BALL STATE DAILY NEWS
READERSHIP SURVEY

Stephenie Overman
Honors Project
Winter Quarter, 1974
A three and a half year involvement with the Ball State Daily News has whetted my journalistic curiosity. After listening to Daily News reporters and editors discuss what they believe the average reader thinks about the newspaper and reads in it, it seemed reasonable to ask the readers.

The reasonable way to ask them was, of course, a readership survey. Other surveys of the Daily News have been done; however, none have been done in the past few years.

I considered conducting a survey similar to the one done by The Chicago Tribune in May of 1969 but rejected the idea as impossible for one person to handle adequately.

In the Chicago Tribune studies a systematic, quantitative method is used to determine those items which individuals read in a given copy of the newspaper. The individual who has read the newspaper is taken through the issue page by page and asked what he remembers seeing or reading. The interviewer records each headline, article, picture, caption, cartoon and piece of advertising the individual remembers. The results of such a study is a complete listing of the percentage of the people reading every item in the newspaper.

Because people tend to forget specific items they read, it is necessary in this form of survey to contact people as soon as possible after they have read the issue to determine readership. This means a number of interviewers must conduct the survey the day following the issue to be studied.
The conduct the survey the Chicago Tribune employed the Barlow Survey Service, Inc. (Information on the survey obtained from "Plain Talk About Readership Studies," a publication of the Chicago Tribune.)

I did not have a trained staff to conduct personal interviews and I could not conduct them all in one day so I decided instead to conduct a mail-out survey. To obtain a random sample of Ball State undergraduates I requested a Computer Center run of 1,000 names. The sample was made from all Ball State undergraduates as of the start of fall quarter with 170 or fewer hours. This was to eliminate students who would graduate by the time the survey was mailed in the winter quarter. The request for 1,000 names was made November 19, 1974.

December 3, 1974, a random sample of 861 names was received from the Computer Center. The breakdown of the list was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>frosh</th>
<th>Soph</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>senior</th>
<th>Special</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>460</td>
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The readership survey was sent December 4 with the request that they be returned by campus mail by December 19.

Of the 861 questionnaires sent out, 173 were returned.
SAMPLE COPY
READERSHIP SURVEY OF THE DAILY NEWS

1. How frequently do you read the Daily News?
   a) once a week b) twice a week c) three times a week d) four times a week e) five times a week f) do not read the Daily News

2. Do you regularly read other newspapers besides the Daily News?
   a) no b) local newspaper c) other

3. What is your primary source of national news?
   a) Daily News b) other newspaper c) television news d) radio

4. Have you ever written a letter to the editor to the Daily News?
   a) yes b) no

5. Have you ever requested a correction or made a complaint to the Daily News?
   a) yes b) no

6. Do you believe the Daily News prints:
   a) only letters to the editor which agree with the Daily News b) letters which may disagree with the Daily News c) all letters regardless of content

7. Do you read the letters to the editor in the Daily News?
   a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

8. Do you read the editorial on the opinion page of the Daily News?
   a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

9. Do you read the Jack Anderson (Washington Merry-Go-Round) column on the opinion page of the Daily News?
   a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

10. Do you read the Art Hoppe (Innocent Bystander) column on the opinion page of the Daily News?
    a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

11. Do you read the "Days Ahead" (public announcement) column?
    a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

12. Do you read the AP (Associated Press) briefs in the Daily News?
    a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

13. Do you read arts page reviews in the Daily News?
    a) always b) frequently c) seldom d) never

14. How much arts news do you think there is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

15. How much sports news do you think there is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

16. How much national and state news do you think there is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

17. How much city news do you think there is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

18. How much fraternity/sorority news do you think is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

19. How much residence hall news do you think is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

20. How much off-campus news do you think is in the Daily News?
    a) enough b) too much c) not enough

Please return the survey by Dec. 19 by campus mail to:
INDEPENDENT STUDY SURVEY
Daily News
300 N. College
A listing of each question, the results and comments from those questioned and my evaluation of each question follows.

