

A SURVEY OF EMPLOYER RATINGS OF COURSES OFFERED
AT MAJOR UNIVERSITIES IN ARKANSAS, COLORADO,
KANSAS, MISSOURI, NEW MEXICO, OKLAHOMA AND
TEXAS IN THE JOURNALISM DEGREE SEQUENCE
AND OF CERTAIN NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

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Edmond, Oklahoma

1985

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1991

Thesis
1991
Q3654
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The brevity of this page in no way reflects the endless gratitude I have for Dr. Charles Fleming, Dr. Maureen Nemecek, Dr. Greg Stefaniak, Dr. Marlan Nelson, Dr. Harry Heath, Greg, Gregory, Dillon, my mother, my father, Jack, Joanie and especially, God. Thank you all very much!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Growth of Journalism Education

Early journalists learned their trade first by experiencing all the trials-and-errors of a copy apprentice; then through hard work and determination they acquired the necessary skills of a news reporter. But even the early journalists saw a need for journalism education.

John Ward Fenno "advocated college training for newspaper editors in The Gazette of the United States in 1789" (Wolseley and Campbell 96), and Robert E. Lee, president of Washington College, urged journalism instruction in the nation's universities in 1870.

It wasn't until the first actual schools of journalism were founded at the University of Missouri in 1908 and Columbia University in 1912, that journalists in the United States were finally able to receive a formal education within their field (Wolseley and Campbell 96).

The journalism education movement spread rapidly and by 1917 the Association of Teachers of Journalism listed 172 members in 84 institutions. By 1984 this membership exceeded 500 (Wolseley and Campbell 97). In 1969 the Journalism Educator Directory of programs listed 158 schools and by

1989 the AEJMC Directory listed 373 schools in the United States that offered a journalism or mass communication program (Stone 4).

Before the 1950s journalism wasn't considered a popular major, but by 1974, journalism enrollment at the nation's colleges and universities had so drastically increased that program resources were being exceeded (Stone 4).

Along with this increasing enrollment trend, journalism educators began to see that changes needed to be made in journalism curricula so as to better meet the needs of a more diverse student body (Stone 5).

The journalism field is constantly changing as well, and as with any changing field, there is continual controversy concerning just what journalism education should consist of.

Background

The first journalism education in the United States was "loosely defined" and consisted mainly of an apprenticeship system, although some early American journalists "perfected their writing skills in colleges on the eastern seaboard or abroad" (Weaver and Wilhoit 41-42).

It wasn't until the late 1800s that educators began to develop a specific journalism curriculum to be taught in the nation's universities usually by former newspaper men (Weaver and Wilhoit 42).

These "early journalism education programs stressed

training in writing and editing at the undergraduate level, first within English departments, then in independent departments" within the colleges of liberal arts or in schools of journalism (Weaver and Wilhoit 42).

In the early 1900s, the undergraduate writing and editing training developed into master's-level education and in 1927 at the University of Wisconsin, journalism first found its home in the social sciences rather than humanities, "a decision that had a far-reaching impact on the kind of journalism research and education carried out in many U.S. colleges and universities in the years to come" (Weaver and Wilhoit 43). However, not all schools today consider journalism a social science.

By 1947 The Committee on Schools of Journalism of the American Newspaper Publishers Association reported that most journalism degree programs in the nation consisted of only 25 percent journalism courses. "Every journalism student...spends at least 75 percent of his time on background courses in history, economics, political science, English, etc." (Wolseley and Campbell 99).

As the field of journalism has changed considerably in the past several decades, the education has responded with change as well. Demanding, therefore, that journalism instructors continually ask themselves if they need to review and revise their curriculum.

A major national effort to improve journalism and mass communications curriculum was conducted in 1983 and 1984 by

The Task Force on the Future of Journalism Education at University of Oregon. These efforts were continued by a 1988 task force formed by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, in conjunction with the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication. The 1988 task force sought to "identify a model curriculum for journalism and mass communication education, as well as to address major problems and prospects facing journalism education" (Curriculum A-2).

The task force recognized that journalism curricula developed in the past several decades may not be pertinent for today's profession, so it sought information from professionals in the mass communication fields to see what they thought should be included in today's curriculum.

Six subcommittees sought to "identify the basic principles which ought to characterize the academic and professional preparation of individuals aspiring to careers" (Curriculum A-3) in advertising, broadcasting, magazine, news-editorial, public relations and visual communication.

Instead of a national survey, the news-editorial committee members wrote personal letters to 50 editors and educators "whose opinions are frequently sought because of their excellent newspapers or interests in journalism education" (Curriculum A-15).

The committee concluded from the responses of these acclaimed professionals that the ideal program would discipline students to think, speak and write clearly,

analytically and conceptually" (Curriculum A-15).

Journalism curricula, according to the committee, should "include courses which teach students how to find information, how to take full advantage of databases which are available to them.

There should be a place in the curriculum where students learn to identify appropriate original sources and to interview intelligently. Advanced skills courses which once were bedrock for news editorial students--- editorial writing, investigative or in-depth reporting--should be strongly encouraged or required (Curriculum A-16).

The professionals cited by the committee stressed the importance of ethics courses and were adamant about the importance of a strong liberal arts background for news-editorial graduates.

Controversy still remains, though, as to the ideal journalism education program.

The Problem

The problem that this study will address is similar to that faced by the task force: Which areas of knowledge/skills do newspaper employers consider to be most important? What skills do employers consider are deficient among journalism graduates? How can educators help better prepare students and make them more employable?

Additionally, this study will examine which specific elective courses and extra-curricular activities that newspaper employers think are most important for news-ed journalism students.

Purpose of Study

It seems logical that college graduates who have been better prepared will have an "edge" in the job market. Not only will they be better able to obtain the jobs they want, they will also be more likely to receive higher starting salaries.

But just what does make graduates better prepared? What skills should they possess that will make them more competitive in the job market?

How can educators help to better prepare their students? In what areas should educators concentrate to furnish students with the skills they need?

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the areas of journalism knowledge/skills that newspaper employers in Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas deem to be the most important for an entry-level applicant to have.

Another purpose of this study was to determine which elective courses employers thought were most beneficial to journalism students; and how important they thought extra-curricular activities, such as work on a campus newspaper, newspaper internships and professional memberships such as Sigma Delta Chi, were to journalism graduates.

This paper sought to identify which journalism knowledge/skills, elective courses and extra-curricular activities will most favorably affect an applicant's employability.

Objectives of Study

The questions that this study will answer include which areas of journalism knowledge/skills and which extracurricular activities impress newspaper employers most when they are hiring entry-level employees.

This study was designed to accomplish three objectives:

- 1) To determine what skills newspaper employers consider necessary for an entry level applicant after four years of college.
- 2) To determine the areas of knowledge/skills seen as deficient in journalism graduates, as viewed by the newspaper employers.
- 3) To determine which areas of knowledge/skills (journalism and non-journalism), as well as extracurricular activities, newspaper employers considered most beneficial to gaining employment in the news editorial field.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Methodology was a mail survey of newspaper employers in Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The region was limited in this study, which was further limited to a representative sample in the specified region.

The extracurricular activity choices on the questionnaire were limited to internships, work on a school publication and membership in a professional society such as Sigma Delta Chi.

This study was further limited to only the news-editorial sequence within journalism education.

Significance of the Study

This study was an effort to help students and educators know what knowledge/skills areas are most beneficial in securing a favorable job upon graduation.

Students will benefit by knowing which courses to include in their news editorial program of study, as dictated by the professionals who may someday be hiring them.

The journalism educator should also be able to use the results of this study to develop an education plan of study that will be in the student's best interest. The educator should also be able to see by this study's results where his current curriculum might be considered deficient by professionals in the newspaper field.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter II includes a historical background of the problem, reviews the current related literature and establishes a need for this study.

Chapter III describes the research methodology involved in gathering and processing the data.

Chapter IV contains an analysis of the data and reports the results.

Chapter V provides a summary of the study, offers conclusions and makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most journalism education studies have logically concerned themselves with reform, and those conducted during the past two decades have especially emphasized the need for change in journalism curricula, as will be evident in this literature review.

While early studies are important and many still relevant, only those conducted since 1979 will be reviewed here, so as to provide the reader with a more up-to-date view of journalism education.

Current Literature

To provide background for this study, literature was reviewed in three areas of interest related to the news editorial sequence in journalism education.

The first area reviewed was the available literature on newspaper editors' views of news-editorial journalism courses. The second area examined non-journalism courses or secondary areas of education interest (academic minors) preferred by newspaper editors. The third area examined literature concerning editors' opinions about extra-curricular activities for news-editorial journalism majors.

What Editors Want

A newspaper editor interviewed by the News Editorial Journalism subcommittee of the Task Force on the Future of Journalism Education (1983) responded:

The young people who impress me are those who have had the broadest liberal arts education, and, thus, know enough on Day One to ask an intelligent question....If their academic training had so disciplined them that they can think, speak and write clearly, analytically and conceptually, then that's superb! (A-15)

Another response the Task Force cited concerning the qualities journalism students should develop in college was: "Evidence of energy, a hunger for the next question, reverence for the English language, enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, a need to be passionate and caring, a sense of responsibility..." (A-15).

Another was:

Newcomers must understand that their role is not only to seize the award-winning story but to do a variety of other tasks that support the entire business enterprise. Their education should teach them to recognize that a well-written and well-edited obituary or police story or profile of a cat fancier plays an important role in building a solid readership base for the long haul. (A-16)

Haskell Gaddis found in his 1979 study of journalism practitioners that editors wanted to see news-editorial graduates with the following attributes:

1. "Reporting skills which are at least acceptable for entry-level reporting jobs."
2. "A wide ranging preparation in the social and behavioral sciences and liberal arts."
3. "A foundation in media ethics."

4. "A dedication to the practice of journalism in the public interest."
5. "A fairly comprehensive knowledge of local government."
6. "The ability to conduct statistically reliable opinion polls" (163).

Deficiencies in Journalism Graduates

The Task Force on the Future of Journalism Education cited one editor in its report who asked the following about entry-level employees:

Why can't they organize their work and thoughts? Why are their vocabularies so scant? Do I have to rewrite each and every one of their leads? How can they be credible with me when I find out they haven't reread their own stories? (16)

Journalism graduates' poor writing skills that especially lack grammar and spelling basics were overwhelmingly cited in recent literature.

"We have almost given up on finding anyone skilled in basic grammar, spelling and writing skills" (15), wrote one daily editor who participated in a 1980 study conducted by Brigham Young University professors Gordon Mills, Kenneth Harvey and Leland B. Warnick. This study surveyed 666 daily and weekly newspaper editors to determine the preparedness of journalism graduates as evidenced by their entry-level employees.

One respondent added:

I've hired three journalism grads, but consider their college journalism training to be the least of their qualifications. I've received illiterate cover letters and resumes from a host of other

journalism graduates....One criticism I would level at all colleges---not just those which teach journalism---is that many students seem to be able to graduate without knowing much about grammar (15).

Another wrote:

We see little culling of obviously unqualified and inept persons who will never make the grade, who should be detoured in college and not forcing working editors to cull them out after accepting their diploma as prima facie evidence of competency. Colleges would be much better serving the journalism profession by raking out the chaff (16).

An editor/publisher of two weeklies had the following response:

I participated in an internship program...for several years. Not one of the 12 seniors I had in my plant over the six-year period was prepared to enter the work-a-day world of journalism, and they were just three months from graduation! (14)

Another daily newspaper editor wrote:

They (journalism graduates) come to us with plenty of theory and experience covering fraternity parties. They are not prepared to cover day-to-day governmental and/or political activities....They can't spell worth a damn. Worse yet, they either can't or won't open the dictionary (14).

Another complained:

I have a staff that is too small to offer fledgling reporters any extraordinary assistance and a staff too large to justify halting copy flow to perform surgery on a story sorely in need of it. But newly graduated journalism majors appear to require such concern (15).

The Brigham Young study cited the following deficiencies in journalism graduates, in order of significance: basic grammar and spelling; writing clearly and concisely; writing under deadline pressure; reporting and interviewing skills; gathering in-depth information from a variety of sources; writing basic news stories; copy

editing; journalism experience; writing in-depth stories; writing analytical articles; layout experience; and writing technical stories concerning science, economics (16-17).

When Gaddis compared the attitudes of journalism educators to those of newspaper editors concerning the skill levels of news-editorial journalism graduates, he found several differences. For example, editors were less likely to agree that "recent graduates had had adequate laboratory reporting experience " (161).

"Educators moderately agreed that graduates had 'hands-on' experience with electronic newsroom equipment, while editors moderately disagreed. Educators moderately agreed that graduates had adequate understanding of local government while editors moderately disagreed" (161).

Editors indicated that they believed recent journalism graduates' skills to be inadequate for beginning reporters. They further indicated, according to Gaddis, that they "saw a need for a greater level of improvement between currently observed and expected skills" (161).

Gaddis concluded that editors and educators both seem "less than enthusiastic about the level of journalism skills of recent news-editorial graduates." However, since editors were found to see a greater need for improvement than the educators did, Gaddis wrote that "while educators set higher standards for expected skills of graduates, they also apparently believed, more than editors, that the perceived standards and the expected standards of skill levels were

less widely separated. These educators apparently believed news-editorial education has been doing a better job than did these editors" (162-163).

Recommended Journalism Courses

The proportion of journalism skills courses in a journalism student's total class load should be increased from the typical 25 percent to 40 percent, according to editors in the Brigham Young study (12).

While this review found no literature specifically addressing the particular journalism courses that newspaper editors most want their employees to have, the list of deficiencies noted in the Brigham Young study show that newswriting courses that teach interviewing, reporting and writing skills, as well as courses that teach copy editing, layout and photography were considered essential.

In its "Accredited Journalism and Mass Communication Education 1989-90" report, the Accrediting Council on Education for Journalism and Mass Communication does not list specific journalism courses necessary for schools seeking accreditation, but does insist that "a sound educational program should provide...up-to-date instruction in the skills necessary to practice journalism and mass communications and understanding of the role of the mass media as important social institutions" (7).

The report continues:

Theoretical instruction and practical laboratory experience should be provided in the basic skills

of writing, reporting, editing, visual communication, layout and design and other fundamental techniques appropriate for such specialties as advertising, public relations and broadcasting. Whatever the specialization, the skills work should be offered in a context of philosophical instruction in such areas as history, law, ethics and mass communications theory. (7)

The report also stresses that "courses should be offered in an order to ensure that students learn to gather, analyze, organize, synthesize and communicate information in a format appropriate to their areas of specialization" (7).

"How can educators best prepare journalism students to become the kind of reporters who editors value?" asked journalism researchers Ward and Seifert. They determined the following from their 1990 study of newspaper reporters and their editors:

Obviously, journalism programs should be designed to help students develop strong mechanics, and expressive and journalistic writing abilities. Journalism educators might seek ways to work cooperatively with their colleagues in English to improve students' writing abilities. English faculties have long emphasized the development of expressive writing abilities, and for whatever reason, reporters who majored in English did better on our writing mechanics test than did reporters who majored in journalism or communications.

Non-Journalism Courses/Academic Minors

One managing editor responding to the Brigham Young survey stressed the importance of non-journalism courses for students seeking a news-editorial journalism career:

I've found that journalism students for the most part, slide through college. I would prefer to hire someone who has majored in almost anything

else (math, history, English, etc.) and who has minored in journalism or simply decided to work for a newspaper. (13)

One-fourth of the respondents suggested that in order for journalism students to be better prepared for journalism careers, schools should require a "broader range" of classes (17).

A 1984 survey of 266 editors employed by some of the nation's largest dailies found that from an employer standpoint, courses in grammar, economics and government are the most desirable electives for students majoring in journalism to have had (Shelly 52).

The ACEJMC report stresses the importance of grammar usage, as well. "Competence in English should be stressed everywhere, and demonstration of such competence should be a requirement for graduation" (7).

Students must also have a strong liberal arts background, according to ACEJMC. "Today's world is complex and fast-paced. To prepare students for such a world, a sound educational program should provide a broad exposure to the liberal arts and sciences..." (7).

Based on 120 semester hours required for graduation, ACEJMC requires that students take a minimum of 90 semester hours in courses outside the major area of journalism and mass communications, "with no fewer than 65 semester hours in the basic liberal arts and sciences" (7).

Journalism-Related Extra-Curricular Activities

While many extra-curricular activities may be considered important for journalism students to have participated in, literature concerning editors' preferences was limited to the activity of newspaper internships. Respondents in the Brigham Young survey overwhelmingly agreed on the necessity of journalism internships. Editors frequently cited participation in an internship program as a necessary prerequisite for an applicant being hired "straight out of college" (16).

A large majority of the respondents urged journalism schools to make internships a bigger part of their programs.

One response was: "I firmly believe that an internship is the best training....Newsgathering is changing so rapidly, some professors may be out of touch with reality" (18).

Another responded: "Experience is the best teacher' continues to be the best advice, but so few graduates have much outside their school publications. They need to see the practical side along with the academics" (18).

Two others replied: "Public affairs reporting classes should get the students right into the courtroom, city council chamber, school board meeting or what have you. Students then should bring their stories back to class where they are critiqued in a friendly manner." "Theory is fine, but I think a short internship (2-6 weeks) is worth a year of college study" (18).

ACEJMC's report stresses activities that allow students to receive practical journalism experience, as well:

Quality experience in journalism and mass communications should be encouraged....Journalism and mass communications internships, practicums and student publications can add a significant and realistic component to a student's education. Innovative programs in this area of the curriculum are encouraged. (10)

In their survey of 1,252 journalism graduates who received bachelor's degrees in 1987, Becker and Engleman found that 84 percent of the news-editorial majors had worked for their college newspaper, and 79 percent of all the graduates had participated in media internship programs (6-7).

Very little literature concerning newspaper editors' opinions about extra-curricular activities was found for this review. Therefore, a 1987 study of public relations practitioners conducted by David Blohm was considered because of the close relationship between the two professions.

Blohm found that public relations practitioners felt that practical experience was the most important extra-curricular activity for public relations majors to have participated in. While a public relations internship was considered very important by the respondents, experience as a newspaper reporter was deemed desirable as well (74).

Surprisingly, Blohm found that respondents were "less than enthusiastic" about students' participation in a public

relations professional organization or attainment of grants, scholarships and awards (75).

Summary of the Literature Reviewed

From the literature reviewed, it appears that editors prefer to hire "well-rounded" applicants who have knowledge concerning many different areas, especially government, business, sciences and most importantly, proper language and grammar usage.

While journalistic theory may be important, it definitely seems secondary to practical journalistic skills. Practical experience gained from participation in an internship program seems "worth its weight in gold" to journalism students. In fact, this participation might just provide "the edge" that the new graduate needs in the job market, especially when up against other recent graduates for a newsroom position.

It must be further stressed, though, that editors seem to wholeheartedly agree that no amount of practical experience can compensate for an applicant's lack of grammar and language usage skills.

While it seems that it should go without saying, the editors who participated in the reviewed studies insist that it must be said: Any student who can't, through precise grammar and spelling usage, express his or her thoughts logically in writing, does not belong in the journalism degree sequence.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures that were used to conduct this study, including explanations of the research approach, research design, pilot study, population and sample selection, research instruments, data collection and analysis plans, methodological assumptions and study limitations.

Research Methodology

Methodology was a mail survey questionnaire that gathered data reflecting newspaper editors' attitudes toward journalism education.

The questionnaire used forced decision questions that asked respondents to numerically rank course preferences. A rating scale was also used to determine how editors rated the importance of courses. Copies of the questionnaire and cover letter are contained in Appendix A.

Research Design

The dependent variables in this study were the course rankings and ratings by newspaper editors. The independent

variables included the circulation rate of the respondent's newspaper, his/her educational background and years of newspaper experience.

This study examined the relationship of the newspapers editors' background (journalism experience and education) and newspaper's circulation rate to their opinions about the value of journalism and non-journalism courses, extra-curricular activities and overall grade point averages.

A student's high overall grade point average was expected to be ranked as important by newspaper employers, but was thought to be rated as secondary compared to other applicant characteristics such as courses taken, internships and other journalism-related non-academic activities.

The hypotheses for this study were (1) that newswriting and news editing would be ranked as the two most important journalism courses, (2) that most editors think it necessary for journalism undergraduates to have a "minor," (3) that the educational areas of government and business will be ranked as the two most desirable for the "minor" area and (4) that newspaper editors would rate practical experience as being the most desirable extra-curricular activity for journalism undergraduates to have participated in.

Pilot Study

Fifteen Oklahoma State University journalism instructors were selected to participate in a pilot study to determine the clarity and validity of the questionnaire.

The pilot study was conducted three weeks before the initial questionnaire mailing. Following the pilot study responses, appropriate changes were made to the questionnaire as indicated and they were then mailed to the sample population. A copy of the pilot study's cover letter is contained in Appendix B.

Population

The population for this study consisted of all daily and weekly newspaper editors in the seven-state region of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Sample Population

The sample for this study consisted of randomly selected newspaper editors in the seven-state region. A list of all newspapers, monthlies and shoppers excluded, was obtained from the Gale Directory of Publications, and by using a table of random numbers, the sample was randomly selected.

Since there were so few, all newspapers with a circulation over 100,000 were included in the sample; and were excluded from the random selection.

The sample for this study consisted of 417 newspapers, 17 were dailies with a circulation greater than 100,000, 314 were dailies with a circulation less than 100,000 and 86 were weekly newspapers.

Data Collected

The questionnaire consisted mainly of four questions. Three asked participants to numerically rank courses, areas and activities, and a fourth question asked the editors/employers to rate the importance of several applicant characteristics.

The first question asked the newspaper editors to numerically rank their top five choices for journalism courses; the second asked them to rank their top three choices for "minor" areas; and the third asked them to rank their top three choices for extra-curricular activities.

Participants were also asked to rate (using a five position semantic differential scale that ranged from "very important" to "not important") the importance of the following when they consider hiring an applicant:

- * The importance of an applicant's overall grade point average.
- * The importance of an applicant's grade point average in his/her major field.
- * The importance of having a secondary area of education emphasis (a minor.)
- * The overall usefulness and importance of having a journalism degree once in the newspaper field.

Newspaper editors were also asked to indicate the circulation rate of their newspaper (whether it was a daily or weekly), as well as their educational background and years of journalism experience.

Participants were further asked whether their organization requires applicants to take an entrance exam that determines writing ability.

Initial and Follow-up Mailings

Questionnaires with cover letters were mailed to the sample of 417 newspaper editors in mid-March. Three weeks later, a follow-up questionnaire and cover letter were sent to those editors who didn't respond to the initial mailing. A second follow-up mailing was used to improve the response rate; it was mailed in mid-May.

Data Collection and Recording

Questionnaires were returned in stamped and addressed envelopes that the researcher provided with each questionnaire mailing. Questionnaire responses were coded and then entered into a computer.

Analysis of Data

Individual score rankings and ratings were analyzed to determine the relationship between these and the independent variables (editors' education, years of experience and newspaper's circulation rate).

Analysis was performed by using SYSTAT, "The System for Statistics." These results, as well as the overall rankings and ratings, are displayed in table form.

Limitations and Weaknesses

The main limitation was the less than perfect response rate associated with any mail survey.

Another limitation is the study's geographic region that consisted of newspaper editors in the seven-state region of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. All editors in this region were not surveyed, therefore a further weakness is the random sample of 417.

A potential limitation exists in that the questionnaire didn't accurately reflect the study's intended purpose, although the questionnaire pilot test was intended to lessen this possibility.

This study, as with any, was further limited to the time frame in which it was conducted, March-June 1991.

Methodological Assumptions

Several methodology assumptions had to be made, in order to conduct this survey:

- 1.) It was assumed that the questionnaire was completed by the newspaper editors who were in charge of hiring entry-level journalism employees.
- 2.) It was assumed that the participants answered in a candid and unbiased manner.
- 3.) It was assumed that the pretest eliminated any questions and that the instructions were clear and easily understood.
- 4.) It was assumed that the questionnaire content was sufficient so as to complete this study's objectives.

Summary

This study used a mail survey questionnaire research approach which asked newspaper editors/employers to rank their top five journalism and non-journalism course preferences, as well as their extra-curricular activity preferences for entry-level employees.

Participants were also asked to rate the importance of journalism and non-journalism courses and extra-curricular activities. They were further asked to rate the importance of grade point average and the overall usefulness of a journalism degree.

Editors/employers were asked whether or not their organization requires applicants to take an entrance exam that determines writing ability.

Participants in this study were randomly drawn from the Gale Directory of Publications listing of newspapers for the seven-state region of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Data were collected, coded and entered in a computer where analysis of variance was used to determine the relationships between/among variables.

Limitations for this study included: a less than perfect response rate, the geographic region, the limited sample, the possible invalidity of the questions asked and the allowed time frame.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

General

Questionnaires were mailed to 417 daily and weekly newspaper editors in the seven-state region of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

The initial mailing resulted in the return of 196 questionnaires (47 percent). A second mailing resulted in 48 more returns (244 total questionnaires) for a 59 percent response rate. A third mailing resulted in seven more returns; a total of 251 returned questionnaires resulted in a 60 percent total response rate for this study.

Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents' Newspaper's

Characteristics

Respondents were asked to check whether their paper was published weekly or daily. Dailies with a circulation of 100,000 or more had previously been identified by a corresponding number on the questionnaire that also assisted with follow-up mailings.

Of the respondents, 71 percent were managing editors for weekly newspapers, 24 percent were managing editors for dailies with a circulation less than 100,000 and 4 percent were managing editors for dailies with more than 100,000 circulation. Table I shows the respondents' break down according to newspaper circulation rate.

TABLE I
RESPONDENTS' NEWSPAPER'S CHARACTERISTICS

NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION RATE	N	Percent
Weekly	178	71%
Daily <100,000	61	24%
Daily >100,000	10	4%
No Response	2	1%
Total	251	100%

Respondents' Educational Background

Respondents were further asked to indicate their educational background. Almost half of those surveyed, (42 percent) had earned a bachelor's degree, and 7 percent had earned a post-graduate degree in journalism/mass communications. Six percent had earned a bachelor's degree,

and two percent had earned a post-graduate degree in English. Three percent indicated they had earned a bachelor's degree in business, while 11 percent had earned a bachelor's degree in other fields and four percent had received post-graduate degrees in other fields. Almost one-fourth of the respondents (24 percent) indicated they had received no college degree. Table II shows the breakdown of managing editors by educational background.

TABLE II
RESPONDENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

EDUCATION	N	Percent
Journalism/Mass Comm		
Bachelor's	103	42%
Post-Graduate	18	7%
English		
Bachelor's	15	6%
Post-Graduate	6	2%
Business		
Bachelor's	7	3%
Other Fields		
Bachelor's	27	11%
Post-Graduate	11	4%
No College Degree	61	24%
No Response	3	1%
Total	251	100%

Respondents' Experience

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years of their journalism experience. Of the respondents, almost one-half, 47 percent, indicated they had more than 16 years of experience, 22 percent indicated they had 11 to 15 years of experience, 19 percent indicated six to 10 years of experience and 12 percent indicated one to five years. Table III shows the managing editors' breakdown according to experience.

TABLE III
RESPONDENTS' JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE	N	Percent
16 Years or Over	119	47%
11 to 15 Years	55	22%
6 to 10 Years	45	18%
1 to 5 Years	28	11%
No Response	4	2%
Total	251	100%

Rankings

Journalism Courses

Respondents were asked to rank the top five journalism courses they felt important for an undergraduate journalism

student to have successfully completed. Courses were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the first most important course and 5 the fifth most important. Table IV shows the managing editors' average rankings of journalism courses. (Since all respondents didn't rank all courses, N indicates the number of responses that averages were based on.)

TABLE IV
RANKING OF JOURNALISM COURSES ON THE BASIS OF IMPORTANCE

Course	N	Average Ranking
News Writing	244	1.2
News Editing	203	2.7
Layout	1	3.0*
Principles of Public Relations	30	3.2*
Basic Photography	162	3.4
Media Research	26	3.4*
Feature Writing	148	3.5
Press Laws	150	3.6
Media Ethics	142	3.6
Principles of Advertising	60	3.8
Editorial Writing	44	4.0
Media Management	18	4.2
Public Affairs Reporting	4	4.8
Publishing	1	5.0

*While this course appears to have a high average ranking, it is deceptive since based on relatively few responses.

Secondary Area of Study

Respondents were asked whether they thought it necessary for journalism undergraduates to have a secondary area of study (a minor). More than one-half of the respondents indicated they thought a "minor" was necessary for journalism undergraduates. Table VI shows their responses.

TABLE V

OPINION OF RESPONDENTS ON NECESSITY FOR A MINOR OR SECONDARY
AREA OF STUDY

Response	N	Percent
Yes	176	70%
No	73	29%
No Response	2	1%
Total	251	100%

Those respondents who indicated that a minor was necessary were further asked to indicate their preferences for the minor's educational area, by ranking their top three choices, with 1 being the most important and 3 the third most important. Table VI shows the managing editors' rankings of educational areas for the secondary area of study.

TABLE VI
RANKINGS OF EDUCATIONAL AREAS FOR "MINOR" ON THE BASIS OF
IMPORTANCE

Area	N	Average Ranking
State Government	2	1.0*
U.S. Government	113	1.6
English	73	1.8
Business Management	57	1.9
U.S. History	63	2.1
Arts and Humanities	38	2.1
Economics	75	2.2
Marketing	25	2.2
World History	49	2.4
Natural Sciences	7	2.6
Agriculture	10	2.7
Physical Sciences	6	2.8
Foreign Language	2	3.0
Philosophy	1	3.0
Computer Science	1	3.0
Graphic Arts	1	3.0
Religion/Theology	1	3.0

*While this area appears to have a high average ranking, it is deceptive since based on so few responses.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Respondents were asked to rank the top three extra-curricular activities that are important for an undergraduate journalism student to have participated in. Respondents ranked activities on the basis of importance with 1 being the most important activity and 3 being the third most important activity. Table VII shows the managing editors' ranking of extra-curricular activities.

TABLE VII
RANKING OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON BASIS OF
IMPORTANCE

Activity	N	Average Ranking
Diverse Reading	1	1.0*
Part-Time Newspaper Job	230	1.6
Newspaper Internship	230	1.8
Work in Business Field	8	2.0*
Diverse Writing	1	2.0*
Reporter for School Newspaper or Magazine	195	2.4
Voluntary Community Service	55	2.5
Involvement in Campus Organizations	2	2.5*
Society of Professional Journalists Member	16	2.6
Scholarships, Grants, Awards	5	2.6
Job in Anything Unrelated to Journalism Field	3	3.0
Travel	1	3.0
Participation in Politics	1	3.0

*While this activity appears to have a high average ranking, it is deceptive since based on so few responses.

Ratings of Specific Statements

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of specific statements on a five-point semantic differential scale with five blanks. The bipolar adjective on the left of the scale was "very unimportant" and the bipolar adjective on the right was "very important." The respondents rated the following: the importance of an applicant's overall grade point average, the importance of an applicant's grade point average in journalism courses and the importance and overall

usefulness of a college journalism degree once in the "real world." Table VIII shows managing editors' ratings of specific statements.

TABLE VIII
RESPONDENTS' RATING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC
ASPECTS OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION

Scale: 1 = very unimportant, 5 = very important

Statement	N	Average Rating
Journalism G.P.A.	251	3.7
Overall G.P.A.	251	3.2
Journalism Degree	251	3.3

Written Exam

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their newspaper requires job applicants to take a written exam to determine writing ability. A total of 68 percent of the respondents indicated their newspaper did not require a written exam, while 32 percent said their newspaper did require it. Table IX shows the breakdown of respondents whose newspapers require applicants to take a written exam.

TABLE IX

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHOSE NEWSPAPER GIVES A WRITTEN
TEST TO JOB APPLICANTS

Response	N	Percent
No	168	67%
Yes	81	32%
No Response	2	1%
Total	251	100%

Advice From Managing Editors

Respondents were also asked to give "one piece of advice" to journalism students planning to enter the newspaper field. While all responses could not be listed, the offered advice is summarized as follows.

Managing Editors' Advice On the Importance of Writing Ability

"Get as much writing experience as possible while still in college."

"Good writing skills are essential. Learn to write, edit, then rewrite."

"Spelling and use of the English language is still lacking in college graduates today."

"Write (for free) articles for any newspaper who will publish them. Write even if just for a critique."

"Journalism students should never be satisfied with what they have written, even if they get a good grade---they should always wake up the next day with another angle; another way to write the lead; a better transition---anything."

"If you can't write it right, don't write it."

"Keep your writing simple with a 'musical flow' to it."

"Develop the skill of writing in a clear, precise manner. Be direct. Flowery dissertations do not impress readers or editors."

"Never use two words where one will do."

"Pay attention to details, spelling, grammar and deadlines."

"Above all else, be grammatically proficient. You can learn the 5 W's at any time."

"Be accurate! Most words have exact meanings---be sure to use them correctly."

"Polish writing skills---everything else can be learned on the job."

Managing Editors' Advice On the Importance of Gaining Practical Experience

"Work---part-time or summer jobs---in all facets of the business...writing, advertising, photography, page layout, circulation, etc."

"Get some practical experience while in college---don't just rely on a degree to get you a job."

"Try to spend some time early in your career on a small newspaper."

"Experience the field in the real world! There is no comparison between school and the real world."

"Get published somewhere---intern when you can."

Managing Editors' Complaints Concerning Journalism Graduates

"Too many 'new' grads come into the field wanting to specialize in one area. Rather than locking into one area, they should get a good broad-based foundation. By doing so, they can more easily view the total impact a particular

story will have on all their readers, not just one particular group."

"Many J-school grads I have been in contact with, actually are not good writers."

"In just the seven years since I got out of school, I see more and more specialization. As the City Editor for a 5-paper weekly group, I don't need specialization. I need versatile people, willing to fill in where they are needed. Being able to cover the city council, a sports event, a legislative issue, a dedication ceremony and bring me stories and photos from all of it, is my ideal for a good young reporter. Most that I've met could be capable of this, but they just aren't willing."

"Journalism schools have to clamp down on the students who are entering them. The schools must stop turning out 'journalists' who can't write. We are bombarded by students who can't write. I am not talking about bad writers, but ones who do not possess basic writing skills, much less reporting, interviewing or editing skills. The old adage 'good help is hard to find' is alive and well in today's journalism market."

"Please learn to spell! Too many J-school grads arrive in the newsroom without as much as a clue about the spelling of many words they want to use. Even worse, their grammar is often a tad on the weak side, too!"

"We graduate too many J-school young people and then pay them too poorly. It's time for quality, not quantity."

"There is a severe lack of training in the community journalism field. I can't afford to hire 'just graduated' experts. Give me one willing person capable of 'everything' and chances are I'll have a job available. Small papers need better qualified people than the big ones, because we can't afford to hire a stable of 'experts.'"

"I am concerned with a perceived lack of character and morals in recent entry level journalists."

Managing Editors' Advice on

Liberal Arts Education

"Get a strong overall, liberal arts background with a good understanding of the English language."

"Take as many courses possible related to journalism, such as political science, government, history, economics."

"Take all the history courses possible."

"Read everything you can get your hands on."

"Know government!"

"Learning to write well is only one-third of the game. Get a good handle on state and local government and politics. J-schools do not emphasize this enough....I constantly come upon good writers who cannot cover a story because they don't understand what they are covering."

Managing Editors' General Comments for Students

Planning to Enter the Newspaper Field

"Overcome elitist attitudes and understand fully the laws of libel and fairness."

"The major qualities a reporter needs are not taught in J-school; curiosity, aggressiveness, a thick skin."

"Start at a small weekly to obtain overall experience not only in writing, but make-up and photography."

"You must be an innovator because the job market is exceptionally tight."

"Clips from a part-time newspaper job or internship carry the most weight in landing a job. We do a 'test' ---have the applicants edit copy and write stories to make sure the clips aren't the work of an editor. We added this because of past problems with new employees."

"Once you get involved, don't drop out because of low pay. Rapid advancement and financial rewards are possible for reporters who are good and who stick with it."

"Understand that for the most part what you write will be believed. Therefore be extremely careful to write with accuracy.

"Get some clips---a degree doesn't mean squat. I base my hiring decisions solely on who has demonstrated he or she can produce. Also, I look for clear writing and a spark of personality in cover letters."

"Plan on making less money than teachers, policemen, newspaper carriers and other groups who feel constantly underpaid. J-schools reverently avoid the subject of salary."

"J-teachers need to try not to instill any false hopes in their students. Journalism is tough and students need to know about this. Let's try to let them know that you must work hard to get ahead in this field---especially if you're a woman/minority. I got tired of being fed a pack of lies about how easy this field was to enter. I've worked long hours and spent much time and worry to get where I'm at right now."

"Prepare for poverty."

"Be prepared, at all times, to defend what you write no matter how trivial it may seem to you."

"Always take in consideration how your story will affect the lives of the subjects on which you are writing. They and you must live with your story."

"Don't get discouraged. If you can make it over the hurdles the first couple of years and find that you love this crazy profession, then it's the right field for you."

"When interviewing a person---listen, don't talk except to ask pertinent questions."

"Check the standings of the paper and its owner; make sure you get everything you want (in a written contract), don't settle for less."

"Be interested in everything in the world around you, and be willing to learn something from every contact you make."

"Be accurate; always receive authorization to run a story instead of trying for a scoop at any expense; avoid sensationalism; forget about the ivory tower life style in regard to dealing with the public."

"Be open-minded and fair."

"Keep your objectivity---never let your personal emotions or opinions dictate the angle of the story, rely upon ethics."

Relationships Between Respondent Characteristics and Respondents' Rankings

Responses to questions concerning the newspaper circulation rate, educational background and experience of the respondents were compared to each other and to responses concerning journalism courses, "minor" areas, extra-curricular activities and applicant characteristics to see if any interesting interactions occurred. They are summarized as follows.

Newspaper Circulation Rate and Respondents' Experience

All the managing editor respondents' who indicated that their daily newspaper circulation rate was in excess of 100,000 had at least 11 years of experience, and most indicated having more than 16 years' experience. At least one-half of those who indicated a weekly circulation rate or a daily under 100,000, indicated having 16 or more years' experience as well, although weekly managing editors indicated the greatest percentage of those having one to five years' experience. Table X cross references managing editors' newspaper circulation rate by their years of experience.

TABLE X
NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION RATE AND RESPONDENTS'
EXPERIENCE

<u>Circulation</u> N		<u>Experience</u>			
		1-5 N (%)	6-10 N (%)	11-15 N (%)	16+ N (%)
Daily					
>100,000	10	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	8 (3)
Daily					
<100,000	59	5 (2)	15 (6)	12 (5)	27 (11)
Weekly	178	23 (10)	30 (13)	41 (16)	84 (33)
Totals	247	28 (12)	45 (18)	55 (22)	119 (47)

Newspaper Circulation Rate and
Respondents' Education

All respondents from daily newspapers with a circulation rate in excess of 100,000 had either a bachelor's or post-graduate degree in journalism/mass communications, and over one-half of those from dailies with circulation under 100,000 indicated having a journalism/mass communications degree as well. Almost one-half of the respondents who worked at weekly newspapers indicated having a journalism/mass communications degree, while more than one-fourth of them indicated having no college degree. Table XI cross references managing editors' education by their newspapers' circulation rate.

TABLE XI
NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION RATE AND RESPONDENT'S EDUCATION

<u>Education</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Circulation</u>				
		Daily >100,000		Daily <100,000		Weekly
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N (%)

Journalism/Mass Comm						
Bachelor's	103	4	(2)	28	(11)	71 (28)
Post-Graduate	18	2	(1)	6	(2)	10 (4)
English						
Bachelor's	15	1	(0)	5	(2)	9 (4)
Post-Graduate	6	1	(0)	3	(1)	2 (1)
Business						
Bachelor's	7	0	(0)	1	(0)	6 (2)
Other Fields						
Bachelor's	27	0	(0)	5	(2)	22 (9)
Post-Graduate	11	0	(0)	2	(1)	9 (4)
No College Degree	61	2	(1)	9	(4)	50 (20)
Totals	248	10	(4)	59	(24)	179 (71)

Newspaper Circulation Rate
and Written Exam

Responses from large and small dailies and weeklies indicated all are less likely to require job applicants to take a written exam to determine writing ability. No circulation rate was indicated as being more likely to require a test. Table XII cross references circulation rate by written exam requirement.

TABLE XII
 WHETHER APPLICANTS ARE GIVEN A WRITTEN TEST BY NEWSPAPER
 CIRCULATION RATE

<u>Circulation Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Yes</u> N (%)	<u>No</u> N (%)
Daily >100,000	10	4 (2)	6 (2)
Daily <100,000	60	25 (10)	35 (14)
Weekly	179	52 (21)	127 (51)
Totals	249	77 (32)	165 (67)

Circulation Rate and
 Journalism Course Rankings

Respondents from all circulation rates think news writing is the most important journalism course and news editing the second most important for news-editorial journalism students to successfully complete. Respondents from the smaller daily newspapers and weeklies think basic photography is the third most important course, while respondents from larger dailies rank press law and ethics courses as being more important than basic photography. Table XIII cross references respondents' newspaper circulation rate by their journalism course rankings.

TABLE XIII
RANKING OF JOURNALISM COURSES BY CIRCULATION RATE

<u>Circulation Rate</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Average Ranking</u>

DAILY			
>100,000			
	News Writing	10	1.2
	News Editing	10	2.3
	Press Laws	9	3.4
	Media Ethics	7	3.6
	Feature Writing	7	3.9
	Media Research	2	4.0
	Media Management	4	4.8
	Basic Photography	1	5.0
DAILY			
<100,000			
	News Writing	61	1.1
	Media Research	4	2.3*
	News Editing	52	2.6
	Basic Photography	40	3.5
	Feature Writing	42	3.6
	Principles of Advertising	6	3.6*
	Media Ethics	40	3.7
	Press Laws	45	3.7
	Media Management	2	4.0
	Principles of Public Relations	4	4.5
	Editorial Writing	2	4.5
	Public Affairs Reporting	3	5.0
WEEKLY			
	News Writing	173	1.3
	News Editing	141	2.8
	Principles of Public Relations	26	3.0*
	Basic Photography	121	3.4
	Feature Writing	99	3.4
	Media Ethics	95	3.5
	Press Laws	96	3.6
	Media Research	20	3.6*
	Principles of Advertising	54	3.7
	Editorial Writing	42	4.0
	Public Affairs Reporting	1	4.0
	Media Management	12	4.1

TABLE XIII (Continued)

Publishing	1	5.0
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*While this course appears to have a high average ranking, it is deceptive since based on so few responses.

Respondents' Education and Rating
of Specific Questions

Most respondents rated an applicant's grade point average in journalism courses as being more important than his/her overall G.P.A., except those with a bachelor's degree in business and those with a post-graduate degree in English who, incidentally, rated the importance of an applicant's overall G.P.A. higher than all other respondents rated it.

Those with a journalism degree (either bachelor's or post graduate) and those with English and other post graduate degrees rated the importance and overall usefulness of a journalism degree "once in the real world," higher than the other applicants rated it. Table XIV cross references respondents' educational backgrounds with their ratings of specific questions concerning job applicants.

TABLE XIV
 RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION AND RATING OF
 SPECIFIC STATEMENTS

<u>Education</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Statement</u>	<u>Mean</u>
<hr/>			
JOURNALISM/MASS COMM			
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	103	Overall GPA	3.2
		Journalism GPA	3.7
		Degree	3.7
POST-GRADUATE DEGREE	18	Overall GPA	3.2
		Journalism GPA	4.0
		Degree	3.4
ENGLISH			
BACHELOR'S	15	Overall GPA	3.2
		Journalism GPA	3.7
		Degree	2.8
POST-GRADUATE	6	Overall GPA	4.2
		Journalism GPA	3.8
		Degree	3.3
BUSINESS			
BACHELOR'S	7	Overall GPA	3.3
		Journalism GPA	3.3
		Degree	2.4
OTHER			
BACHELOR'S	23	Overall GPA	3.1
		Journalism GPA	3.9
		Degree	2.7
POST GRADUATE	11	Overall GPA	3.4
		Journalism GPA	3.5
		Degree	3.4
NO COLLEGE DEGREE	61	Overall GPA	3.3
		Journalism GPA	3.8
		Degree	3.0

Summary

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that news writing and news editing were the two most important journalism courses for journalism students to have successfully completed. While respondents from smaller daily newspapers and weeklies considered basic photography the third most important course, respondents from larger dailies indicated that courses in press laws and ethics were next important.

Respondents further indicated that part-time newspaper jobs and newspaper internships are the most important extra-curricular activities for journalism students to have participated in. They indicated that an entry-level applicant's practical journalism experience was considered of much greater importance than his/her having a high college grade point average.

The majority of the respondents think it is necessary for journalism students to have a secondary area of study (a minor), and they suggested the areas of government, English and business as being most desirable.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

The Need for this Study

As with any changing field, the necessary educational preparation for it must be dynamic as well. The field of journalism is no exception. Thus, the need for journalism educators to consistently ask themselves if their instructional curricula has "changed with the times."

The student who receives "up-to-date" instruction will be better prepared for his/her career and may find it easier to obtain a desirable job. He/she will be a more hireable applicant, since employers will see that valuable time and money won't need to be wasted on his/her training.

Since obtaining a job upon graduation from college is of utmost importance to most students, the best training should be available to them. To make this possible, editors should be allowed input into exactly what the best education for the news-editorial journalism student is, since after all, hiring does lie mostly in their hands.

This study concentrated on the those areas of skill/knowledge preferred and recommended by the news-

editorial journalism employer. This study should benefit the news-editorial journalism student by illustrating some of the qualifications his/her potential employer would like to see in an applicant. The journalism educator may benefit from this study as well, since giving the employers "what they want" insofar as graduates are concerned, should be important to him/her.

More specifically, this study attempted to help educators and students in the specified seven-state region by showing them what skills/knowledge that managing editors of daily and weekly newspapers in this region want their newly graduated applicants to have.

This study also allowed these employers an opportunity to share their opinions and recommendations concerning current journalism education as reflected by their entry-level employees.

Summary of Study

The Participants

A questionnaire was mailed to a stratified random sample of 417 daily and weekly newspaper managing editors in the seven-state region of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Participants were randomly selected using a table of random numbers. The response rate was 59 percent for this study, which included 242 participants.

Of the respondents, 71 percent were from weekly newspapers, 25 percent from daily newspapers with a circulation rate under 100,000 and 4 percent from dailies with a circulation rate greater than 100,000.

Exactly one-half of the respondents had earned at least a bachelor's (7 percent a post-graduate) degree in journalism/mass communications, 9 percent had earned at least a bachelor's (3 percent a post-graduate) degree in English, 17 percent had earned at least a bachelor's (5 percent a post-graduate) degree in "other" fields and 24 percent had no college degree.

Of the respondents, 47 percent said they had 16 or more years of experience, 22 percent said they had between 11 and 15 years' experience, 19 percent indicated having six to 10 years' experience and 12 percent indicated having between one and five years' experience.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three core questions that asked participants to rank the importance of courses and activities in three areas: (1) journalism courses, (2) secondary educational emphasis ("minor") areas and (3) extra-curricular activities.

Respondents were also asked to rate the following when considering an applicant:

- 1.) The importance of an applicant's overall grade point average.

- 2.) The importance of an applicant's grade point average in journalism courses only.
- 3.) The importance and overall usefulness of a journalism degree once in the "real world."

Practitioners were asked the rate of their newspaper's circulation, as well as their educational level and years of experience. They were further questioned about whether or not their newspaper requires applicants to take a written exam to determine writing ability.

Objectives

The main objective of this study was to determine what knowledge/skills that newspaper editors consider important for an undergraduate news-editorial journalism major to have. Another objective of this study was to determine whether or not editors think it necessary for students to have an academic minor, and if so, in what area.

This study also sought to determine which extra-curricular activities editors deem important for students to have participated in.

Discussion of Findings

Support of Hypotheses

The first hypothesis for this study was that newswriting and news editing would be ranked as the two most important journalism courses for undergraduate journalism

students to have successfully completed. Responses from managing editors supported this hypothesis.

The second hypothesis was that most editors would agree that it is necessary for journalism undergraduates to have an academic "minor." This hypothesis was supported as well, since 72 percent of the respondents indicated that a minor was indeed necessary.

The third hypothesis was that government and business would be ranked as the two most important areas for a journalism undergraduate's minor. The government hypothesis was supported, but English was selected as the second most important "minor," and business was ranked as the third most important area by the respondents.

This study's fourth hypothesis was that newspaper editors would rate practical experience as being the most desirable extra-curricular activity for journalism undergraduates to have participated in. It was overwhelmingly supported.

Preferred Journalism Courses

Newspaper managing editors in this study ranked newswriting as the top journalism course for news-editorial journalism students to have successfully completed. This result was highly expected and supports the findings of other similar studies. While editors would probably admit that some other journalism skills may come with on-the-job

training, they would most likely insist that good writing is a pre-requisite for obtaining a job.

News editing was understandably the second most preferred course, and basic photography the third. The large number of responding managing editors from weeklies and smaller dailies might account for the high ranking that basic photography received. Because of the smaller staffs, news reporters at these papers might likely be responsible for obtaining accompanying photos for their stories, more so, maybe, than the reporters for larger dailies.

Preferred Areas for Academic Minors

Of the respondents (72 percent of the total) who indicated they thought a "minor" necessary for journalism undergraduates, U.S. government was the first choice for the "minor" area, English the second and business management the third.

Since a knowledge of government affairs is essential to the reporter, this was a predictable choice for editors. The English choice was greatly expected as well, since proper communication skills are dependent on knowledge of the English language. These choices are consistent with other similar studies concerning journalism undergraduate education. Lack of knowledge concerning U.S. government and English language skills are frequent criticisms landed against newly graduated journalism majors by their editor employers.

Preferred Extra-Curricular Activities

A newspaper internship was chosen as the number one extra-curricular activity that newspaper managing editors think journalism undergraduates should participate in. A part-time newspaper job was a close second and work as a school reporter was third.

These choices support similar studies that have found practical experience is by far the most recommended activity for journalism undergraduates.

Editors overwhelmingly agree they would rather hire an applicant who has more than just a "text book" knowledge of the workings of a newsroom.

Although it wasn't ranked as high as the previous three activities, many respondents felt the activity of volunteer community service was important for a student to participate in.

It was surprising how few felt that attaining grants, scholarships and awards was important. A possible explanation for this may be that since respondents were allowed only three rankings, the three activities that provided practical experience accounted for the three choices of most of the respondents.

A student's grade point average in journalism courses was rated higher than his having a high overall grade point average, but neither was rated as high as was expected. A high overall grade point average received a rating just

above neutral, which was a similar rating that the importance of a journalism degree received.

A total of 68 percent of the respondents said their newspaper did not require applicants to take a written exam to determine writing ability.

Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to determine which courses/extra-curricular activities that newspaper employers deem as most important for journalism undergraduates.

Hypotheses were that news writing and news editing would be considered most important, and practical experience would be considered the most important activity for undergraduates. It was further hypothesized that government and business would be considered the most important areas for a journalism undergraduate's academic minor.

The results of this study were similar to those of other studies, and hypotheses, for the most part, were supported. Newspaper editors in this study indicated that fundamental news writing skills are the most important for an applicant to possess. A 1980 Brigham Young study found editors thought journalism students needed more training in writing clearly and concisely, as well as in basic reporting and interviewing (Mills 16).

News editing was ranked as the second most important course that newspaper editors felt journalism students should have successfully completed. This supports the

Brigham Young study as well, that found editors thought students needed more training in copy editing and layout (Mills 16).

A journalism internship, part-time work at a newspaper and work as a school reporter were all ranked very high by the respondents. This supports other studies that have found editors would rather hire those who have had practical experience in a newsroom.

One editor who participated in the Brigham Young survey felt so strongly about internship participation, that he replied the only way he would hire a new graduate was if he/she had so participated (Mills 16). Since similar responses came from other studies as well, it seems that editors would most likely consider a news-editorial journalism program inadequate or incomplete if it didn't include mandatory internship participation.

The majority of those who participated in this study felt it necessary for journalism undergraduates to have a minor. It was no surprise that U.S. government was ranked as the number one choice for a minor. The second highest ranking of English and the third of business management came as no surprise either. Participants in Shelly's 1985 study responded similarly, that journalism undergraduates should have knowledge of grammar, economics and government (52).

This is supportive of other responses from similar studies which have suggested that journalism students should have a "broad array" of supporting courses included in their

curriculum, which will make them more prepared for making decisions once in the "real world" Curriculum A-4).

An applicant's grade point average in journalism courses was rated as being more important than his/her overall grade point average, but neither was rated as high as was expected. Employers are evidently looking for applicants who can write well, who have had some experience in a newsroom and who have knowledge concerning government and business. These attributes are apparently more important to editor employers than how the applicants performed while in school.

Recommendations to Students and Educators

Students

Educational advice for students based on the views of managing editors in the region specified can be summarized by the following:

1. Learn to write well---clearly, concisely and most importantly, grammatically correct.
2. Pay close attention to accuracy; learn to get the facts straight!
3. Gain as much practical experience as possible, through an internship program, work as a school reporter and a summer or part-time journalism job. The more experience one can gain while in school, the better chance he/she has of being hired upon graduation.
4. Declare an academic minor---or two---in government, business, English or other related areas; it will be considered an asset to most employers.

Educators

Advice to educators based on responses from editors in the specified region can be summarized as follows:

1. Please be advised that strong writing skills are obviously considered essential by students' future employers, but unfortunately aren't as evident as editors would like.
2. Make it mandatory that students participate in an internship program, and encourage---or even require---campus newspaper participation as well, since employers consider practical experience a necessity.
3. Stress the importance of elective courses, and find ways to implement business, government and science-related writing into journalism courses, since editors want employees who can write about a variety of subjects, especially the more "technical" ones.

Recommendations for Future Study

While this study sought to determine which journalism and elective courses and extra-curricular activities are important to students' prospective employers, no attempt was made to determine how closely the educators' opinions matched them. This might make a more comprehensive study since the available instruction could then be compared to what is wanted and expected by employers.

Participants in this study were only asked to rank courses, areas and activities. If they had been asked to rate them as well, a better understanding of importance might have been achieved, since only limited rankings were

available and may have caused exclusion of otherwise importance courses, areas and activities.

While this study and others similar to it have focused mainly on undergraduate journalism education, it would be interesting to see what is available in graduate journalism education, as well, and what opinions working professionals have concerning it.

The Oregon study and the 1988 task force both made valuable contributions to journalism education, but since the field remains ever-changing, comprehensive educational studies that are on-going and rely on input from working professionals will continue to remain necessary, as well.

Conclusions to this Study

The undergraduate news-editorial student beginning to enter the work force who has not had practical experience in the newsroom and doesn't have proper English usage skills, will be seriously handicapped. Conversely, the student who does have these characteristics and has a working knowledge of business and government can feel confident that he is a desirable applicant.

Students and educators must realize that instruction that provides theoretical knowledge of journalism practices is only beneficial when it is backed by practical newsroom experience. All the theory in the world cannot compensate for the lack of practical experience.

Although, editors do seem to want students who have had plenty of theory concerning English, government, business and even science.

In short, editors want "well-rounded" applicants who have had plenty of "hands-on" experience in the newsroom and plenty of knowledge concerning the many different subjects they will be exposed to in the real world of news-editorial journalism.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

JOURNALISM COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

NEWS EDITING - Basic copy editing, including use of language, improving and trimming copy, headline writing, news judgment and page design.

NEWS WRITING - Fundamentals of news gathering, reporting and writing basic news stories under deadline pressure.

PRESS LAWS - Libel and slander; privacy, copyright, obscenity; legal problems, reporting courts, legislatures.

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHY - Basic camera and darkroom techniques to provide a better understanding of photography as a creative and journalistic skill.

PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS - The development, definitions, practice and tools of public relations.

MEDIA ETHICS - A study of the various ethics, duties and responsibilities of the press.

PRINCIPLES OF ADVERTISING - Advertising history, purposes, techniques, media and research.

FEATURE WRITING - Theory and practice of researching and writing the feature story.

EDITORIAL WRITING - Writing print editorials; analysis of editorial page, persuasive campaigns and column writing.

MEDIA RESEARCH - Applied media research and research criticism; fundamentals of audience analysis, survey design, experimental and field research, content analysis.

MEDIA MANAGEMENT - Exploring management issues unique to media organizations and the impact of those issues on organization's structure, economics, market and employees.

APPENDIX B
PILOT STUDY COVER LETTER

Dear Journalism Educator:

I am interested in your opinion concerning the following cover letter and questionnaire. Would you please participate in a pilot study to determine their effectiveness? Your frank analysis and critique will be greatly appreciated.

Please return this questionnaire, complete with your comments and suggestions, to my box in JB Room #206 by Feb. 25. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Terri Catlett
Mass Comm Graduate Student
Adviser - Dr. Fleming

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

Journalism Areas of Skills/Knowledge Deemed Important
by Newspaper Editors

SURVEY

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions concerning undergraduate journalism education according to the instructions given below. A summary of the subject matter for each of the listed courses is included. Please return the completed survey to the address below by April 1.

If you have any questions/comments, please contact me at:

Terri Catlett
1502 Shalamar Drive
Stillwater, OK 74074
(405) 372-6313

1. RANK the TOP FIVE journalism courses listed below that you feel are important for an undergraduate news-editorial journalism student to have successfully completed.

For example: If you feel the course MEDIA ETHICS is the most important course listed, place a "1" beside that course offering. If you feel NEWS EDITING is the second most important course listed, place a "2" beside that course offering. Please rank only FIVE courses. See the attached course descriptions.

- _____ NEWS EDITING
- _____ NEWS WRITING
- _____ PRESS LAWS
- _____ BASIC PHOTOGRAPHY
- _____ PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
- _____ MEDIA ETHICS
- _____ PRINCIPLES OF ADVERTISING
- _____ FEATURE WRITING
- _____ EDITORIAL WRITING
- _____ MEDIA MANAGEMENT
- _____ MEDIA RESEARCH
- _____ OTHER: _____
(please specify)

2. Do you think it is necessary for journalism students to have an area of specialization other than journalism (a minor)?

_____ yes

_____ no

3. If you answered "yes" above, RANK the TOP THREE educational areas below that you feel an undergraduate news-editorial journalism student should "minor" in.

For example: If you feel the educational area of HISTORY is the most important minor for news-editorial journalism students, place a "1" beside that choice. If you feel BUSINESS MANAGEMENT is the second most important minor, place a "2" beside that choice. Please rank only THREE choices.

- _____ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
- _____ MARKETING
- _____ ECONOMICS
- _____ U.S. GOVERNMENT
- _____ WORLD HISTORY
- _____ U.S. HISTORY
- _____ ENGLISH (LITERATURE)
- _____ ARTS AND HUMANITIES
- _____ NATURAL SCIENCES
- _____ PHYSICAL SCIENCES
- _____ AGRICULTURE
- _____ OTHER: _____
(please specify)

4. RANK the TOP THREE extra-curricular activities listed below that you think are important for an undergraduate journalism student to have participated in.

For Example: If you feel the activity NEWSPAPER INTERNSHIP is the most important activity listed, place a "1" beside that activity. If you feel the activity SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS MEMBER is the second most important activity listed, place a "2" beside that activity. Please rank only THREE activities.

_____	NEWSPAPER INTERNSHIP (for course credit)
_____	PART-TIME NEWSPAPER JOB
_____	SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS MEMBER
_____	REPORTER FOR SCHOOL NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE
_____	SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS
_____	VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY SERVICE
_____	OTHER: _____
	(please specify)

Please rate the importance of each of the following questions by placing an "X" along the continuum on the blank that most closely represents your opinion.

For example: If you feel the importance of an applicant's overall grade point average is very important, place an "X" in the blank to the far right.

5. The importance of an applicant's overall grade point average.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Very				Very
Unimportant				Important

6. The importance of an applicant's grade point average in journalism courses.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Very				Very
Unimportant				Important

7. The importance and overall usefulness of a college journalism degree once in the "real world."

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Very				Very
Unimportant				Important

8. Please check how often your newspaper is published.
- _____ Daily --- at least three publications per week
- _____ Weekly --- less than three publications per week
- _____ Other --- please specify _____
9. Please indicate your educational background.
- _____ Post-graduate degree in journalism/mass communication
- _____ Post-graduate degree in other field: _____
(specify)
- _____ Bachelor's degree in journalism
- _____ Bachelor's degree in other field: _____
(specify)
- _____ No college degree
10. Years of newspaper experience.
- _____ 1-5
- _____ 6-10
- _____ 11-15
- _____ 16 or more
11. How many editors does your newspaper employ? _____
12. Of these, how many are women? _____ ethnic minorities? _____
13. How many reporters does your newspaper employ? _____
14. Of these, how many are women? _____ ethnic minorities? _____
15. Does your newspaper require job applicants to take a written exam to determine writing ability?
- _____ yes _____ no

16. Finally, what one piece of advice would you give to a journalism student planning to enter the newspaper field?

17. Please add any additional comments below:

-page 5-
End of the survey

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Please return this questionnaire as soon as possible.

APPENDIX D
INITIAL AND FOLLOW-UP COVER LETTERS

March 18, 1991

Dear Editor:

There is much debate about how best to prepare undergraduate journalism majors for a profession in print media, and I am interested in your opinion.

As a graduate student at Oklahoma State University, I am conducting a regional study of daily and weekly newspaper editors to determine what skills you, as newspaper employers, expect undergraduate news-editorial journalism students to have upon graduation from college.

Since your response is important to my study, I hope you will take a few minutes to complete this survey and then return it in the enclosed stamped envelope by April 1.

The number on the questionnaire is solely to help me keep track of responses and follow-up mailings. All answers will be kept confidential.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this study that will be of value to both journalism students and educators.

Sincerely,

Terri Catlett

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like more information please contact me at (405) 372-6313. Or if you would prefer to write, my address is:

Terri Catlett
1502 Shalamar
Stillwater, OK 74074

The purpose of this study can be confirmed by contacting:

Dr. Charles Fleming, professor
School of Journalism and Broadcasting
Paul Miller Building
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-8270

April 8, 1991

Dear Editor:

A few weeks ago I mailed you a letter and survey concerning a study I am conducting. The purpose of my study is to determine how you, a newspaper employer, feel about undergraduate journalism education.

Since I have not received your completed survey, I am concerned that it may not have reached you. I have enclosed another survey and hope that you can take a few minutes to complete it and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.

As I mentioned in my first letter, I am very interested in your opinion, and the success of my study depends on you. I realize how busy you must be, and I greatly appreciate your help.

If you have already completed and returned the survey, please let me take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Terri Catlett

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like more information, please contact me. My number is (405) 372-6313. Or if you would prefer to write, my address is:

Terri Catlett
1502 Shalamar Drive
Stillwater OK 74074

The purpose of this study can be confirmed by contacting:

Dr. Charles Fleming - professor
School of Journalism and Broadcasting
Paul Miller Building
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater OK 74078
(405) 744-8270

Dear Editor:

May 21, 1991

PLEASE HELP!!! My advisor is threatening torture if I don't get sufficient responses from my survey concerning undergraduate journalism education.

Since I am really fond of my fingers and toes, I hope you can locate one of the questionnaires I have mailed you over the past several weeks, take a few minutes to fill it out and then return it in the provided stamped-addressed envelope.

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, let me take this opportunity to thank you again for your time.

Terri Catlett
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University

1502 Shalamar Drive
Stillwater, OK 74074
(405) 372-6313

VITA

Terri L. Catlett

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: A SURVEY OF EMPLOYER RATINGS OF COURSES OFFERED AT MAJOR UNIVERSITIES IN ARKANSAS, COLORADO, KANSAS, MISSOURI, NEW MEXICO, OKLAHOMA AND TEXAS IN THE JOURNALISM DEGREE SEQUENCE AND OF CERTAIN NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, October 30, 1962, the daughter of Herbert and Wanda Carpenter.

Education: Graduated from Putnam City High School, Oklahoma City, in January 1980; received Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Central State University at Edmond in December 1985; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in July 1991.

Professional Experience: Staff Writer, ADA EVENING NEWS, Ada, Oklahoma, June 1986 to Sept. 1988; Assistant Editor/Staff Writer, THE VISTA, Central State University, June 1983 to December 1984; Member of Kappa Tau Alpha, Honorary Journalism Society.