from five alternatives a reason they did not read the paper (if applicable), and 9, which asked each reader to rate individual content categories on a one-to-five performance basis, were questions taken from the Burgoon survey. The questions were revised in form due to the fact they needed to be shortened to be part of a survey rather than the entire survey. Question 10 was added to 9 to give readers a chance to express specific reasons for their given ratings, something which in the introduction was expressed as an intent of this survey.

Question 1 was a general information question. Age and class standing were requested to help determine how long the reader had been reading the Daily News, and hence how long-standing his expressed opinions had been in formulation. Sex and marital status were originally included because the writer had planned to find a correlation, if any, between the two factors and frequency of readership, but it soon became apparent soon after the survey was distributed that this was
irrelevant. The *Journalism Quarterly* study had found that persons in the college age group (18-24) who were married had much higher readership frequency than those who were single.

The writer also felt that finding out whether the respondents lived on or off campus was important. The distribution of the *Daily News* is such that a student living in a residence hall practically had the paper delivered to him; papers are delivered to each hall and stacked in hallways or made available in dining services. However, an off campus student must make the effort to go get a paper in an academic building, thereby showing that reading the *Daily News* is in some way worth this extra effort. This could be called a measure of commitment to readership. The opposite could also be true. An on-campus student who does not read the paper would have to be avoiding it for some reason, since the paper is made so available.

Race and membership in campus organizations were considered to be perhaps the most important of the personal questions. The *Daily News* is often accused of being anti-black and anti-Greek, so this was included to find out if Greeks and blacks felt they were being treated unfairly in the paper.

Question 3 was asked to find out what types of news people want to read. Is it news, features,
sports or classified ads that they read the paper for primarily?

Questions 5 through 8 were write-in questions because the list of possible answers was too long to make a concise list. In addition, this was in keeping with the introductory statement in which the writer said he wanted specific opinions to be expressed.

Finally, question 11 was asked to seek a consensus on Daily News editorial opinions. This information could also be used to determine to what degree disagreement with editorial policy is carried over by readers to disagreement with news content.

The survey was mailed to 282 students listed on a scientific sampling prepared by Dr. Donald Nikesell of the Office of Student Affairs Research. Of the 282, 82 responses were received, for a response rate of 29 percent. All results were tallied and all crosstabulations made by the writer.
IV. FINDINGS

Of the 82 responses received and tallied, 60 said they regularly read the *Daily News*, while 20 answered "sometimes" and two answered "never." Of the students who answered "sometimes" or "never," nearly half said lack of time was the main reason they did not read the paper regularly. Only two of the 17 respondents cited dislike of content as their main reason for not reading.

As far as what they liked best about the *Daily News*, the daily cartoons (Bill Thornbro's editorial cartoon, Doonesbury, and the B.S. comic strip) were mentioned by more respondents (28) than anything else. General campus information was a distant second with 14, followed by classified ads (9) and no cost (7).

The front and inside news pages were 1-2 in terms of being read most often (by 75 and 65 respondents, respectively). Features were next most widely read (62), followed by the editorial page (56) and classified ads (54). Only a little more than half the surveyed readers said they read the sports section, and four readers went on to say there should be less coverage of sports in the *Daily News*.

But, on a fill-in question, nearly one-third
of the readers (26) said they wanted to see more national, international, and state news in the Daily News. Several readers said this was perhaps more important than campus news since the Daily News is the only source of news for many students. No other response to this question was given more than eight times.

Two other closely related questions asked readers what they wanted to see less of in the Daily News and what their biggest complaints were about the Daily News. Most frequent responses were biased writing (15), errors—typographical and factual (14), overkill (12) and triviality/individual attacks (9). On a later question, 16 persons wrote in that they felt the Daily News's news coverage was biased.

The readers' notion that the Daily News was biased in news coverage showed up again in another question. Readers were asked to rate the Daily News, on its performance, on a 1 to 5 basis (5 representing best) in these categories:

1) paper's interest in actively seeking its readers' opinions

2) paper's fair-mindedness

3) influence in the university community

4) quality of content of news, feature, and sports stories (all separate) and photos

5) paper's ability to keep you informed on issues you feel are important
Table I.

Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seeking opinions</th>
<th>Avg Resp</th>
<th>Total Resp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14% 16% 43% 16% 11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair-mindedness</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% 28% 34% 12% 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence in comm.</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20% 24% 28% 20% 8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of news</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>features</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% 20% 39% 29% 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sports</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6% 16% 45% 26% 7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12% 14% 45% 24% 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping informed</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% 35% 33% 12% 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13% 22% 39% 20% 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Daily News was scored lowest in fair-mindedness. In possibly the two most important duties of a newspaper, outlined in questions 3 and 5, the Daily News was also scored well below average. In questions 2 and 5, half of all respondents scored the Daily News as failing or below average (responses 1 or 2).

Readers scored the Daily News above the neutral mark in only two categories: features and sports, despite the fact that sports was the least-read section of the paper and one which many felt the Daily News overemphasized.

The responses to the fair-mindedness question were further broken down to see what relationships class standing and Greek organization membership had to their responses.
Table II.
Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Avg. Resp.</th>
<th>Total Resp.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Of the 79 respondents who gave their class standing, there were 19 freshmen, 17 sophomores, 23 juniors, 12 seniors, 6 graduate students, and 2 doctoral. Not all answered the fair-mindedness question, however.

