

PUBLICATION OF WILDLIFE NEWS RELEASES
IN RELATION TO RELEASE CATEGORY
AND NEWSPAPER TYPE

By

MARK ALAN CHESNUT

Bachelor of Science in Arts and Sciences

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

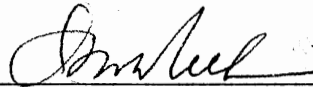
1984

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

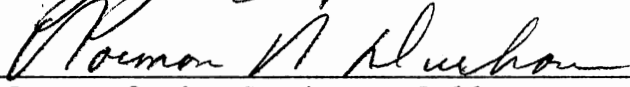
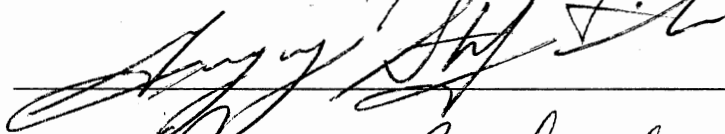
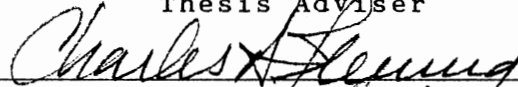
Theo1s
1991
C5254
cop. 2

PUBLICATION OF WILDLIFE NEWS RELEASES
IN RELATION TO RELEASE CATEGORY
AND NEWSPAPER TYPE

Thesis Approved:



Thesis Adviser



Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Marlan Nelson for his advice and assistance throughout my graduate program and, in particular, this project. Many thanks also to the other members of my thesis committee -- Dr. Charles Fleming and Dr. Greg Stefaniak. Also thanks goes to the late Walter Ward, who introduced me to many insights into communications that I otherwise would have missed.

Thanks also to Scott Carter and Bruce Stromp for assistance with the content analysis portion of this study, and to Tammy Litzer for her assistance with the content analysis and her expert input during rough draft stages. Extra special thanks to Bill Stiver for invaluable help with statistical analysis procedures.

My parents, Lewis and JoAnn Chesnut, encouraged me all the way, and for that I am so very thankful. Undying love and thanks goes to my wife Donna, for without her help this project never would have been completed. Her constant encouragement and confidence in me gave me the strength I needed when deadlines reared their ugly heads. Also special thanks to my son Joshua, who was born during the early stages of this project. What better encouragement than a son for whom you truly want all of the best things in life!

Also, I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for all of the blessings he has bestowed upon me and my family. Without his handiwork, nothing of value can be accomplished.

I extend sincere thanks to all of these individuals. I'll never forget their assistance and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|--|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Background | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem | 4 |
| Purpose of the Study | 6 |
| Importance of the Study. | 7 |
| Limitations of the Study | 9 |
| Definition of Terms. | 10 |
| Thesis Plan. | 11 |
| II. LITERATURE REVIEW | 13 |
| Introduction | 13 |
| What is News?. | 14 |
| News Releases Studies. | 19 |
| Summary. | 34 |
| III. METHODOLOGY | 42 |
| Introduction | 42 |
| Operational Definitions. | 42 |
| Operational Definitions of Categories. | 44 |
| Usage Comparison Procedures. | 45 |
| Content Analysis Procedures. | 47 |
| Presentation of Data | 48 |
| Limitations and Weaknesses | 50 |
| Summary. | 51 |
| IV. FINDINGS. | 53 |
| Introduction | 53 |
| Releases by Category | 54 |
| News Releases Usage. | 55 |
| Usage in Daily Newspapers | 56 |
| Usage in Weekly Newspapers. | 59 |
| Usage from Clipsheet. | 61 |
| Content Analysis | 62 |
| Discussion | 65 |
| Summary. | 68 |

| Chapter | Page |
|--|------|
| V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. | 69 |
| Recommendations for Wildlife | |
| Department Personnel | 72 |
| Recommendation for Further Research. | 74 |
| Conclusion | 75 |
| SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY. | 77 |
| APPENDIXES | 80 |
| APPENDIX A - WILDLIFE NEWS SERVICE EXAMPLE. | 81 |
| APPENDIX B - USAGE OF NEWS RELEASE STORIES. | 84 |
| APPENDIX C - CONTENT ANALYSIS INSTRUCTIONS AND SCORE SHEET. | 89 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|---|------|
| I. Breakdown of News Releases | 54 |
| II. Breakdown of News Releases After Recategorization | 55 |
| III. Usage in Daily Newspapers by Category. | 57 |
| IV. Usage in Daily Newspapers After Recategorization | 58 |
| V. Usage in Weekly Newspapers by Category | 59 |
| VI. Usage in Weekly Newspapers After Recategorization | 60 |
| VII. Usage Directly from Clipsheet. | 61 |
| VIII. Individual Content Analysis by Category. | 63 |
| IX. Individual Content Analysis After Recategorization | 64 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Nearly everyone has heard the term "public relations," and there's little doubt as to why. Public relations comes to us from all aspects of society -- government, sports organizations, schools, corporations, political candidates, you name it. Known as PR to practitioners and much of the public, public relations has been around as long as people have been dealing with the public. Unlike many aspects of communication that have come into being since the computerized information age, PR has been around as long as people have been trying to shape other peoples' viewpoints.

Edward L. Bernays, known as the father of modern American public relations, theorized that PR has been around since people began dealing with other people. He states:

The three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people.¹

Bernays defines public relations as the "attempt, by information, persuasion and adjustment to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution."²

Scott Cutlip in Effective Public Relations defined

public relations as "the management that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends."³ Howard Stephenson in the Handbook of Public Relations defined public relations as "the art of convincing people that they should adopt a certain attitude or pursue a certain course of action; usually associated with management."⁴

The Committee on Modern Journalism had yet another definition for PR. It defined public relations as,

the communication of an individual's or an institution's policy, internal or external, with a view of establishing a meaningful rapport with its various publics. PR, then, is a state of being as well as a technique of communication.⁵

In further study of public relations, the Committee on Modern Journalism stated that the "object of public relations is the creation of a favorable public attitude toward the organization, group, or even individuals by means of contacts -- communications -- with those persons making up the public."⁶

Many sources point toward newspapers as the best mode of making these communication contacts. On this subject, Cutlip stated:

Newspapers are the one means of reaching a general community audience in these days of specialized media and fragmented audiences. Although no longer the dominant medium, newspapers are still a dominant force in shaping the public agenda and influencing the outcome of debate.⁷

Many authors, including Stephenson, noted that the news

release was the primary tool for getting public relations materials into newspapers.

The accepted way of getting publicity material to newspapers is through news releases. The reasoning that applies to interoffice memos headed "Don't Say It -- Write It!" goes double for data released for publication. Written releases, either typed or mimeographed, provide the most convenient method of transmitting clearly and accurately the same information to many publications which is implicit in the concept of Mass Communications.⁸

The fact is, news releases are nothing new. Ivy Lee, one of the more noteworthy modern-style public relations men way back in 1906, used news releases extensively during a campaign in which he helped the Pennsylvania Railroad move away from the policy of telling the press absolutely nothing about events. Through Lee's work, the railroad developed a policy for full and truthful reports of accidents through press releases issued to newspapers. Later Lee worked as a public relations practitioner for the Rockefeller family and continued to use the news release with great success.⁹

Another notable American practitioner using news releases early this century was Pendleton Dudley. In the early 1900s, Dudley established his public relations firm on the basis that large corporations and industries needed guidance and new policies in dealing with the press. Some of Dudley's early clients in which news releases played an important role included Theodore Vail, president of American Telephone and Telegraph, and the American Meat Packers Association of Chicago. Under his guidance, that association was reorganized to increase public awareness and

understanding of the meat packing industry.¹⁰

Lots of things have changed the past several years in newspapers and in public relations, thanks to high-technology advancements. High-speed wire, FAX machines and desktop publishing, just to name a few, have made for a newspaper newsroom that would be nearly unrecognizable to newspaper editors of 30 or 40 years ago. But one thing they would recognize, whether it remains effective or not, is the tried-and-true news release, which has changed very little over the years, still landing on the editor's desk for consideration just as it did decades ago.

Statement of the Problem

Companies, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and a number of other different groups and individuals throughout the country send thousands of news releases to newspapers every day. However, according to a number of research studies, very few of these releases ever reach the public through use in a targeted newspaper.

Stephen Zielke in 1969 concluded that the 12 Wisconsin newspapers in his study used public relations information for only about 10 percent of their news content.¹¹ Chuck Honaker found that in many cases newspaper editors dumped more than 90 percent of the releases they received in the trash after no more than a quick glance.¹² In 1978, Carol Honey concluded that most news releases are not published as news stories.¹³

However, this apparent lack of utilization of news releases by newspapers doesn't seem to stop the flow of news releases to publications. In fact, Honaker found in a follow-up study to his first project that newspapers were receiving more news releases than ever.¹⁴

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation -- the government agency in charge of wildlife conservation and management in the state -- mails a news release packet, the "Wildlife News Service," containing from 4 to 12 wildlife-related news releases to 225 newspapers in the state each week. The releases are typeset and in camera-ready form for easier use by newspapers that wish to simply clip the stories and paste them on a paste-up page.

The "Wildlife News Service" has been mailed each week for nearly 40 years. Every Friday after the release is mailed, it is promptly forgotten and another week's release started. Consequently, aside from seeing an occasional Wildlife Department story in a local newspaper, Department personnel have little idea how many, if any, newspapers actually publish the releases.

Each time steps are taken to improve the release packet, lack of information about usage of the material squelches any progress. Administrative personnel say writers should produce more releases about the great things the Department is doing for the public or other politically-popular topics, while the head of the Fisheries Division believes more people want to read about fishing. Similarly,

the chief of the Department's Game Division is certain more state sportsmen are interested in hunting than in fishing, while personnel in the Nongame Program believe birdwatchers and people who feed birds during the winter far outnumber hunters and fishermen alike.

Regardless of all these factors, the "Wildlife News Service" goes out each week like clockwork, with nobody really knowing how much of the information ever reaches the public. Research in the area would yield welcome information that perhaps could result in more efficient use of time and money in getting wildlife information to the public via publication in state newspapers.

Purpose of the Study

One purpose of this study is to find how many and what kinds of newspapers publish releases from the "Wildlife News Service." Also, information is needed on whether certain categories of wildlife releases are more likely to be published than other types. The categories of releases to be used in the study will be defined later.

Results should also show whether releases that are printed are being utilized directly from the camera-ready clipsheet or whether they are typeset again by the individual newspapers. This should yield important information about efficiency of sending out releases in a typeset, camera-ready form.

Another purpose of the study is to find out if the

releases being sent to state newspaper editors contain certain news elements important for getting information to the public. A content analysis of the releases in the packet will be conducted to see what elements releases contain and what elements they lack.

Of course, the overall purpose is to provide Wildlife Department information personnel with facts and figures concerning the "Wildlife News Service" and how it can be better used to communicate wildlife news to Oklahomans through state newspapers.

Importance of the Study

The study has value to a number of people. The most valuable service will be to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. It should tell Department personnel if the releases they are sending to the media are being used, along with how many and what types of newspapers are using them. It should also tell them if the releases contain the elements editors feel are most important. Also, it should give them ideas about how to improve the release packet to better dispense wildlife information to state residents.

State wildlife agencies in other states should also benefit from this research. Wildlife agencies in more than half of the other states in the United States send out similar weekly news release packets. Information gleaned from a study of Oklahoma wildlife releases will probably be

of value to other states interested in getting more of their information published in newspapers.

The study also has value to state newspaper editors. Perhaps, through changes made from the findings of this study, future news releases will be more useful to state editors. If the Wildlife Department can give news to newspapers in a way editors prefer while still getting out information the Department wants to disseminate, both parties would benefit.

The public also stands to benefit from this study. Wildlife Department officials believe they have lots of information on hand that state citizens -- both sportsmen and non-sportsmen, alike -- would find interesting. If results of this study lead to publication of more wildlife information, the public will realize a direct benefit.

The study also could benefit educators. Many colleges, including Oklahoma State University, have wildlife ecology majors who have an emphasis in communications. Information derived from the results of this research would make good classroom material for educators to present to students, who would also benefit from such information.

The study also could benefit others conducting future research in the news release field. Results should be beneficial for researchers looking at wildlife news releases, as well as researchers delving into news release materials of any kind.

Limitations of the Study

Of course, as with most studies, this one has limitations. Collection of wildlife news releases used by state newspapers is anything but an exact science, with virtually no way to ensure that every clipping of a study release is gathered.

However, for this study, clippings of releases published by state newspapers was conducted by the Oklahoma Press Association Clipping Service. Since the bureau is a profit-motivated organization that charges a per-story fee for clipping, we can assume that bureau representatives found and clipped most of the releases that were published. We also can assume that any published articles that were missed by the clipping bureau were skipped accidentally and not on the basis of any of the study variables, which should cause little, if any, problems with the validity of the study.

The sample size of 11 "Wildlife News Service" packets, which will include approximately 70 to 100 news stories, may be considered too small by some. However, time and monetary constraints limit how many week's worth of release packets can be clipped for this study.

Another limitation concerns timing. Since the release packets used in the study represent the months of October, November and the first three weeks of December, which encompass the bulk of Oklahoma's hunting seasons, stories in the packets will be heavy on hunting and hunting

information. Similarly, since these months comprise some of Oklahoma's cold, winter weather, fewer fish and fishing related stories will be included in releases mailed during these months.

Definition of Terms

News Release -- News story written by public relations practitioners and distributed to newspapers with the intent of being published. Releases are designed to create awareness of or to publicize some person, place or thing.

Wildlife news release -- For the purpose of this study, any news release related to Wildlife or to the Wildlife Department and included in the weekly mailing of the "Wildlife News Service."

"Wildlife News Service" -- A packet of camera-ready wildlife news releases mailed weekly by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to 225 state newspapers. The packet usually contains from 4 to 12 stories.

News Elements or Values -- The aspects contained by releases, including things like timeliness, proximity, prominence, and reward, that frequently contribute to an editor's decision on whether a release should be published. Individual elements for this study will be defined later.

News Release Category -- The type or kind of information to be communicated by a release. Categories will include coming events, past events, timely topics, features, consumer information and institutional releases. Further

categories to be used in comparing utilization of releases include Fish/Fishing, Game/Hunting, Safety, Nongame, Information/Education and Administration.

Thesis Plan

The second chapter, Review of the Literature, looks at news elements and the question "What is News?" It takes an in-depth look at news releases and the myriad of studies that have concentrated on releases and utilization of releases.

Chapter three, Methodology, presents a step-by-step synopsis of how the research will be conducted. Clip collection procedures, sampling procedures and methods for the content analysis will be fully explained. The tabulation procedure for news release usage figures and the content analysis also is explained.

The fourth chapter, Analysis of Data, explains the results and findings of the study. This section also includes interpretation of the findings.

Chapter five, Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations, sums up the results and makes appropriate recommendations. This section includes recommendations for future research that could be conducted to build on this study.

END NOTES

¹Edward L. Bernays, Public Relations, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952, p. 2.

²Edward L. Bernays, "The Theory and Practice of Public Relations: A Resume," The Engineering of Consent, ed., Edward L. Bernays, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955, pp. 3-4.

³Scott M. Cutlip, Effective Public Relations, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1988, p. 1.

⁴Howard Stephenson, Handbook of Public Relations, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960, p. 9.

⁵The Committee on Modern Journalism, Modern Journalism, ed., Sigfried Mandel, New York, NY 1962, p. 169.

⁶Ibid, p. 169-170.

⁷Cutlip, p. 363.

⁸Stephenson, p. 195.

⁹Richard W. Darrow and Dan J. Forrestal, The Dartnell Public Relations Handbook, Chicago, Illinois: Dartnell Press, 1979, p. 5.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Stephen P. Zielke, "Public Relations and Wisconsin Weekly Newspapers: A Study of the Utilization by Twelve Weekly Newspapers of News Materials Received from Public Relations Sources," Journalism Abstracts, VII (1970), p. 147.

¹²Chuck Honaker, "Why Your Releases Aren't Working," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 34, Leo J. Norhart, ed., (March 1978), p. 18.

¹³Carol A. Honey, "The Utilization of Press Releases by Two Metropolitan Newspapers," Journalism Abstracts, XVII (1979) p. 74.

¹⁴Charles Honaker, "News Releases Revisited," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 37, Leo J. Norhart, Ed., (April 1981), p. 25.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To explore news release usage studies, one must first take a look at studies dealing with news values and elements. The age-old question "What is News?" has been answered quite differently by a number of people and is one that must again be asked here. Luckily, a vast number of studies have looked into this question. Similarly, a number of studies also have delved into the question of whether newspapers use news releases, and why or why not.

The literature review will look at several studies that were designed to define news. Among these are studies that identified different news values and news elements. In a nutshell, most of these studies were aimed at discovering why gatekeepers -- newspaper editors in most cases -- chose to run the stories they did in their publications, and why they chose not to run the stories they rejected.

Further review will look into a number of studies dealing with news releases. Many deal with utilization of news releases by newspapers, and most attempt to isolate why certain releases were used and others were not. With studies

exploring a range of newspapers from small weeklies to the largest dailies, past researchers have provided plenty of material to start thinking about why newspaper editors choose the releases they do.

What Is News

In 1947, the Commission on Freedom of the Press helped answer the question "What is news?" by taking a look at criteria that various media must meet to help ensure freedom of the press for future generations. In looking at newspapers, the Commission identified a number of responsibilities, certainly not the least of which was getting news to the public. They described this news as "A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which give them meaning."¹

A number of studies have been conducted since then to identify what elements or aspects make up "news." But regardless of what we think news is, the stories that people read in their newspapers are placed there by an editor who is responsible for selecting the most "newsworthy" stories for the amount of space available. Studying the decision-making processes of these editors helps us key in on what news really is, and has been the focus of a number of researchers.

In 1949, David M. White conducted the first in a long line of news value studies when he took a look at all of the wire stories used and all those rejected by a non-

metropolitan newspaper over a seven-day period.² White also classified the wire stories by content and analyzed the reasons given by the telegraph editor, appropriately referred to as Mr. Gates, for his choices.

Interestingly enough, White found, among other things, that "many of the reasons which Mr. Gates gave for the rejection of the stories fall into the category of highly subjective value-judgments."³ Further analysis showed that human interest news was used the most, followed by national news and international news. However, overall findings showed that "insofar as this 'gate keeper' is representative of wire editors as a whole, it does not appear that there is any conscious choice of news by categories."⁴

A later, more direct effort to define news values was a 1963 study of 25 afternoon newspapers by Guido Stempel. Through factor analyzing content, Stempel suggested the possibility of working out a definition of news values. He found agreement on six factors of news, which he labeled: suspense-conflict, public affairs, human interest, specific incidents pinpointed in time, positive news and government-politics.⁵ This study, along with a number of other research projects by Stempel, led to his conclusion that "news is a more complex process than we have suspected."⁶

Another Stempel look into news values studied the news and editorial content of eight Michigan newspapers to try to get a handle on what types of stories papers were using.⁷ Stempel found that there was relative agreement among the

papers as to what categories were important, but considerable disagreement as to just how important certain categories were. Overall study results pointed out a tendency for small-town dailies to place a little more emphasis on hard news than the metropolitan papers did.⁸

Approaching the problem of "What is News?" Walter Ward in 1967 developed a three-dimensional news model that stands as a milestone in communications research to this day.⁹ Ward's goal was to determine what elements were present in news stories printed in newspapers.

To test his model, Ward constructed a pool of 54 news stories based on the definition of the three-dimensional news model with single and multiple news elements.¹⁰ He investigated the decisions of ten city editors as they assembled news packages in their newspaper situations and in hypothetical bad and ideal situations. The news stories reported events in the mythical city of Middleport, U. S. A.

Ward started with six original news facets with two elements each: Timeliness, Proximity, Prominence, Oddity, Conflict, and Significance. After a preliminary study, the six facets were reduced to four, and then to three. He found that Proximity and Timeliness tend to be constant in all of the local news stories during preliminary testing: later Oddity and Conflict were combined as elements within a dimension called Normality.¹¹

Ward's news dimensions were defined as Prominence, which included known principal(s) and unknown principal(s);

Normality, which included conflict, oddity, and normal; and Significance, which encompassed impact, magnitude and neither. When the model was examined, Ward found similarity among city editors' rank-ordering of the news stories as well as significant agreement among the editors on the importance of single and multiple news elements in the news stories.¹²

Ward later built on his original work while at Oklahoma State University. His conclusions were basically the same. He reported that "news evolved from a lower-level structure, which may comprise as few as five or six news elements. These elements carry different labels, but they are familiar to virtually all newsmen and journalism educators."¹³

Analysis showed that for all editors in the study, stories with Impact, Oddity, Conflict or Known Principal elements were played significantly higher than those without. Mean probable use of impact stories was greater than for stories with any other element. Oddity, Known Principals and Conflict tended to receive about equal play.¹⁴

Ward's study also indicated three separate editor types based on the way they ranked stories. Type I editors preferred a "Soft news-Oddity" package. They played Oddity items higher than did other types. Type II editors were characterized by a "Hard news, Big Name-Conflict" package. They played Conflict and Known Principals higher than did the other types. Type III -- the "Hard news-Impact" editors

-- tended more to use stories having high impact on the community.¹⁵

Ward's study of the three-dimensional news model has been built upon by a number of researchers over the years. In the late 1960s, L. Erwin Atwood selected one newspaper from Ward's original study for further investigation. The city editor was described by Ward as a hard news-impact editor who tended to play down oddity stories. In the study, both newsmen and subscribers were asked to Q-sort Ward's 54 stories as to preference along a quasi-normal 11-point distribution.¹⁶

Results showed four distinct editor types and four subscriber types. All four editor types preferred stories with impact and prominence, while all four subscriber types preferred stories with impact and conflict.¹⁷ Overall findings showed impact was the preferred news element, with conflict the second most preferred. Also, differences among preference types centered on the oddity element. And, among the newspaper subscribers, age, education, sex, place of residence and occupation did not appear to be consistently related to preference type.¹⁸

Further studies into news values based on the news elements identified by Ward were conducted by George Rhoades¹⁹ and Lorenzo Carter.²⁰

The fact that newspaper policy frequently has a bearing on news values also must not be overlooked. Sometimes policy determines, within limits, the types of news stories that a

given publication will print or even consider. For example, in years past The Christian Science Monitor made it a policy to shun most stories about crime, violence and disaster, while the New York Daily News was likely to splash heavy, emotion-laden stories of scandal and violence on page one.²¹

News Release Studies

In 1964, Wren Aber took a look at news release usage patterns at three Ohio Newspapers. Aber, with the help of news editors at the Cincinnati Enquirer, the Dayton Daily News and the Columbus Citizen-Journal, collected all of the news releases sent to the three newspapers in one week. Aber also recorded which releases were printed and which were rejected.

His results showed that for a news release to be used it must come from a "local source, it should be sponsored by a civic or service organization, it should have original editing marks, no release time, no reproduction and copy key sponsor identification."²²

Aber further reported that editors said they "published releases that were developed specifically for their papers and rejected those sent to a large number of publications."²³

Stephen Zielke during a 1969 study at the University of Wisconsin surveyed 12 Wisconsin weeklies to determine news release usage by those newspapers. Results showed that the newspapers used public relations information for about 10

percent of their content measured as news.²⁴

Zielke further concluded that newspapers most often used releases if they contained local interest. A lack of local interest was reportedly the main reason for rejecting the releases.

In 1978, Carol Honey tried to identify news release usage trends. Honey looked at two metropolitan newspapers -- the Nashville Tennessean and Cincinnati Enquirer. Spending a week at each newspaper, she collected all news releases that had been rejected. She also compared the number of releases received to the number rejected.

Honey concluded that most news releases are not published as news stories. She further reported that the Tennessean received 676 releases and printed 78.²⁵ Similarly, the Cincinnati Enquirer received 579 releases and published 162.²⁶

Checking into news release usage in 1977, Chuck Honaker discovered some interesting information that should be of great concern to public relations practitioners who rely on news releases to carry part or all of their information to the public. Surveying city and managing editors at several of the largest newspapers throughout the nation, Honaker found that many were looking and hoping for "somebody trying to halt the avalanche of paper engulfing city rooms across the nation."²⁷

Honaker found that many newspapers were using only a minuscule percentage of the news releases they received.

Some newspapers reported they dumped more than 90 percent in the waste basket after no more than a quick glance, if even that much consideration. In fact, Gordon Pates, then managing editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, responded to the survey by saying, "I couldn't begin to guess how many hundred press releases this newspaper gets each week, but you can be sure very few of them ever end up as stories."²⁸

Honaker's conclusions were certainly not encouraging for news release writers. He summarized his findings about mass mail-out news releases in the following manner:

Obviously, it is time (in fact we are way behind schedule) for public relations practitioners, journalism schools and the news media to get together and obliterate this wasteful and disgraceful practice. The news release still can be a useful tool, but only if we implement an education program that produces a drastic redress of the current destructive paper blitz and leads to a healthy form of discrimination by public relations folks. They must carefully consider to whom they send releases, what is truly newsworthy, when they mail (not the day of or day after the press conference), why they are sending anything, where, and how (fancy styles, gimmicky mailings, emblazoned headlines, obscene logos are not the things editors want).²⁹

Honaker followed up that study with similar research three years later and found that "It's as bad as ever, if not worse."³⁰ Most editors still reported that they used less than 5 percent (many even less than 2 percent) of releases they received. This time, Honaker attributed much of the lack of usage of news releases to editors' general attitudes toward handouts, regardless of their quality.

It is time to pause and remind readers that the public relations business needs to organize a reform movement to correct this situation. I hate to say it, but I've

sent some written releases to these newspapers. They were accurate, the proper length, had strong, imaginative leads ... and they were still ignored. I think an editor or reporter sees a release now and then that catches his or her attention, but most of the time, the releases get tossed -- the good go down with the bad. And, unless public relations professionals and their bosses recognize the ineffectiveness of handouts, everybody is going to suffer.³¹

One possible reason for this phenomenon of the "good going down with the bad" can be found in a 1975 Georgia State University doctoral dissertation by Craig Aronoff. He looked at opinions of both newspapermen and public relations practitioners on the role of PR. Results showed that opinions of the newspapermen were generally less than flattering.

While many newspapermen see public relations as an important part of the process of getting news to the public, they continue to associate the public relations profession with unacceptable practices. Moreover, newspapermen's attitudes toward public relations differ substantially and negatively from the attitudes held by public relations practitioners toward themselves.³²

Only 59 percent of newspapermen surveyed agreed with the statement, "Public relations and the press are partners in the dissemination of information," and only 44 percent agreed that "public relations and the press are partners in the dissemination of information." Only 48 percent of the newspapermen thought "public relations practitioners help reporters obtain accurate, complete and timely news," while only 40 percent felt that "public relations practitioners are necessary to the production of the daily newspaper as we know it."³³

However, practitioners generally had quite a different

attitude. Partnership in the dissemination of information netted 89 percent agreement, while 83 percent claimed that public relations does work for newspapers that would otherwise go undone. Public relations helps reporters obtain accurate, complete and timely news, according to 91 percent of public relations practitioners surveyed, and 74 percent felt that public relations is necessary to the production of the daily newspaper as we know it.³⁴

Aronoff concluded that this difference in attitude, specifically the more negative attitude toward public relations by newspapermen, is something that must be resolved before PR people can make great strides toward getting their information to newspaper readers.

It would be difficult to deny that the press is a desired public, or that public relations practitioners would prefer journalists to have positive attitudes toward them. If members of the public relations profession are concerned with the general receptivity of journalists to public relations practitioners and their products, this survey indicates that considerable work remains to be done in improving attitudes toward public relations held by the people serving as gatekeepers to the channels through which flows the information that shapes public opinion.³⁵

Bill L. Baxter, a journalism professor at the University of Oklahoma, looked at a number of news release usage studies.³⁶ Through his review, Baxter cited lack of localization as the major culprit why a majority of releases received at newspapers are not used. Other reasons for lack of usage in descending order of importance were, (1) Releases were not newsworthy; (2) Releases contained too much advertising puffery; (3) Releases were too long and

cumbersome; and (4) Releases arrived too late to be useful.³⁷

Baxter concluded with some recommendations for public relations practitioners that he felt would help increase news release usage.

Releases should be aimed more at specific media and localized for individual newspapers-television-radio-magazines as much as possible. Business publicists should insure that releases contain pure news and feature material about business, not advertising puff. Releases should be well researched, short, concise -- as nearly ready for publication (requiring the editor to do as little editing as possible) as the business news person can write them. This procedure will build respect for the business public relations office in the eyes of the media and will increase its effectiveness.³⁸

Gerald C. Stone and Janet Morrison took a look at content of community newspapers and came away with interesting information about use of public relations releases in these publications. The pair took a national sample of community newspapers with less than 8,000 circulation and performed a content analysis of two consecutive issues of each participating paper. Inches of copy designated as several separate categories were converted to averaged percentages of total inches for each newspaper.

Results showed that mean percentage of public relations copy in the weeklies was 5.2 percent, while in the dailies it averaged 3.0 percent.³⁹ Further analysis showed that the lower circulation newspapers involved in the study tended to have a higher ratio of public relations stories than in

higher circulation newspapers.⁴⁰

Interestingly, researchers in this study found that local news comprised the highest percentage of copy for both weeklies and dailies with circulations of less than 8,000. Local news made up 7.1 percent of the content of the weeklies in the study, and accounted for 5.4 percent of the total content of the study dailies.⁴¹

In 1985, Linda P. Morton studied 408 news release articles from Oklahoma State University's public information and agriculture information offices.⁴² They were released to 191 newspapers that responded to a mail survey conducted earlier by OSU's public information office.

For the study, Morton used only releases that could be categorized as one of the following types:

Institutional -- This type included all releases that related to the entire institution as well as those about specific parts of the institution. It included reports of activities, services, and accomplishments of such units.

Coming events -- This type included all articles that announced and/or promoted events sponsored by the institution. These articles were all written and released before the event.

Past events -- This type included all articles summarizing or based upon the past event. They covered the same types of activities as coming events but were released after the event.

Consumer information -- This type included all articles

that provided information to aid consumers. Much of this information told consumers how to do something.

Timely topics -- This type included all articles dealing with topics in the news.

Features -- This type included all articles about people associated with the institution of interest to and, therefore, released to newspapers besides the person's hometown newspaper.

Research stories -- This type included all articles summarizing or based upon research projects conducted at the institution or by the institution's personnel.⁴³

The Oklahoma Press Clipping Bureau provided clippings of all published articles, noting the name of the newspapers publishing them. At the end of a six-month period, usage of articles was analyzed according to release type and along the lines of four newspaper variables: Frequency of publication, circulation, distance from source institution and news staff size.

Results showed that Oklahoma newspaper gatekeepers are more receptive to and more likely to print some types of articles than others. Editors exhibited a strong preference for consumer information releases, publishing 24 percent of those releases. The next strongest preference was for coming events, of which 15 percent were published.

Timely topics and research stories appeared to be preferred almost equally, with 9 and 10 percent of these releases being published. Less than 5 percent of past events

and features were published. Institutional releases were the least preferred, with less than 1 percent being published.⁴⁴

Further analysis revealed that only one of the newspaper characteristics, frequency of publication, interacted with the different types of news releases to influence publication decisions ($F=2.33;p=.007$). An examination of the means indicated that the greatest percentage of publications was for twice-weekly newspapers for consumer information releases ($X=.82$). The next highest mean was for twice-weekly newspapers with timely topics (.31). The third-highest mean (.23) was tied by twice-weekly newspapers with coming events and weekly newspapers with consumer information. Daily newspapers showed a slight preference for consumer information, coming events and research stories, followed by stories concerning past events, timely topics, features, and institutional.⁴⁵

Through the study, Morton was able to draw several noteworthy conclusions. Frequency of newspaper publication appeared to play a major role in news release usage, with dailies publishing an average of 7.6 percent of all articles sent them, while weeklies published 9 percent and twice weeklies published 21.6 percent. Thus the odds of getting articles published appear to be better when sent to weeklies and twice-weeklies than when sent to dailies.⁴⁶

Morton also concluded that three types of releases were published so infrequently that their value to public relations practitioners should be seriously questioned.

These releases are past events (4 percent published), features (3 percent) and institutional (less than 1 percent). These results indicate that newspaper gatekeepers are not receptive to these types of articles regardless of the newspapers' characteristics.⁴⁷

Steven Stengel, An Oklahoma State University Master's candidate, added more information to the relationship of news elements and news release usage in 1989 when he looked at press releases sent to Stillwater media.⁴⁸ In this study, Stengel looked at news release usage by Stillwater, Oklahoma, media and also looked into reasons state editors use or do not use news releases.

Stengel queried a random sample of editors from Oklahoma daily and weekly newspapers on reasons they most commonly reject news releases. Before the study he defined six variables to be rated by editors:

Information -- The news release should answer the questions Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?

News Value -- Stengel defined this variable in terms of Walter Ward's three dimensional news model developed in his 1967 doctoral dissertation.⁴⁹ In Stengel's study, a news release was considered as having news value if it contained prominence, normality and significance.

Prominence was defined as news involving a person, group or institution that has gained fame through accomplishment, accident, etc. Normality was defined as content involving oddity, conflict or normal situations.

Oddity is something rarer than unusual. Conflict is a clash between persons, places or things. Normal are actions not considered an oddity or a conflict. Significance was defined as participation in an event by a large number of readers or the potential impact of something on a large number of readers.

Local Angle -- A news release must concern or be concerned in some way to the people receiving the information. The information must concern the people within the newspaper's circulation area.

Mechanical/Grammatical Errors -- Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation and word usage.

Poorly Written -- Information that does not flow logically from the lead. Also lack of a slug line and the name and phone number of a person who can be contacted in case further information is needed.

Timeliness -- The release must concern information that affects people today or in the near future. Near future is defined as within a two-week time period.⁵⁰

On his first question, Stengel asked editors on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being the most important and 6 being least important, to rank a list of reasons for most commonly rejecting press releases. Reasons to rank were Lack of Timeliness, Lack of information, Lack of news value, Lack of local angle, Mechanical/Grammatical errors, and Poorly written.

Results showed that the Local Angle was ranked most

important by weekly newspaper editors with a mean score of 1.286 on a six-point scale. News Value was the next most important with a mean score of 2.571. This was followed by Timeliness, 3.571; Information, 3.821; Poorly Written, 4.464; and Mechanical/Grammatical Errors, 5.036.⁵¹

Results for daily newspaper editors again showed Local Angle and News Value receiving the same mean of 2.0. Timeliness followed with a mean of 3.67; followed by Information, 4.33; Poorly Written, 4.89; and Mechanical/Grammatical Errors, 5.22.⁵²

Combined editor ranking of news elements showed Local Element remaining most important to editors, with a mean score of 1.459. News Value followed at 2.4323, Timeliness, 3.596; Information, 3.946; Poorly Written, 4.568; and Mechanical/Grammatical Errors, 5.081.⁵³

Stengel was also interested in what categories of news releases editors would be most likely to print. Modifying the categories use in the 1985 study by Linda Morton.⁵⁴ Stengel defined six categories as:

Institutional -- Releases that relate to an entire institution, business or organization. It includes reports of activities, services and any accomplishments.

Coming Events -- Releases that announce or promote activities or events sponsored by a group, individual, institution, or organization.

Past Events -- Releases that summarize an event or that are dated and received by the media after an event has occurred.

Consumer Information -- Releases that provide information to consumers. This type also includes releases that give instructions or tell consumers how to do something.

Timely Topics -- Releases that deal with current topics or issues in the news.

Features -- Releases that focus on an individual or group or institution. Releases that tend to promote and are of interest to the population as a whole.⁵⁵

Stengel asked editors to rank these release types on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 representing the type of press release they would most likely use and 6 being the release type they would least likely use. Results from weekly papers indicated that editors would most likely use features (mean score of 1.071). Timely Topics were next preferred by editors with a mean of 2.714, followed by Consumer Information, 3.5; Coming Events, 3.929; Institutional, 4.286; and Past Events, 4.929. No significant difference in the means was found between Institutional news releases and Coming Events releases, Past Releases, and Timely Topics releases. Stengel concluded that any difference found between the means of these three pairs of news release types may be attributed to chance.⁵⁶

Daily newspaper editors ranked their preference of using release types in the same order. Features led the way with a mean of 1.133, followed by Timely Topics, 1.89; Consumer Information, 3.44; Coming Events, 4.0; Institutional, 4.22; and Past Events, 5.78. Analysis showed

that the means for Institutional news releases and Coming Events news releases were not significantly different at the .05 level of probability. The means for Timely Topics and Features were also not significant at the .05 level.⁵⁷

Combined results for weekly and daily newspaper editors concerning what release types they would most likely print showed both groups prefer Features, which had a mean score of 1.135. Timely Topics was next with a mean score of 2.514, followed by Consumer Information, 3.486; Coming Events, 3.946; Institutional, 4.270; and Past Events, 5.135.⁵⁸

Stengel's study also involved an in-depth content analysis of news releases received by Stillwater media. Releases received by the Stillwater NewsPress, the Daily O'Collegian, KOSU radio and KVRO radio were collected for two one-week periods.⁵⁹ When all releases were collected they were categorized using the six previously-defined categories.

Three judges were used in the content analyses to determine which of the previously-defined news elements were present. Two judges looked at each release. If they disagreed on the presence or absence of a particular news element, a third judge was used to break the tie. The entire news release was not analyzed. The content analyses looked only at the first, second and last paragraph of each news release.

Results showed that these select Stillwater media received more than twice as many Coming Events releases as

any other type. Out of 227 releases collected, 84 were Coming Events releases, 34 Features, 33 Consumer Information, 31 Institutional, 25 Past Events, and 20 Timely Topics.⁶⁰

The analysis of news elements contained in the releases received indicated that releases did not contain a high percentage of the elements considered important by editors. While it was previously determined that editors believed the two most important elements were Local Angle and News Value, only 40 or 18 percent of the releases received by the sample media contained a local angle.⁶¹ Only 102 or 45 percent of the news releases were determined by judges to contain news value.

A large portion of the news releases, 161 or 71 percent, contained Timeliness. A large portion, 157 or 69 percent, also contained Information. Only a small number of the news releases, 46 or 20 percent, were poorly written, while 125 or 55 percent contained mechanical or grammatical errors.⁶²

While Stengel was able to draw many conclusions from analysis of these findings, he considered one more important than the rest. "The only thing that can be said with certainty is that most of the news releases studied leave out the most important element, local angle."⁶³

In 1988, Linda Morton again studied news release usage, this time attempting to determine the effectiveness of camera-ready copy in press releases. This study looked at

what types of newspapers published articles from a camera-ready, one-page clipsheet called "Greater Oklahoma News."⁶⁴

Results showed that almost 55 percent of the editors indicated that they used the clipsheet at least occasionally; 18 percent weekly; more than 11 percent monthly; and 28 percent stated they rarely used the clipsheet.⁶⁵

Fairly small newspapers with small news staffs were determined to be most likely to use stories from the clipsheet. Newspapers with circulations between 1,000 and 6,000 accounted for 75 percent of all publication of stories from the clipsheet. Almost 65 percent of the users had three or fewer personnel on their news staffs, while less than 15 percent had six or more.⁶⁶

Using her same news release categories from an earlier study, Morton found that the types of releases most used from the clipsheet were timely topics, 28 percent; research stories, 18 percent; consumer information, 17 percent; coming events, 15 percent; and features, 9 percent. None of the releases on past events or institutional stories were used from the clipsheet.⁶⁷

Summary

Numerous studies have been conducted to determine why newspaper editors use the stories they do. While many aspects were researched and some questions were answered, complete agreement about what news elements or aspects are

most important still does not exist.

White found that many stories were rejected by editors simply due to highly subjective value-judgments by those editors. Stempel deduced that several specific factors figured into usage decisions, while Ward combined a number of what he perceived as overlapping elements and developed a three-dimensional news model. This model was later tested successfully by Rhoades, Carter and a handful of other researchers.

Along with these studies into "What Is News?" a number of research projects have looked into news releases to determine what elements or aspects of releases are considered in editors' decisions of whether to print or not to print. Aber concluded that news releases must have a local source, be sponsored by a civic or service organization, have original editing marks and no release time to be used. He also found that editors most frequently published releases developed specifically for their newspapers.

Zielke concluded that newspapers use public relations information for only about 10 percent of their news content. He stated that having a local angle was of utmost importance in editors' news decisions. Honey also concluded that most news releases were not published as news stories, and Honaker found that many editors were wishing that the deluge of news releases to city desks throughout the country would subside. Honaker believed that the practice of mass mailing

news releases should be abandoned, and, in a later study, concluded that editors were receiving more releases than ever and were also trashing more than ever.

In looking at the problem of good releases going down with the bad, Aronoff found that the attitude of editors toward PR practitioners was a major source of the problem. He concluded that newspapermen's attitudes toward public relations was much more negative than the attitudes of practitioners to the PR profession.

In another study, Baxter cited lack of localization as the main reason releases fail to appear in print. He also concluded that many releases lacked newsworthiness, contained too much advertising, were too long and cumbersome, and often arrived too late to be useful.

Stone and Morrison took a look into content of community newspapers and found that weeklies used public relations copy for 5.2 percent of their content, while in dailies it averaged 3.0 percent. They also concluded that the lower circulation newspapers involved in the study had a higher ratio of public relations stories than the larger newspapers.

Morton classified releases into several types and found that Oklahoma editors in her study were more likely to print consumer information releases, with coming events releases receiving the next highest preference. Timely topics and research stories followed. Later, Stengel used similar categories to study releases sent to Stillwater media.

Editors indicated they preferred to use feature releases. Next most preferred were timely topics, consumer information and coming events.

Stengel's study also showed that Oklahoma editors in his sample considered lack of a local angle as the most important reason they would reject a release. Next most, in descending order of importance, were lack of news value, lack of timeliness, lack of information, poorly written, and mechanical/grammatical problems.

Morton looked into usage of camera-ready releases and concluded that more than half of the editors in her sample used the clipsheet she was studying at least occasionally. She also determined that 'small newspapers with small staffs were most likely to use the camera-ready releases.

Despite all of the studies, findings and recommendations, the bottom line is that editors have the final say about which releases are used and which are rejected. And while a myriad of reasons appear to influence such decisions, many are based on personal preference and subjective decisions by gatekeepers.

END NOTES

¹Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press; A General Report on Mass Communications: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 20.

²David M. White, "The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study In The Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 27, (Fall 1950), pp. 383-390.

³Ibid, p. 386.

⁴Ibid, p. 389.

⁵Guido Stempel, III, "An Empirical Exploration of the Nature of News," Paul J. Deutschmann Memorial Papers in Mass Communications, ed. Wayne A. Danielson, Scripps-Howard Research (Cincinnati, 1963) p. 21.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Guido H. Stempel, "Content Patterns of Small and Metropolitan Dailies," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 39, (Winter 1962), p. 88.

⁸Ibid, p. 90.

⁹Walter J. Ward, "News Values, News Situations, and News Selections: An Intensive Study of Ten City Editors," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967), pp. 178-180.

¹⁰Ibid, pp. 45-46.

¹¹Ibid, p. 39.

¹²Ibid, pp. 178-180.

¹³Walter J. Ward and Associates, The Nature of News in Three Dimensions, Stillwater: Oklahoma State University Bureau of Media Research, 1973, p. 19.

¹⁴Ibid, pp. 38-39.

¹⁵Ibid, pp. 39-40.

¹⁶L. Erwin Atwood, "How Newsmen and Readers Perceive Each Others' Story Preferences," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 47, (Summer 1970), p. 298.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 301.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 301-302.

¹⁹ George Rhoades, "The Effects of News Values on News Decisions by Associated Press and United Press International Newsmen in a Gatekeeper Study," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1970).

²⁰ Lorenzo Edward Carter, "News Values of Editors-Reporters on Five Oklahoma Newspapers," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1970).

²¹ Committee on Modern Journalism, Modern Journalism, Siegfried Mandel, ed., New York: 1962, p. 97.

²² Wren Aber, "A Comparison of Published and Reported News Releases in Three Ohio Metropolitan Papers," Journalism Abstracts, III (1965), p. 42.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Stephen P. Zielke, "Public Relations and Wisconsin Weekly Newspapers: A Study of the Utilization by Twelve Weekly Newspapers of News Material Received From Public Relations Sources," Journalism Abstracts, VIII (1970), p. 147.

²⁵ Carol A. Honey, "The Utilization of Press Releases by Two Metropolitan Newspapers," Journalism Abstracts, XVII (1979), p. 74.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Chuck Honaker, "Why Your Releases Aren't Working," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 34., Leo J. Norhart, ed., (March 1978), p. 16.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 18.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

³⁰ Charles Honaker, "News Releases Revisited," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 37., Leo J. Norhart, ed., (April 1981), p. 25.

³¹ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

³² Craig Aronoff, "Newspapermen and practitioners differ widely on PR role," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 31., Leo J. Norhart, ed., (August 1975), p. 24.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bill L. Baxter, "The News Release: An Idea Whose Time Has Gone?" Public Relations Review, Vol. 1, (Spring 1981), pp. 27-30.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 30.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 31.

³⁹ Gerald C. Stone and Janet Morrison, "Content as a Key to the Purpose of Community Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 53 (Winter 1976), p. 497.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 497.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Linda P. Morton, "How Newspapers Choose the Releases They Use," Public Relations Review, Ray E. Hiebert, ed., (Fall 1986), p. 23.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 25.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

⁴⁸ Steven Stengel, "News Elements and Their Relationship To News Releases," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1989.

⁴⁹ Ward, "News Values, News Situations, and News Selections: An Intensive Study of Ten City Editors."

⁵⁰ Stengel, pp. 39-40.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 52.

⁵² Ibid, p. 55.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 58.

⁵⁴ Morton, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁵ Stengel, p. 40.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 54.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 57.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 44.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 50.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 60.

⁶² Ibid, p. 61.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 63.

⁶⁴ Linda P. Morton, "Effectiveness of Camera-Ready Copy In Press Releases," Public Relations Review, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (Summer 1988) p. 46.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 47.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Common questions by Wildlife Department administrators and other personnel indicated a desire to know more about usage of the Wildlife News Service by state newspapers. Among these questions are how many newspapers actually use the releases, and what news elements or characteristics are contained in releases that are sent out in the packet? Another important question deals with whether certain types of releases are used more often than others by state newspaper editors. And yet another question to be answered is whether editors who use the releases simply cut them from the clippingsheet and paste them to the layout page or whether they typeset the stories again before using them in their publications. This study will attempt to answer these four primary questions. It also will yield additional information that can be of benefit to Wildlife Department information personnel, along with providing some recommendations to improve the Wildlife News Service.

Operational Definitions

Definitions for terms in the content analysis and the

release categories used in comparing usage of different types of releases were derived from those used by Stengel in 1989 for meaningful comparisons to be made.¹

Information -- The news release should answer the questions, Who? What? When? Where? and Why?

News Value -- This variable is defined in terms of Walter Ward's three-dimensional model developed in his 1967 doctoral dissertation.² A news release will be considered as having news value if it contains Prominence, Normality and Significance.

Prominence is defined as news involving a person, group or institution that has gained fame through accomplishment, accident, etc.

Normality is defined as news involving oddity, conflict or normal situations. Oddity is something rarer than unusual. Conflict is a clash between persons, places or things. Normal are actions not considered an oddity or a conflict.

Significance is defined as participation in an event by a large number of readers or the potential impact of something on a large number of readers.

Local Angle -- A news release must concern or be concerned in some way with the people receiving the information. The information must concern the people within the newspaper's circulation area.

Mechanical/Grammatical Errors -- Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation and word usage.

Poorly Written -- Information that does not flow logically from the lead.

Timeliness -- The release must concern information that affects people today or in the near future. Near future is defined as within a two-week time period.

Operational Definitions of Categories

Institutional -- Releases that relate to an entire institution, business or organization. It includes reports of activities, services and any accomplishments.

Coming Events -- Releases that announce or promote activities or events sponsored by a group, individual, institution or organization.

Past Events -- Releases that summarize an event or that are dated and received by the media after an event has occurred.

Consumer Information -- Releases that provide information to consumers. This type also includes releases that give instructions or tell consumers how to do something.

Timely Topics -- Releases that deal with current topics or issues in the news.

Features -- Releases that focus on an individual or group or institution. Releases that tend to promote and are of interest to the population as a whole.

Recategorization to categories dealing directly with Wildlife Department topics include the following:

Fish/Fishing -- Releases that deal with the Department's Fisheries Division activities or any kind of fishing.

Game/Hunting -- Releases that deal with Game Division activities or any kind of hunting.

Hunter Safety -- Releases that deal with hunter safety or other safety-related topics.

Nongame -- Releases dealing with nongame wildlife or any activities of the Department's Nongame Wildlife Program.

Information/Education -- Releases that deal with the Department's Information/Education Division, including releases announcing availability of publications produced by that division.

Administration -- Releases that deal with administrative topics, including licensing, awards, personnel achievements, etc.

Usage Comparison Procedures

Releases contained in the "Wildlife News Service" sent out on October 5, 12, 19, and 26, November 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, and December 7 and 14, 1990, were used for this comparison. An example can be found in Appendix A, Page ???. These packets contained a total of 76 news stories that were sent to 45 daily and 180 weekly newspapers throughout the state. Of the 76 releases in those packets, 62 could be placed in the categories mentioned previously. Each release was given an individual number for easy identification during later analysis.

The Oklahoma Press Association's Clipping Bureau scanned all state newspapers during October, November and

December, 1990, and January, 1991, and clipped any stories that had originally appeared in the Wildlife News Service. Since the Clipping Bureau is a pay-per-clip service, it is assumed that most Wildlife News Service stories used in state newspapers were clipped and sent to the researcher. It is also assumed that if any stories were overlooked during the clipping process, such omissions would have occurred on an accidental basis with no relation to release category, so would have caused little problem concerning the validity of the study.

In early February after clipping was completed, all clippings were sorted into 62 individual piles -- one for each of the releases involved in the study -- and placed into 62 individual envelopes. Clippings were then counted for each release and were categorized as having appeared in daily newspapers, weekly newspapers or dailies and weeklies combined.

This procedure yielded the number of daily, weekly and total newspapers in which each release appeared. This information is found in Appendix B, Page ??. For each category -- Institutional, Coming Events, Past Events, Consumer Information, Timely Topics and Features -- a mean percentage of newspapers in which that release type appeared was calculated. Clippings were then recategorized into the categories of Fish/Fishing, Game/Hunting, Nongame, Administration, Hunter Safety and Information/Education, and the same procedures were followed to determine the mean

percentage of newspapers in which releases from each of those categories appeared.

In order to ensure a normal distribution of data during subsequent testing, an arcsin transformation was used to transform percentages to means. An analysis of variance was used to determine whether there was a difference in release usage that could be related to newspaper type (frequency of publication). Another analysis of variance was conducted to assert whether usage of releases varied due to release category. Pairwise t-tests were then used to determine whether significant differences existed between usage of different categories of releases in both daily and weekly newspapers.

Each newspaper clipping in the 62 envelopes was then reviewed to determine whether it had been cut and pasted directly from the clipsheet or had been typeset again by individual newspaper editors. A mean percentage was then calculated representing releases, by category, that were cut and pasted directly from the clipsheet. A separate mean percentage was then calculated for weeklies versus dailies to make a comparison of clipsheet usage by newspaper type.

Content Analysis Procedure

The same 62 news releases that were utilized in the release usage comparison were used for the content analysis. Each release was clipped from an original Wildlife News Service and pasted to a score sheet on which was listed the

six news elements previously defined. A copy of the instruction sheet and a score sheet are included in Appendix C, Page ??. Separate score sheets were used for each release in order to eliminate confusion that could result when matching scores and individual releases during analysis.

Each release was scored on the presence or absence of the news elements. In this procedure, three judges were used to score the releases. Two judges read each release in its entirety and marked the presence or absence of news elements on the score sheet. Releases in which the first two judges disagreed on particular elements were submitted to a third judge, who read the releases and marked his opinion of the presence or absence of those news elements. His score was used as a tie-breaker.

Percentages of releases containing individual news elements were then derived from calculations of the three judges' analyses. The percentage of each news element present in each release type was also calculated. And, after recategorization using the six Wildlife Department release categories, the percentage of each news element present in each of those release types was also calculated.

Presentation of Data

Two tables were used to present the breakdown of types of news releases sent to newspapers during the study period. One table exhibits the number and percentage of releases by category, while the other gives similar information for

release types after recategorization.

On the lefthand side of the table are the release categories. The number of releases of each type included in the study is listed in the center column, while the righthand column gives the percentage of each release type included in the analysis.

Four tables were used to present the results of the news release usage comparison. One table was used to present daily newspaper usage of news releases by category, and another was used to show usage by category after recategorization. The third was used to present weekly usage of releases by category, and the fourth illustrated weekly usage after recategorization.

In these four tables, news release categories are found on the lefthand side of the table, the percentage of newspapers in which the releases appeared are listed in the center column and the release type's rank is found in the righthand column.

One table was used to show the results of the portion of the study designed to determine whether editors use the releases directly from the clippingsheet. The lefthand column lists daily, weekly and total newspapers, and the righthand column gives the percentage of releases used directly from the clippingsheet for the newspaper types.

The results of the content analysis were illustrated using two tables. Each table has six columns and six rows. Each row represents a different type of new release, while

each column represents a different news characteristic.

The numbers contained in the table represent the number of news releases that contain that particular element. The numbers are also expressed as a percentage of the total.

Limitations and Weaknesses

Despite the fact that release stories were clipped from newspapers for 1 1/2 months after the final releases were mailed, it is possible that some releases appeared in newspapers after clipping was completed so were not included in the analysis. However, it is unlikely that a significant number of releases would be held and used that much later than their release date.

Since all sorting and counting were completed manually, a small amount of error could have been introduced during these processes. However, all sorting and counting were done twice to ensure accurate results.

Small sample sizes in some categories also are likely to interject some error into the study. Consideration was given to excluding some categories with small sample sizes from data analysis. However, these categories were retained in the analysis for overall results to be more meaningful.

A wide range in the number of newspapers using some articles is likely to cause a very large standard deviation from the mean in some categories. Because of this wide range, significant differences between categories concerning the number of newspapers publishing releases may be hard to

prove.

Summary

In summary, 62 releases sent by the Wildlife Department to state newspapers were categorized using previously-defined categories. Releases appearing in state newspapers were clipped, sorted and counted, and a mean percentage of newspapers that used the various release types was calculated, both for daily and weekly newspapers. The percentage of releases used directly from the clipsheet was also calculated for daily and weekly newspapers.

These 62 releases were also analyzed according to content based on procedures previously described. Content analysis was also broken down according to release category -- both original category and after recategorization.

Results of the study will appear in the next chapter, titled "Findings."

ENDNOTES

¹Stephen P. Stengel, "News Elements And Their Relationship To News Releases," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State Univeristy, 1989), pp. 39-40.

²Walter J. Ward, "News Values, News Situations, and News Selection: An Intensive Study of Ten City Editors," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967), pp. 178-180.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Sixty-two news releases mailed to state newspapers in the "Wildlife News Service" were clipped and counted to determine how many newspapers were using the releases and whether certain types of newspapers used them more frequently than others. Analysis was also designed to determine whether different categories of releases were treated differently by editors in charge. Published releases were analyzed to determine whether they had been used directly from the clippingsheet or whether editors typeset them again before publication.

Results indicate that both newspaper type (daily or weekly) and category of release are instrumental in determining how many newspapers publish a release. Findings also reveal that of the releases printed, more than one-half are used directly from the clippingsheet.

A content analysis was conducted to determine whether the same 62 releases contained certain previously-defined news elements. Findings, by category, reveal that, on the most part, releases contained positive news elements, while

few were analyzed as poorly written or as containing mechanical and grammatical errors.

Releases by Category

Results of a breakdown by category of the 62 releases studied from the Wildlife News Service are presented in Table I below.

TABLE I
BREAKDOWN OF NEWS RELEASES

| Category | Number | Percent |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Coming Events | 21 | 33.9% |
| Consumer Information | 21 | 33.9% |
| Features | 7 | 11.4% |
| Past Events | 6 | 9.7% |
| Timely Topics | 4 | 6.5% |
| Institutional | 3 | 4.8% |
| Total | 62 | 100% |

There were three times as many releases in the Coming Events and Consumer Information categories as in any of the other four categories. In fact, Coming Events and Consumer Information releases comprised nearly 70 percent of the stories mailed to state newspapers during the study period.

A breakdown by Wildlife Department categories of

releases mailed during the study period can be found in Table II below.

TABLE II
BREAKDOWN OF NEWS RELEASES
AFTER RECATEGORIZATION

| Category | Number | Percent |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------|
| Game/Hunting | 28 | 45.1% |
| Nongame | 9 | 14.5% |
| Information/Education | 8 | 12.9% |
| Fish/Fishing | 8 | 12.9% |
| Administration | 6 | 9.8% |
| Hunter Safety | <u>3</u> | <u>4.8%</u> |
| Total | 62 | 100% |

There were 28 releases in the Game/Hunting category, more than three times as many as in any other category. Nongame, Information/Education and Fish/Fishing stories occurred in about the same numbers, with Administration and Hunter Safety stories making up a much smaller percentage of the releases than the other four types.

News Release Usage

Analysis of variance indicated that the mean percentage of newspapers publishing releases varied due to category

type ($F=2.23$, $P=.05$) and newspaper type ($F=13.28$, $P=.0004$). This indicates that both release category and newspaper type have a significant impact on the number of newspapers in which an individual release will be published.

After recategorization to Wildlife Department categories, analysis of variance also indicated that the mean percentage of newspapers publishing releases varied due to category type ($F=4.89$, $P=.0004$) and newspaper type ($F=14.38$, $P=.0002$). These figures indicate that release category and newspaper type had an even greater impact on usage of releases after stories were recategorized.

Usage in Daily Newspapers

For daily newspapers, an analysis of variance to determine whether stories are treated differently by editors due to category revealed a strong indication that category does have an effect on usage ($F=2.24$, $P=.063$). The mean number and mean percentage of daily newspapers in which different categories of news releases were published appears in Table III located on the next page.

Pairwise t-tests indicated that while Coming Events articles were used most frequently, usage of these releases was not significantly different than usage of Features, Institutional and Past Events stories by daily newspapers. Coming Events were, however, used by significantly more ($P<.05$) daily newspapers than were articles categorized as Consumer Information and Timely Topics.

Pairwise t-tests also revealed that no significant difference ($P > .05$) existed between the mean percentage of newspapers printing releases classified as Features, Institutional, Past Events, Consumer Information and Timely Topics.

TABLE III
USAGE IN DAILY NEWSPAPERS BY CATEGORY

| Category | Mean # papers | Mean percent | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|------|
| Coming Events | 7.2 | 16.0% | 1 |
| Features | 5.1 | 11.3% | 2 |
| Institutional | 5.0 | 11.1% | 3 |
| Past Events | 4.7 | 10.4% | 4 |
| Consumer Information | 4.2 | 9.3% | 5 |
| Timely Topics | 3.3 | 7.2% | 6 |

After recategorization to Wildlife Department categories, an analysis of variance indicated that there is a greater certainty that release types had an effect ($F=3.46$, $P=.008$) on story usage by daily newspapers. The

mean number and mean percentage of daily newspapers using releases by category after recategorization appear in Table IV below.

TABLE IV
USAGE IN DAILY NEWSPAPERS
AFTER RECATEGORIZATION

| Category | Mean # papers | Mean percent | Rank |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|------|
| Game/Hunting | 7.1 | 15.9% | 1 |
| Hunter Safety | 4.3 | 9.6% | 2 |
| Fish/Fishing | 4.1 | 9.2% | 3 |
| Administration | 4.0 | 8.9% | 4 |
| Nongame | 3.6 | 7.9% | 5 |
| Information/Education | 3.5 | 7.8% | 6 |

Pairwise t-tests revealed that releases categorized as Game/Hunting were used significantly more ($P < .05$) than Administration, Nongame or Information/Education releases. However, no significant difference was found when comparing Game/Hunting releases to those categorized as Hunter Safety and Fish/Fishing.

T-tests also showed that no significant difference

($P > .05$) existed between the last five categories -- Hunter Safety, Fish/Fishing, Administration, Nongame and Information/Education.

Usage in Weekly Newspapers

The analysis of variance for weekly newspapers indicated that category plays less of a role in affecting release usage for this newspaper type ($F=1.12$, $P=.36$). The mean number and mean percentage of weekly newspapers in which different categories of news releases were published appears in Table V below.

TABLE V
USAGE IN WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS BY CATEGORY

| Category | Mean # papers | Mean percent | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|------|
| Coming Events | 15.6 | 8.7% | 1 |
| Consumer Information | 14.4 | 8.0% | 2 |
| Past Events | 14.4 | 8.0% | 3 |
| Timely Topics | 12 | 6.7% | 4 |
| Features | 11.3 | 6.3% | 5 |
| Institutional | 6.3 | 3.5% | 6 |

T-tests indicated that Coming Events releases were used in more weekly newspapers than Institutional releases ($P > .05$). No significant difference was found between other categories.

After recategorization, an analysis of variance yielded a slight indication ($F=1.94$, $P=.1$) that release category had an effect on the number of weekly newspapers printing releases. The mean number and mean percentage of weekly newspapers using releases by category after recategorization appear in Table VI below.

TABLE VI
USAGE IN WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS
AFTER RECATEGORIZATION

| Category | Mean # papers | Mean percent | Rank |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|------|
| Game/Hunting | 16.8 | 9.3% | 1 |
| Nongame | 13.1 | 7.3% | 2 |
| Information/Education | 12.6 | 7.0% | 3 |
| Hunter Safety | 11.3 | 6.3% | 4 |
| Administration | 10.7 | 5.9% | 5 |
| Fish/Fishing | 9.3 | 5.1% | 6 |

T-tests showed that Game/Hunting releases were printed in more newspapers ($P < .05$) than those categorized as Administration and Fish/Fishing. With the exception of Game/Hunting, there was no indication of a significant difference in the number of newspapers that published the other five types of releases.

Usage From Clipsheet

Each release that was clipped from state newspapers was analyzed to determine if it had been cut and pasted directly from the clipsheet or had been typeset again. The percentage of published releases that had been used directly from the clipsheet are listed in Table VII below.

TABLE VII
USAGE DIRECTLY FROM CLIPSHEET

| Newspaper Type | Percent from clipsheet |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Daily | 66.7% |
| Weekly | 57.9% |
| Combined | 61.8% |

These results indicate that 66.7 percent of the

newspapers publishing the releases prefer to cut and paste them directly from the clipsheet. Daily newspapers tend to use material directly from the clipsheet more frequently than weeklies do.

Content Analysis

All articles were analyzed during the content analysis phase of the study to determine the presence or absence of certain news elements or aspects. Results for original categories are found in Table VIII on the following page.

A review of the tables show several interesting points. In the original categories, all of the releases were judged to contain information as defined in a previous chapter. This did not vary with category. However, a fairly low percentage of releases categorized as Features contained News Value and few Features contained a Local Angle. Institutional releases also ranked very low in containing a Local Angle.

Timeliness was also a problem with a high percentage of releases. Ironically enough, Timely Topics rated lowest in Timeliness, with only 25 percent considered timely. Also, few features were judged to contain Timeliness.

A small percentage of releases were considered Poorly Written or contained Mechanical/Grammatical Errors. All stories judged as Poorly Written or as containing errors were in the Coming Events category.

TABLE VIII
INDIVIDUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS BY CATEGORY
N=62

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Coming Events | 21 100% | 21 100% | 16 76.2% | 2 9.5% | 3 14.3% | 20 95.2% |
| Consumer Info | 21 100% | 18 85.7% | 20 95.2% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 18 85.7% |
| Features | 7 100% | 4 57.1% | 1 14.3% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 3 42.9% |
| Past Events | 6 100% | 6 100% | 5 83.3% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 4 66.7% |
| Timely Topics | 4 100% | 4 100% | 3 75% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 1 25% |
| Institutional | 3 100% | 3 100% | 1 33.3% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 2 66.7% |
| Total | 62 100% | 56 90.3% | 46 74.2% | 2 3.2% | 3 4.8% | 48 77.4% |

Legend: 1= Information
2= News Value
3= Local Angle
4= Mechanical/Grammatical Errors
5= Poorly Written
6= Timeliness

Table IX, which shows content analysis results after recategorization, is on the following page. From these results, several trends are evident.

A fairly low percentage of stories in several categories, including Game/Hunting, Administration and Hunter Safety, were judged to contain a local angle. Also, a

fairly low percentage of Administration and Nongame releases contained the Timeliness element. The Game/Hunting category was responsible for nearly all of the stories that were considered Poorly Written or that contained Mechanical/Grammatical Errors.

TABLE IX
INDIVIDUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS AFTER RECATEGORYIZATION
N=62

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Game/ Hunting | 28 100% | 26 92.9% | 19 67.9% | 1 3.6% | 3 10.7% | 25 89.3% |
| Nongame | 9 100% | 8 88.9% | 8 88.9% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 5 55.6% |
| Info/ Educ | 8 100% | 6 75% | 7 87.5% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 6 75% |
| Fish/ Fishing | 8 100% | 7 87.5% | 6 75% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 6 75% |
| Adminis- tration | 6 100% | 6 100% | 4 66.7% | 1 16.7% | 0 0% | 3 50% |
| Hunter Safety | 3 100% | 3 100% | 2 66.7% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 3 100% |
| Total | 62 100% | 56 90.3% | 46 74.2% | 2 3.2% | 3 4.8% | 48 77.4% |

Legend: 1= Information
2= News Value
3= Local Angle
4= Mechanical/Grammatical Errors
5= Poorly Written
6= Timeliness

Discussion

The fact that significantly more daily and weekly newspapers tended to run Coming Events releases than other categories is somewhat surprising, since Stengel's preference survey showed editors ranked that category as fourth choice to publish in their newspapers. Coincidentally, both daily and weekly editors ranked Features as most preferred in that study, while results of this study indicated features were printed second most often by daily newspapers and only fifth most frequently by weeklies.

One interesting point to ponder is that every clip was used by at least six newspapers. This seems to indicate that regardless of the kind of information contained in a Wildlife Department release, at least a few newspapers will publish it.

The higher F Value for difference between categories after stories were recategorized seems to indicate that perhaps the Wildlife Department categories were more appropriate for the comparison than original categories. This is possibly due to the fact that a category such as Coming Events could contain stories about hunting, fishing, nongame wildlife or a variety of other topics, while a category such as Game/Hunting was much more specific.

As mentioned in the limitations section of the previous chapter, the inability to find significant differences between most individual categories is probably due to the

wide range in the number of newspapers publishing releases from a given category. For example, in the Coming Events category, a story on an upcoming wetlands conference was published in only six newspapers, while a story on the upcoming firearm deer season appeared in 47 newspapers. Wide ranges such as this cause large standard deviations from the mean, in this case resulting in a lack of significance between most individual categories.

It is interesting to note that a higher percentage of daily newspapers (66.7 percent) used the releases directly from the clipsheet than did weekly newspapers (57.9). Earlier findings by Morton indicated that weeklies were more likely to use releases from clipsheets.

An important finding in Stengel's study indicated that most releases left out the element editors considered most important -- Local Angle. About 75 percent of the releases from the "Wildlife News Service" also left out this element, which is much better than in previous studies but far from what might be considered adequate by Wildlife Department administrators.

The Stengel study also indicated that 20 percent of the releases in that study were poorly written, while 55 percent contained grammatical errors. Releases from the "Wildlife News Service" ranked much better along these lines, since only 3.2 percent contained grammatical errors and only 4.8 percent were considered Poorly Written.

An interesting discovery that should be mentioned is

that the release published by the most newspapers -- a deer gun season advance printed by 18 dailies and 29 weeklies -- was one of the three releases judged in the content analysis as being Poorly Written. This probably indicates that the topic was popular enough that editors decided to overlook substandard writing to get the information in their publications. In fact, the three releases judged as being Poorly Written were all among the top 25 percent in relation to the number of papers in which they were published.

Conversely, the three releases published by the least newspapers were not considered Poorly Written and only one was judged as containing Mechanical/Grammatical Errors.

A look into the circulation of newspapers publishing specific articles indicates that the presence or absence of three newspapers can make a lot of difference in the number of readers actually being exposed to the news release. These three newspapers -- the Sunday Oklahoman, Tulsa World and Tulsa Tribune -- account for about 500,000 subscribers and are very important to news dissemination by the Wildlife Department.

For example, a hypothetical release published by 40 newspapers, including those three, could reach roughly 600,000 households. If those newspapers fail to publish the release, the information might only be accessible to about 100,000 subscribers. Obviously, that could make a substantial difference in getting information to the public.

Summary

After looking at the news releases printed by state newspapers, some patterns emerged. Release category had more of a relationship to the number of daily newspapers that published articles than to weekly newspapers. Results indicated that both daily and weekly papers preferred to publish Coming Events releases more than any other type. Among Wildlife Department categories, releases in the Game/Hunting category were published by both dailies and weeklies much more than releases in other categories.

For dailies, Timely Topics and Information/Education releases were published least. Weekly newspapers published Institutional and Fish/Fishing releases least frequently.

Results also showed that daily newspapers were more likely than weekly newspapers to cut and paste releases directly from the clipsheet. Overall, 61.8 percent of the releases published were used directly from the clipsheet.

Results from the content analysis indicated that all of the releases used in the study contained Information. Overall, 90.3 percent were judged to have News Value, 74.2 percent contained Local Angle and 77.4 percent contained Timeliness. Only a small portion, 4.8 percent, were judged to be poorly written, while only 3.2 percent contained Mechanical/Grammatical Errors.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Public relations is something that most people are familiar with, and even those few who have never even heard of it have certainly been affected by it. "PR" reaches us from nearly all aspects of society. Dating back hundreds of years, PR is used, among other purposes, to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution.

The news release has long been a primary public relations tool used to reach the masses. Even with the advent of more high-tech media, mailing of news release has remained an important method for public relations practitioners to distribute message.

However, mass mailing of news releases certainly isn't without its opponents, and some past research efforts have shown that newspaper editors are among those hoping for an end to this so-called "paper avalanche." Studies have also indicated that few of the releases sent to newspapers are actually published.

That's where the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation enters the picture. Every week for more than 40 years the Wildlife Department has mailed out the "Wildlife News Service," a release packet consisting of 4 to 12

articles dealing with wildlife-related matters. Although the packet is mailed to 225 state newspapers each week, nobody involved had any idea how many releases were being published. Department personnel also had no idea if certain types of stories were published more than other types, or if daily and weekly newspapers varied on the number of releases they published. Another question dealt with whether releases contained certain news elements deemed important by state newspapers editors in a previous study.

To help answer these questions, a sample of 11 weekly "Wildlife News Service" packets was chosen as a research topic. Sixty-two stories from the packets were categorized into one of six different types of news releases used in previous studies, then recategorized into six categories relating to Wildlife Department programs.

All releases that were published in Oklahoma newspapers in October, November and December, 1990, and January and February, 1991, were clipped, sorted by release category as well as newspaper type, and counted. They were also individually analyzed to see if printed releases had been clipped and pasted on a layout page directly from the camera-ready clipsheet or if editors typeset the articles again.

The study also involved a content analysis in which the same 62 releases were analyzed on the basis of presence or absence of certain previously-defined elements.

Results showed that both category type and newspaper

type were significant in the number of newspapers running releases. Release category tended to have more of a relationship to the number of daily newspapers that published releases than to weekly newspapers.

On an average, daily newspapers were more likely to run releases than weekly newspapers. Stories comprising the Timely Topics category were published in more newspapers, both dailies and weeklies, than were stories from other categories. For dailies, Timely Topics were published in the fewest newspapers, while for weeklies, Institutional releases were used least.

After recategorization, stories from the Game/Hunting category were printed by both dailies and weeklies more than stories from other categories. For daily newspapers, stories comprising the Information/Education category appeared in the fewest newspapers, while Fish/Fishing stories were published in the fewest weekly newspapers.

Results also indicated that more than 60 percent of the newspapers publishing releases cut and pasted them directly from the clipsheet. Daily newspapers tended to use releases directly from the clipsheet more than did weekly newspapers.

Content analysis results showed that all of the 62 stories in the study contained the Information element. Further results indicated that 90.3 percent of the releases contained News Value, 74.2 percent contained a Local Angle and 77.4 percent contained Timeliness, while only 3.2 percent contained Mechanical/Grammatical Errors and only 4.8

percent were judged to be Poorly Written.

Recommendations for Wildlife

Department Personnel

Based on the research results, stories from the "Wildlife News Service" probably do not appear in as many newspapers as personnel involved with distribution of the release had hoped. However, there appears to be consistent enough usage of the release material to continue publication and mailing of the release packet, especially if certain improvements are made.

The tendency here would be to say that since Coming Events releases and Game/Hunting releases were published in more newspapers than other types were, maybe these less-published types should not be distributed. However, at times it is important to distribute information dealing with other categories, so simply refusing to write less popular types of releases makes very little sense.

A better idea might be to mold other types of news releases into Coming Events releases when possible. For instance, a story about a new brown trout program might receive more play if it were written from the angle that trout season opens soon. Similarly, information concerning the availability of waterfowl regulation pamphlets might appear in more newspapers if it was inserted into a story about the duck season opener approaching.

An in-depth review of the content analysis results also

might be instrumental in making releases in the packet more useful to newspapers. By finding trends in the content analysis, writers and editors should be alerted to potential problems with releases produced in the future.

For example, simply being aware that there tends to be a lack of News Value in feature stories could help correct that situation. Likewise realizing that feature stories contained the Timeliness element less than half of the time can alert writers and editors to the fact that they should work harder to include that element in future feature stories.

Even though the releases contained few Mechanical/Grammatical Errors and few were judged as Poorly Written, some improvements can still be made in these areas. Spending some extra time in the proofing stage is probably a good recommendation not only to the Wildlife Department but to public relations practitioners in general.

As for release format, the researcher believes the research tends to suggest that the "Wildlife News Service" should continue to be published in camera-ready format, since more than 60 percent of the newspapers publishing releases used them directly from the clipsheet. This will allow newspapers who prefer to cut and paste the releases to do so, while not inconveniencing newspaper editors who prefer to typeset the material again. If the format were changed from the camera-ready format to typewritten pages, all newspapers would have to typeset the material, which

might require enough additional effort to cause some editors to discontinue use of Wildlife Department material.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although this research project answered several of the questions under study, there are several other research projects that the Wildlife Department could conduct to learn more about usage, and how to increase usage, of the "Wildlife News Service."

Following are five possibilities for further research in this area.

1. The same project could be conducted again, except this time for several weeks at four different times of year -- winter, spring, summer and fall. This would probably delete the error caused by the study being done when hunting season was in full swing and fishing was virtually nonexistent.

2. Another content analysis of the "Wildlife News Service" should be conducted in the future to determine whether improvements have been made based on findings from this study.

3. A study to determine whether most of the newspapers in the state have the means to receive release materials electronically would also be helpful. The Department's Information/Education Division has computerized means to send releases directly to newspaper computers. This study would also look at the receptiveness of newspaper editors

for such a change in distribution method.

4. To help to reach the goal of getting information out to the masses, I also suggest a research project targeting the largest circulation newspapers in the state. This project would include a questionnaire about what the editors like or don't like about the "Wildlife News Service." The research would also ask editors what aspects of the release packet should be changed for more releases to be published. This should also include a study of need versus content -- that is, need of newspaper editors compared to content of the release packet.

5. Another study that has been suggested by other researchers and that would certainly be applicable in this case would be a comparison of the personal relationship between sender and editor, and the number of news releases published. A personal relationship would be operationally defined as "friends on a social level."

These five studies would be instrumental in giving the Wildlife Department important information on which to base future evaluation of the "Wildlife News Service."

Conclusion

This study indicates that both release category and newspaper type have a relationship with how many newspapers publish a Wildlife Department release. The releases tend to be published in a higher percentage of daily newspapers than weekly newspapers, and dailies also tend to use the releases

directly from the clipsheet more than weeklies do.

On average, Coming Events releases were published by more daily and weekly newspapers than were releases from any other category. After recategorization, Game/Hunting releases were published in more newspapers than were releases from other categories.

Content analysis indicates that while the "Wildlife News Service" tends to be fairly well-written in respect to grammatical errors and writing style, writers and editors need to be concerned that each release distributed contains as many of the important news elements as possible.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aber, Wren, "A Comparison of Published and Reported News Releases in Three Ohio Metropolitan Papers," Journalism Abstracts, III (1965).
- Aranoff, Craig, "Newspapermen and practitioners differ widely on PR role," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 31., Leo J. Norhart, ed., (August 1975).
- Atwood, Erwin L., "How Newsmen and Readers Perceive Each Others' Story Preferences," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 47, (Summer 1970).
- Baxter, Bill L., "The News Release: An Idea Whose Time Has Gone?" Public Relations Review, Vol. 1, (Spring 1981).
- Bernays, Edward L., Public Relations, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952.
- Bernays, Edward L., "The Theory and Practice of Public Relations: A Resume," The Engineering of Consent, ed., Edward L. Bernays, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955.
- Carter, Lorenzo Edward, "News Values of Editors-Reporters on Five Oklahoma Newspapers," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1970).
- Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press: A General Report on Mass Communications; Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947.
- Committee on Modern Journalism, Modern Journalism, ed., Sigfried Mandel, New York, NY 1962.
- Cutlip, Scott M., Effective Public Relations, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960.
- Darrow, Richard W., and Dan J. Forrestal, The Dartnell Public Relations Handbook, Chicago, Illinois: Dartnell Press, 1979.

- Forster, Mark, "How To Get Your Articles Published," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 42, Michael Winkleman, ed., (February 1986).
- Gieber, Walter, "News is What Newspapermen Make It," People. Society and Mass Communication, Anthony Dexter and David Manning White, eds., New York: The Free Press, 1968.
- Honaker, Charles, "News Releases Revisited," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 37, Leo J. Norhart, ed., (April 1981).
- Honaker, Chuck, "Why Your Releases Aren't Working," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 34, Leo J. Norhart ed., (March 1978).
- Honey, Carol A., "The Utilization of Press Release by Two Metropolitan Newspapers," Journalism Abstracts, XVII (1979).
- Kerlinger, Fred N., Foundations of Behavioral Research, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1964.
- Kopenhaver, Lillian Lodge, "Aligning Values of Practitioners and Journalists," Public Relations Review, Vol. 11, Ray E. Hiebert, ed., (Summer 1985).
- Morton, Linda P., "Effectiveness of Camera-Ready Copy In Press Releases," Public Relations Review, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (Summer 1988).
- Morton, Linda P., "How Newspapers Choose the Releases They Use," Public Relations Review, Ray E. Hiebert, ed., (Fall 1986).
- Rhoades, George, "The Effects of News Values on News Decisions by Associated Press and United Press International Newsmen in a Gatekeeper Study," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1970).
- Stempel, Guido III, "An Empirical Exploration of the Nature of News," Paul J. Deutschmann Memorial Papers in Mass Communications, ed. Wayne A. Danielson, Scripps-Howard Research (Cincinnati, 1963).
- Stephenson, Howard, Handbook of Public Relations, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960.

- Stengel, Steven, "News Elements and Their Relationship To News Releases," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1989).
- Stone, Gerald C., and Janet Morrison, "Content as a Key to the Purpose of Community Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 53 (Winter 1976).
- Ward, Walter J., "News Values, News Situations, and News Selection: An Intensive Study of Ten City Editors," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967).
- Ward, Walter J. and Associates, The Nature of News in Three Dimensions, Stillwater: Oklahoma State University Bureau of Media Research, 1973.
- White, David M., "The Gate Keeper: A Case Study In The Selection of News," Paul J. Deutschmann Memorial Papers in Mass Communications, ed. Wayne A Danielson, Scripps-Howard Research (Cincinnati, 1963).
- Zielke, Stephen P., "Public Relations and Wisconsin Weekly Newspapers: A Study of the Utilization by Twelve Weekly Newspapers of News Materials Received from Public Relations Sources," Journalism Abstracts, VII (1970).

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

WILDLIFE NEWS SERVICE EXAMPLE



WILDLIFE QUIZ

BY STEVE LEWIS, DIRECTOR

Oklahoma Department
of Wildlife Conservation

Q. How do birds find their way during migration?

A. Migrating birds possess a remarkable ability to fly thousands of miles and arrive at the same wintering grounds each fall. They are guided by a unique sense of direction that employs information from many sources allowing them to arrive at their destination even if they are traveling along unfamiliar routes.

The position of the sun provides useful compass information to species that migrate during the day. Because migratory birds have demonstrated their ability to detect polarization of light, they also have the capability to orient themselves on cloudy or overcast days, and before sunrise and after sunset.

Nocturnal migrants are believed to use the position of the stars and the moon to navigate the night sky. There is evidence suggesting that birds learn the star compass by reviewing the rotation of star patterns.

Wind direction may also be an important direction indicator at night, enabling birds to fly along a proper course when it is cloudy. The fall flight is often toward the southwest due to prevailing winds from the east.

Ornithologists also speculate that birds can determine compass directions using forces exerted by the earth's magnetic field. The magnetic field is thought to allow birds to set up a grid pattern so they can judge their latitudinal and longitudinal position. The receptor for magnetic information is thought to be located in the head region, however scientists aren't sure yet how it works.

In addition, ornithologists attribute the homing ability in part to piloting or orienting to a destination by referring to familiar landmarks. Birds will randomly or systematically search for familiar landmarks to keep them on course. However, this method is probably used in conjunction with other navigation techniques or for short-distance journeys.

Many questions concerning bird migration still exist. In the future, scientists will be looking at other direction sensing possibilities, including sense of smell, and ability to detect barometric pressure, infrasound and ultraviolet light.

-30-

Crane, early duck seasons open soon

Panhandle duck hunters and western Oklahoma sandhill crane hunters can uncage their shotguns and head for the fields as the crane and panhandle duck seasons open Oct. 20.

Crane season is open west of Interstate 35 only, and runs through Jan. 20, 1991. Bag limit is three sandhills daily, with a possession limit of six after the first day.

Crane hunters do not need duck stamps, but a free federal sandhill crane permit is required of anyone hunting cranes. Permits can be obtained by sending your name, address and zip code to Game Division, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 1801 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

The panhandle duck season runs through Nov. 27 and then reopens Dec. 15-26. Shooting hours are one-half hour before official sunrise until sunset.

The daily bag limit is three ducks, which may include no more than two mallards (only one may be a hen), two wood ducks, one pintail or one redhead. The season is closed on canvasbacks.

A new regulation also allows hunters to take an additional five mergansers, of which no more than one may be a hooded merganser.

Duck and goose hunters are reminded that in addition to a state hunting license, both federal and state duck stamps are required for hunting waterfowl. State duck stamps are available at Wildlife Department installations and most license dealers, while federal stamps are available only at U.S. Post Offices.

-30-

Duck identification guide now available

Oklahoma waterfowl hunting seasons are no longer governed by the point system, but restrictions on the bag limit still make it necessary to identify different species of ducks and geese.

"Waterfowl Identification in the Central Flyway," a 60-page booklet published by the Central Flyway Waterfowl Council, is a handy tool for sportsmen who want to brush up on their waterfowl identification skills.

This full-color publication features paintings of ducks in various stages of plumage, photos of wings and descriptions of distinguishing characteristics to aid in identifying birds in hand and in flight. A run down of past, present and future waterfowl management strategies is also included in this pocket-sized book, as well as brief descriptions of other water birds including herons, swans and cranes.

"Waterfowl Identification in the Central Flyway" is available at Wildlife Department headquarters in Oklahoma City for \$1 or by mail for \$2. When ordering by mail, enclose \$2 along with correct return address and send to Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 1801 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

-30-

This weekend on Outdoor Oklahoma

Winterizing Your Boat and the Wildlife Department's New Law Enforcement Chief are the featured topics Saturday evening October 20 at 6:30 p.m. on Outdoor Oklahoma. Texoma Striper Fishing as well as other outdoor subjects are scheduled for airing Sunday morning at 8:00 on the weekend's second presentation of the state's premier outdoor program.

The weekly 30-minute program is produced by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in cooperation with the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority, and can be seen on channels 13 (Oklahoma City), 11 (Tulsa), 3 (Eufaula) and 12 (Cheyenne).

Guest Larry Taylor, Department law enforcement chief, will join host David Warren in discussing these topics. Regular features include Booming Ground and the Outdoor Report.

-30-

October 12, 1990

Don't overlook fall trout fishing

Oklahoma anglers who think they have to wait until winter to catch a mess of trout should try fall fishing at the lower Mountain Fork River, according to fisheries personnel with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Kim Erickson, Wildlife Department fisheries chief, said the Mountain Fork area and the trout area at the lower Illinois River are open year round, giving anglers plenty of good trout fishing opportunities.

"Both these areas offer very good trout fishing in fall," Erickson said. "And both have fine facilities that allow families to combine trout fishing with a nice weekend outing."

The lower Mountain Fork area includes 12 miles of designated trout stream below the Broken Bow dam downstream to U.S. Highway 70. Much of the stream lies within Beavers Bend State Park.

The lower Illinois River area encompasses about 7.75 miles of stream below Lake Tenkiller dam downstream to the State Highway 64 bridge near Gore. Several public access points are available along the stream.

Anglers should keep in mind that trout season will open soon at Oklahoma's other designated areas.

Trout fishing at the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area starts the last Saturday in October. The Blue River trout area is located four miles east of Tishomingo on Highway 78 and six miles north in Johnston County.

The season opener for the Quartz Mountain Trout Area is Nov. 1. Quartz Mountain anglers can trout fish in the North Fork of the Red River from Altus-Lugert Dam downstream to the low water dam at State Highway 44A. This area adjoins Quartz Mountain State Park.

Nov. 1 is also the trout season opener at Lake Watonga. This 55-acre Department lake is located in Blaine County seven miles north of Watonga within Roman Nose State Park.

Panhandle anglers can fish for trout from Nov. 1 to April 30 at Lake Etling, which is located in Cimarron County, 32 miles northwest of Boise City. This 159-acre lake is located in Black Mesa State Park.

Anglers visiting one of these trout areas should realize that special regulations apply. All persons fishing at the designated trout areas, regardless of residency, age or disability, must have a special trout license in addition to their regular

fishing license as required by Oklahoma fishing regulations.

The limit is six trout daily, with 12 allowed in possession after the first day. Only one pole and line (rod and reel) per person is allowed, and trout caught and placed on a stringer or otherwise held in possession cannot be released.

For maps and information about Oklahoma trout fishing get the free pamphlet, Trout Areas of Oklahoma. To order, write to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 1801 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

-30-

Fall turkey season opener approaching

State hunters who want to bag a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner can begin their quest Oct. 27 when the fall firearm turkey season opens.

The season runs through Nov. 16 in the 50 counties open to fall firearm turkey hunting.

Greg Duffy, game chief for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, said hunting prospects are good going into the season.

"Populations are looking good, so hunters should have a pretty good chance for success," he said. "Having lots of grasshoppers this year has given birds a ready food source through the summer and into fall."

Counties that have a bag limit of one turkey of either sex include Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Comanche, Dewey, Ellis, Grant, Harper, Jackson, Kingfisher, Latimer, LeFlore, Logan, Major, McCurtain, Osage, Pawnee, Payne, Pushmataha, Roger Mills, Tillman, Woods and Woodward.

Counties with a bag limit of one tom turkey are Caddo, Canadian, Carter, Cimarron, Cotton, Creek, Custer, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Haskell, Jefferson, Kay, Kiowa, Lincoln, Love, Noble, McIntosh, Murray, Muskogee, Okfuskee, Seminole, Sequoyah, Stephens, Texas and Washita.

The season limit is one turkey.

Legal firearms for fall turkeys are shotguns, handguns or rifles at landowner's option on private lands. Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Muskogee, Pushmataha and Sequoyah counties are shotgun only, except when fall turkey season runs concurrently with deer primitive season. Then muzzleloading rifles are allowed.

Hunters taking a turkey in some counties must check their bird at the nearest hunter check station or with a Department employee. Those counties are Atoka, Cherokee, Choc-

taw, Coal, Craig, Delaware, Haskell, Hughes, Latimer, LeFlore, Mayes, McCurtain, McIntosh, Muskogee, Nowata, Ottawa, Pittsburg, Pushmataha, Rogers, Sequoyah, Wagoner and Washington.

-30-

Public help needed to monitor whoopers

Fall is here, and it won't be long until endangered whooping cranes make their annual migration through Oklahoma en route to their wintering grounds in Texas.

This fall marks the twenty-eighth migration monitored with the cooperation of state and federal wildlife agencies from Central Canada through the United States.

John Skeen, nongame biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, said the public is an important link in the whooping crane protection chain.

"Again this year we're asking anyone who sights a whooping crane to report it immediately," Skeen said. "With the low number of whoopers, it's imperative that the remaining ones be closely monitored so as many as possible make it back to the wintering grounds."

Whooping cranes that migrate through the state are part of the flock from Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada. They winter at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf Coast of Texas.

This fall about 155 whooping cranes are expected to migrate to the coast, 10 more than last year.

Whooping cranes are large, white birds with wingspans of about seven feet and dark wingtips. Pelicans and snow geese look similar in flight, but are usually found in much larger flocks than whoopers.

Whooping cranes begin migrating through Oklahoma from October through late November. Most sightings are made in the western part of the state, particularly in the vicinity of Great Salt Plains and Washita national wildlife refuges.

The total world population of whooping cranes now numbers about 230, a new high since record keeping began in the early 1900s. About 50 years ago before restoration efforts began, only 16 whooping cranes survived in the wild.

Anyone who sees a whooper should report the time, place and other details to Wildlife Department officials. Report sightings to the state game ranger in your county or to Skeen at (405)521-4619.

-30-

October 12, 1990

APPENDIX B

USAGE OF NEWS RELEASE STORIES

| | <u># Papers appeared in</u> | | | <u># from sheet</u> | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | <u>Daily</u> | <u>Weekly</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Daily</u> | <u>Weekly</u> | <u>Total</u> |
| 1990 deer harvest on target for record | 18 | 29 | 47 | 11 | 10 | 21 |
| Deer hunters set new harvest record | 7 | 37 | 44 | 4 | 18 | 22 |
| Duck seasons set to reopen Dec. 15 | 4 | 33 | 37 | 4 | 19 | 23 |
| Lifetime licenses for Christmas gifts | 5 | 31 | 36 | 2 | 18 | 20 |
| Last chance for state deer hunters | 4 | 30 | 34 | 3 | 21 | 24 |
| Dates, sites set for public game hearings | 13 | 20 | 33 | 6 | 7 | 13 |
| Fall turkey season opener approaching | 7 | 26 | 33 | 4 | 12 | 16 |
| Public hearing dates approaching | 13 | 20 | 33 | 6 | 7 | 13 |
| Primitive opener set for October 20 | 13 | 19 | 32 | 7 | 13 | 20 |
| 1990 quail season similar to last year's | 9 | 23 | 32 | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| It's the law: Outer garment law | 11 | 15 | 26 | 7 | 11 | 18 |
| Panhandle pheasant opener set for Dec. 1 | 12 | 14 | 26 | 8 | 9 | 17 |
| Some areas closed during deer gun hunt | 7 | 19 | 26 | 6 | 11 | 17 |
| Wildlife portrait: White-tailed deer | 9 | 16 | 25 | 6 | 9 | 15 |
| Wildlife portrait: Bobwhite quail | 7 | 18 | 25 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| Feeder kits make good holiday gifts | 1 | 23 | 24 | 1 | 10 | 11 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| Wintering eagle pamphlets available | 2 | 21 | 23 | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| Winter bird survey forms now available | 7 | 15 | 22 | 4 | 11 | 15 |
| It's the law: | | | | | | |
| Bobcat regulations | 6 | 16 | 22 | 5 | 11 | 16 |
| Wildlife tree, shrub seedlings available | 4 | 17 | 21 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| Furbearer seasons open in December | 6 | 15 | 21 | 4 | 10 | 14 |
| Duck, goose seasons set to open Nov. 10 | 7 | 13 | 20 | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Pheasant hunters should stress safety | 6 | 14 | 20 | 4 | 7 | 11 |
| Public help needed to minor whoopers | 2 | 18 | 20 | 2 | 9 | 11 |
| Deer handbook is now available | 4 | 16 | 20 | 4 | 9 | 13 |
| Length limit reduced for flathead catfish | 4 | 16 | 20 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| Steel shot areas added in Oklahoma | 5 | 15 | 20 | 4 | 12 | 16 |
| Waterfowl regulation pamphlets available | 4 | 15 | 19 | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| Wildlife quiz: | | | | | | |
| Scaled quail | 7 | 12 | 19 | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Duck identification guide now available | 4 | 14 | 18 | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Deer harvest still on record track | 9 | 9 | 18 | 6 | 7 | 13 |
| Weyerhaeuser donates to bald eagle project | 4 | 13 | 17 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| State man fined in eagle death | 2 | 15 | 17 | 1 | 14 | 15 |
| Attracting birds booklet now available | 1 | 16 | 17 | 0 | 10 | 10 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| Deer hunting safety should be a priority | 5 | 12 | 17 | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| It's the law: Primitive firearms | 1 | 16 | 17 | 1 | 14 | 15 |
| Northwest pheasant hunt opens Nov. 20 | 4 | 12 | 16 | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Wildlife quiz: Fish and winter | 4 | 12 | 16 | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| Study indicates loss of Oklahoma wetlands | 6 | 10 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Trophy brown trout program planned | 7 | 9 | 16 | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| Fly fishing clinics set at Beaver's Bend | 5 | 11 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Crane, early duck seasons open soon | 4 | 11 | 15 | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Bird feeder kits available again | 5 | 9 | 14 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| Don't overlook fall trout fishing | 5 | 8 | 13 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Wildlife quiz: Bird migration | 3 | 10 | 13 | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Trout derby slated for Nov. 10 and 11 | 5 | 7 | 12 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Duck stamp contest begins in November | 5 | 7 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| It's the law: Pheasant regulations | 5 | 6 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Department honored by rivers commission | 4 | 7 | 11 | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| Outdoor Oklahoma good for Christmas | 8 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Outdoor Oklahoma new issue available | 0 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 8 | 8 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|---|---|---|
| Reloading safe if directions followed | 2 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 1990 habitat caps, patches still available | 3 | 7 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Zone 1 duck opener scheduled for Oct. 27 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Prairie chicken hunt set for Nov. 10 opener | 2 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Wildlife director to head international | 4 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Wildlife quiz: Reptiles & Amphibians | 2 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Tishomingo man sets blue cat record | 2 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| Tulsa man pays fine in least tern deaths | 3 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Tulsa bass group makes contribution | 2 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Darter propagation program underway | 4 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Wetlands conference scheduled for Nov. 27 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 5 |

APPENDIX C
CONTENT ANALYSIS INSTRUCTIONS
AND SCORE SHEET

CONTENT ANALYSIS DEFINITIONS

The following news elements may or may not appear in each release. Using the definitions provided below, please mark "present" or "absent" on the score sheets depending on whether the news element in question occurs in that release. Please read the entire news release before deciding on the presence or absence of a news element.

1. INFORMATION -- The news release should answer the questions Who?, What?, When?, Where?, and Why?
2. NEWS VALUE -- The release will be considered as having news value if it contains "prominence," "normality" or "significance." Prominence is defined as news involving a person, group or institution that has gained fame through accomplishment, accident, etc. Normality is defined as content involving oddity, conflict or normal situations. Oddity is something rarer than unusual. Conflict is a clash between persons, places or things. Normal are actions not considered an oddity or a conflict. Significance is defined as participation in an event by a large number of readers or the potential impact of something on a large number of readers.
3. LOCAL ANGLE -- A news release must concern or be concerned in some way to the people receiving the information. The information must concern the people within the newspaper's circulation area.
4. MECHANICAL/GRAMMATICAL ERRORS -- Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation and word usage.
5. POORLY WRITTEN -- Information that does not flow smoothly from the lead.
6. TIMELINESS -- The release must concern information that affects people today or in the near future. Near future is defined as within a two-week time period.

Please check for the presence or absence of each of the news elements defined on the accompanying sheet and record results here. For example, if the release contains the "information" element as defined, check the "present" line beside "Information." If not, check the "absent" line. Please read the entire release before determining the presence or absence of a news element.

Wildlife director to head International

The director of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has been elected president of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Steve Lewis, Wildlife Department director for the past nine years, was chosen to head the premiere association of state, federal and private wildlife agencies, which provides the primary leadership in the world for professional wildlife management.

Lewis has been with the Wildlife Department since 1969. He held several different positions before becoming director, including fisheries biologist, assistant fisheries chief, chief of fisheries and assistant director.

With administrative offices in Washington, D.C., IAFWA officers are from various wildlife agencies and organizations around the continent. The association is composed of all states or territories of the United States, provinces of Canada, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Government, the Dominion of Canada, and governments of countries located in the western hemisphere, as well as individual associate members.

-30-

| <u>NEWS ELEMENT</u> | <u>PRESENT</u> | <u>ABSENT</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Information | _____ | _____ |
| News Value | _____ | _____ |
| Local Angle | _____ | _____ |
| Mechanical/ Grammatical Errors | _____ | _____ |
| Poorly Written | _____ | _____ |
| Timeliness | _____ | _____ |

VITA

Mark A. Chesnut

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: UTILIZATION OF WILDLIFE NEWS RELEASES IN RELATION
TO RELEASE CATEGORY AND NEWSPAPER TYPE

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, June
20, 1962, the son of Lewis and JoAnn Chesnut.

Education: Graduated from Tuttle High School, Tuttle,
Oklahoma, in May 1980; received Bachelor of
Science Degree in Wildlife Ecology from Oklahoma
State University in May, 1984; completed
requirements for the Master of Science degree at
Oklahoma State University in May, 1991

Professional Experience: Outdoor/General Assignment
Reporter, Enid Morning News and Daily Eagle, May,
1984, to August, 1985; Teaching Assistant,
School of Journalism and Broadcasting, Oklahoma
State University, August, 1985, to August, 1986;
Information Specialist, Oklahoma Department of
Wildlife Conservation, August, 1986, to present.