QUESTION 1.
How frequently do you read the Daily News?

a) once a week  5  b) twice a week  6

a) three times a week  16  d) four times a week  32

e) five times a week  113  f) do not read the Daily News  0

Remarks: Where do you put the "once a month" check?  1
Evaluation: Since no one answered f) do not read the Daily News, none of the questionnaires were eliminated. About 62% of those questioned read the Daily News every day.

QUESTION 2
Do you regularly read other newspapers besides the Daily News?

a) no  102  b) local newspaper  44  c) other  27

Remarks: Two noted that they read their hometown newspaper. One said he did not read any other newspaper while at school.

Evaluation: Over half of those questioned (about 57%) do not regularly read a newspaper other than the Daily News. Because of this, it seems important that the Daily News cover a broad scope of news, not just campus oriented news.

QUESTION 3
What is your primary source of national news?

a) Daily News  28  b) other newspaper  26  c) television news  72  d) radio  59  (Note- Some answered more than one; there are 194 responses.)
Remarks: Time and Newsweek magazines were each noted once. One student said "radio" while at school.

Evaluation: Although many more students indicate television or radio as their primary source of national news, the Daily News should not cut back on its national news. Question 16 shows students feel there is not enough national and state news in the Daily News.

QUESTION 4

Have you ever written a letter to the editor to the Daily News?  

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<th></th>
<th>a) yes</th>
<th>b) no</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
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Remarks: "NO, but have felt like it."

Evaluation: Few of the students questioned have written letters to the editor, however of the three indicated two read letters to the editor "always" and one reads letters to the editor "frequently."

QUESTION 5

Have you ever requested a correction or made a complaint to the Daily News?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) yes</th>
<th>b) no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remarks: "No, but I will."

Evaluation: One person questioned answered yes to both 4 and 5. Most of those questioned either had no corrections to make or chose not to make corrections. Perhaps the Daily News should consider promoting the attitude that corrections can be made and mistakes will be corrected.
QUESTION 6

Do you believe the Daily News prints:

a) only letters to the editor which agree with the Daily News? 11
b) letters which may disagree with the Daily News? 29
c) all letters regardless of content? 125 other 8

Remarks: "Both letters which agree and disagree but not all letters."
"b, but the DN tends to print more that agrees with the editor."

Evaluation: Most students answered c which does not take into consideration libelous letters, students seemed unaware of libel laws. However, most felt the Daily News did not withhold letters because they disagreed with the Daily News.

QUESTION 7

Do you read the letters to the editor in the Daily News?

a) always 44 b) frequently 98 c) seldom 26 d) never 2 other 3

Remarks: "Yes, for a good laugh."

Evaluations: The letters to the editor column seems to be popular with most students.

QUESTION 8

Do you read the editorial on the opinion page of the Daily News?

a) always 20 b) frequently 82 c) seldom 66 d) never 5

Remarks: none

Evaluation: The editorial page is only moderately well read and needs to be better presented.

QUESTION 9

Do you read Jack Anderson (Washington Merry-Go-Round) column
on the opinion page of the Daily News?
always 11 frequently 18 c) seldom 91 d) never 44 other 9
Remarks: "Can't even type the survey (sic) right. That's pretty poor."
Evaluation: A typographical error on this question invalidates it, however the responses are listed. The remark about not being able to type the survey right is at least partly accurate. The survey was offset not typed, but it is "pretty poor" when something is not set correctly. This a problem the Daily News runs into constantly. Decent equipment would be a boon, moreover, editorial control over production is vital. The attitude often shown by the Daily News production staff is very unprofessional and this interferes with editorial's ability to deal with its readers.

QUESTION 10
Do you read the Art Hoppe (Innocent Bystander) column on the opinion page of the Daily News?
a) always 20 b) frequently 51 c) seldom 64 d) never 4
Remarks: "I love it."/"I read it every time I read the Ballon."
Evaluation: This column is not too well read; perhaps it should not be run on a regular basis.

QUESTION 11
Do you read the "Days Ahead" (public announcement) column?
a) always 64 b) frequently 59 c) seldom 39 d) never 11
Remarks: none.

Evaluation: This column is well read and should be well displayed.

QUESTION 12

Do you read the AP (Associated Press) briefs in the Daily News?

a) always 147  b) frequently 84  c) seldom 33  d) never 8  other 1

Remarks: none

Evaluation: Well read, AP copy should be carefully chosen.

QUESTION 13

Do you read arts page reviews in the Daily News?

a) always 16  b) frequently 61  c) seldom 68  d) never 27  other 1

Remarks: "Beginning this quarter (winter) there's too much."
"There was no review of Mac Davis/Ann Murray concert."
"C, because Scott Miley did such a "splendid" job."
"Reviews suck."

Evaluation: Only moderate readership. See Question 14

QUESTION 14

How much art news do you think there is in the Daily News?

a) enough 116  b) too much 28  c) not enough 27  other 2

Remarks: "Leave national art reviews to nationally known critiques in magazines."
"No review of concerts."

Evaluation: The Daily News needs to recruit reviews, perhaps from outside the field of journalism.

QUESTION 15

How much sports news do you think there is in the Daily News?

a) enough 101  b) too much 17  c) not enough 54  other 1
Remarks: "Could you please have more thorough coverage of women's sports news. Along with this, could you manage to print the names of participants correctly. After all, no one misspelled Larry Bullington's name or Shafer Suggs! Proofreader, get on the ball." "Not enough women's" "The girls should have a little more publicity such as the flag football tournament." "Like to know backhome basketball scores and other colleges." Cover pro games. "Should cover more women's sports also have more interviews with women in the sports field." "Other schools (IU, Purdue, ISU etc.)" Should include more on women's sports. "Need more space and ED HAMILTON" "More national needed." "Need more national."
Evaluation: A lot more women's sports, a little more national.

QUESTION 16
How much national and state news do you think there is in the Daily News?

a) enough 59  b) too much 4  c) not enough 109  other 1
Remarks: Don't care.
Evaluation: The Daily News may have underestimated the interest in national and state news.

QUESTION 17
How much city news do you think there is in the Daily News?

a) enough 98  b) too much 20  c) not enough 53  other 2
Remarks: "Don't care." "Who cares about Muncie?"
Evaluation: Enough coverage.
QUESTION 18

How much fraternity-sorority news do you think is in the Daily News?

a) enough 96  b) too much 46  c) not enough 29  other 2

Remarks: "Won't put an answer to the question, because I am part of the Greek system I felt the DN was tearing down the Greek system."
"Really don't care."
Evaluation: A little too much news and a little too much bias.

QUESTION 19

How much residence hall news do you think is in the Daily News?

a) enough 54  b) too much 8  c) not enough 110  other 1

Remarks: "Don't care." Give credit where credit is due."
Evaluation: The Daily News needs more residence hall news to please the residence hall people.

QUESTION 20

How much off-campus news do you think is in the Daily News?

a) enough 80  b) too much 5  c) not enough 87  other 1

Remarks: "Don't care."
Evaluation: The Daily News could try to cover more off-campus news.

GENERAL COMMENTS

"An aside-The Daily News is basically disgusting."

"Should be more coverage of state and local news (legislature) that will directly affect students."

"What happened to Doonesbury?"

"I did not approve of the two snow sculptures and agree with the
message in Dec. 6 issue OP ED PAGE by Dave Russell."

"Personal opinion on this matter was not asked, but here is is anyway. I have worked in newspapers for the past 14 years. Seldom have I seen a "public" newspaper with such a blatant disregard and/or misunderstanding of its responsibility, especially in the area of taste."

"I really think the daily news is benificial to any person living on campus or attending BSU. Most of what is going on on campus is listed in the Daily News and if a person has nothing to do, the daily news offers suggestions."

EVALUATION OF READERSHIP SURVEY

The results of this survey could have been improved if
1) I had sent out more questionnaires
2) I had been able to provide self addressed return envelopes
3) The Daily News had run stories and/or ads promoting the survey.

Basically the response to the questionnaire was good, although it was not enough to be really statistically accurate. Perhaps the best way to improve the survey and study the Daily News would be to get a research grant. Maybe next time.