**Data insignificant due to low number of responses.

Table III.
Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Avg. Resp.</th>
<th>Total Resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Greek</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between class standing and perception of fair-mindedness seems to be a curvilinear one.

Greek students, on the average, scored the Daily News far lower than non-Greek students. Particularly noticeable is that none of the 13 Greek respondents scored the Daily News better than neutral.
Results on the fair-mindedness question responses by black students could not be studied since only one black student returned a completed survey.

Several relationships concerning regularity of readership were explored. Results are given below for measurements of commitment to readership\textsuperscript{57} and types of pages read by daily and sometime readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table IV.</th>
<th>Residency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL. TOTAL</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table V.</th>
<th>Content Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a slight difference in regularity of readership between on and off campus students, but it was not great enough to demonstrate a significant relationship.

\textsuperscript{57}See page 19.
Meanwhile, there were some differences between daily and sometime readers in terms of content pages read. A much higher percentage of daily readers read the editorial, feature, and inside news pages, and the front page to a lesser extent. A much higher percentage of daily readers also read the entire newspaper. Frequency of sports and classified ad pages, however, was approximately equal among both groups.

A similar breakdown was done with data from the final question, which asked students how often they agreed with Daily News editorial opinions.

Table VI.

Agreement with Stands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>80-100%</th>
<th>50-80%</th>
<th>25-50%</th>
<th>25%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*11* responses of "don't read editorials" not included.
V. CONCLUSION

Daily News readers, through this survey, put forth several definite views.

News, especially national/international and state, was what was most important to them. Features and sports, though well received, were desired only in small quantities.

The most common content complaint was bias. In addition to the questions which exposed this directly, the Daily News was scored lowest on fair-mindedness of the five main categories in question 9. Although the results were consistent to this point, it was difficult to determine whether these results represented individual readers speaking their own, informed opinions or whether general, longtime complaints about the Daily News had been spread throughout the campus population. The fact that freshmen, those with the least exposure to the Daily News, scored the Daily News lowest in fair-mindedness of all classes would suggest that the latter phenomenon has had some effect.

The shortage of national/international and state news, when combined with the complaints of 21 readers of overkill and triviality in selection and writing of local stories led to the conclusion that readers believed the Daily News did not print what they felt
was important. This was also expressed directly in one of the questions in item 9, as readers gave this the second-lowest rating after fair-mindedness.

The difference in fair-mindedness responses between Greek and non-Greek students was expected. The responses reflected a long-held belief among Greek students that the Daily News was biased against them.

There was surprisingly little difference in regularity of readership between on and off campus students. Apparently off-campus students were willing to make an effort to pick up a paper and read it in most cases, offsetting the higher availability of the paper for on-campus students.

The differences in content read by regular and sometime readers showed that with the exceptions of sports and classified ads, sometime readers were less interested in the entire content of the paper, not just particular sections. It is interesting that while only 45 percent of sometime readers read the editorial page (as opposed to 78 percent of regular readers), a higher percentage of them agreed with Daily News editorial opinions than did regular readers. On the basis of this data, it appears that factors other than editorial disagreement, perhaps lack of interest of a higher degree, accounts for this large difference in readership. However, the fact that only 12 sometime readers answered the question on
agreement with editorial stands and the possibility that their decreased exposure to editorials (as a result of far lower readership of the editorial page) may render these results invalid.

Overall, a significant number of people found things in the Daily News which should not have been there (bias, etc.) and did not find things which should have been there (national, world, and state news.) When coupled with 14 readers saying that errors were the Daily News's major problem, it showed that readers believed the Daily News had much work to do.
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY


VII. APPENDIX

This is a survey which will be used as the basis of a Senior Honors Thesis at Ball State University. Your response is greatly needed to insure that this survey's results will be valid.

It will take you less than 10 minutes to fill out this survey. All responses may be made anonymously. The completed survey should be returned in the included self-addressed envelope by Wednesday, May 6. No return postage is needed. Thank you.

Age _______ Class Standing _______________ Sex _______
Marital status ________ Living on or off campus _______
Race ___________ Campus Organizations to Which You Belong ______________________________________

How often do you read the Daily News?
   a. daily
   b. sometimes
   c. never

What pages of the Daily News do you read? (circle all that apply)
   a. front
   b. inside news
   c. features
   d. sports
   e. editorial
   f. classified ads

If you do not read the Daily News, which is closest to the reason why you do not?
   a. I get the same news from radio and television.
   b. I don't like the choice of content.
   c. I don't have enough time.
   d. I don't like to read.
   e. Other—Explain

What do you like best about the Daily News?
List one or more complaints you have about the Daily News.

What would you like to see more of in the Daily News?

What would you like to see less of?

Rate each of the following on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 representing best performance.

a. Paper's interest in actively seeking its readers' opinions
   1 2 3 4 5
b. Paper's fair-mindedness
   1 2 3 4 5
c. Influence in the university community
   1 2 3 4 5
d. Quality of content of news stories
   1 2 3 4 5
   feature stories
   sports stories
   photographs
   1 2 3 4 5
e. Paper's ability to keep you informed on issues which you feel are important
   1 2 3 4 5

Indicate your reasons for assessing each of the above ratings.

a.
b.
c.
d.

e. How often do you agree with Daily News editorial opinions?
   a. 80 to 100 percent of the time
   b. 50 to 80 percent
   c. 25 to 50 percent
   d. less than 25 percent of the time
   e. don't read editorials

Additional comments: