

ARKANSAS NEWSPAPER EDITORS' ATTITUDES
TOWARD AGRICULTURAL NEWS

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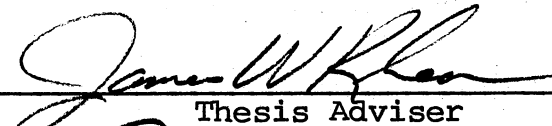
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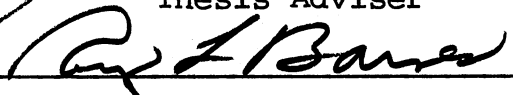
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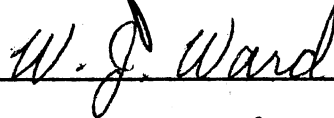
ARKANSAS NEWSPAPER EDITORS' ATTITUDES
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PREFACE

This study attempted to determine what Arkansas newspaper editors foresee as their needs for agricultural news in 1976, how agricultural news competes for space with other types of news in Arkansas newspapers, what sources of agricultural news are most important to Arkansas newspaper editors and the usefulness of the information sent out by the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service (ACES) Editorial Office.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to his major adviser, Dr. James W. Rhea, for his assistance throughout the entire graduate program, and most especially, during this study. Appreciation also is expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Walter J. Ward and Dr. Rey Barnes, for their suggestions and assistance in completing this manuscript. Grateful and loving appreciation is given to my wife, Mrs. Margaret Johnston, for typing this thesis.

Mr. David E. Ryker, Extension Editor, and Mr. Kenneth S. Bates, Director of Extension, were very generous with resources of the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office, for which the author is very appreciative. Of course, the study would have been impossible without the cooperation of the 82 newspaper editors throughout Arkansas who took time to return the mail questionnaires.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES	1
Introduction	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Space Devoted to Agricultural News	6
Factors Affecting Use	7
Preferred Types of Agricultural News	9
Intended Audiences	11
Sources of Agricultural News	12
Evaluation of Agricultural Information	15
Summary	16
III. METHODOLOGY	21
Hypothesis	22
Definitions	22
Questionnaire and Related Objectives	23
Sampling Procedure	25
IV. RESULTS	31
Agricultural News Use and Reader Interest	34
Editors' Interest in Agricultural Subjects	35
Use of ACES News Releases	41
Use of ACES Photo Releases	43
Newspaper Space Competition	44
Use of Agricultural News Sources	48
News Selection Factors	49
ACES Services Evaluation	50
Area News Interest	53
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	63
Objectives: Relevant Findings	63
Limitations of the Study	67
Conclusions and Recommendations	68

Chapter	Page
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	72
APPENDIXES	75
APPENDIX A - QUESTIONNAIRE	76
APPENDIX B - COVER LETTER MAILED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE	80
APPENDIX C - SECOND COVER LETTER	82
APPENDIX D - SAMPLES OF THE TWO NEWS SERVICES TO NEWSPAPERS FROM THE ACES EDITORIAL OFFICE	84

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Number of Daily Newspaper Editors' Responses in Each of Five Possible Degree-of-Interest Categories for Ten Agricultural News Subjects	36
II. Number of Weekly Newspaper Editors' Responses in Each of Five Possible Degree-of-Interest Categories for Ten Agricultural News Subjects	37
III. Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors' Interest In, and Mean Difference Between, Ten Agricultural News Subjects	39
IV. Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors' Interest Compared Between Raw and Finished Agricultural Product News	41
V. 1975 ACES News Release Percent of Use by Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors	42
VI. 1975 ACES Photo Release Percent of Use by Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors	43
VII. Number of Daily Editors Indicating Likelihood of Cutting Back on Ten Subject Categories	45
VIII. Number of Weekly Editors Indicating Likelihood of Cutting Back on Ten Subject Categories	46
IX. Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors' Interests in Ten Subject Categories	47
X. Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors' Use of Agricultural News Sources	49

Table	Page
XI. Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors' Value of Seven Factors Used in the Selection of Agricultural News	50
XII. Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors' Evaluation of Two ACES Services on Eight Criteria	52

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Number and Location of Daily Newspapers in Arkansas	28
2. Number and Location of Weekly Newspapers in Arkansas	29
3. Location of 21 Daily Newspapers Returning Questionnaire	32
4. Location of 61 Weekly Newspapers Returning Questionnaire	33
5. Plotted Scores for Interest in Agricultural News Among Daily Newspapers Returning Questionnaire	56
6. Relative Degree of Interest in Agricultural News Among Daily Newspapers Returning Questionnaire	57
7. Plotted Scores for Interest in Agricultural News Among Weekly Newspapers Returning Questionnaire	59
8. Relative Degree of Interest in Agricultural News Among Weekly Newspapers Returning Questionnaire	60

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction

American agriculture is big business. Because agriculture touches the lives of Americans daily, it is of great concern not only to the farmer but to the consumer.

Agriculture, therefore, becomes big news. The farmer's job is more important and much more complex today than in the past. There are fewer farms today, but they are larger and are forced to be more efficient than ever. To be successful, farmers must have the latest farming information. The consumer, to be a wise and thrifty shopper, also must have the latest product information.

Confusion and turmoil over high grocery bills and high profits attributed to farmers create a greater need among the farmers and consumers for agriculture news. Since the farmer also is a consumer, he is concerned with higher food costs. Agricultural leaders recognize that consumers and non-farm audiences need to be kept informed of the farmer's changing situation and farming developments.

Printing, labor, and material costs, have caused newspaper editors to be more selective and demanding in regard to the various sources and amounts of agricultural news.¹

Because of the above mentioned problems, will newspaper editors print more or less agricultural news? Do newspaper editors think there is a great public interest for agricultural news?

Suppliers of agricultural news need to know two things that relate to these questions. First, what agricultural news do newspaper editors want. Secondly, how do they want it prepared.² Are agricultural communicators supplying unwanted or unuseable news to newspapers?

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, as a supplier of agricultural news, is concerned with answers to these questions. The Editorial Office has never made an official study of Arkansas newspaper editors' wants or needs for agricultural news. Such a study would greatly benefit both the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and Arkansas newspapermen.

Objectives of a study of this type are manifold. Basically, the office needs to determine (1) the Arkansas newspaper editors' perceived needs for agricultural news in the future, (2) how other news competes with agricultural news, (3) the newspaper editors' most important sources of agricultural news, and (4) the usefulness of the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service news releases as a news source.

This study should help the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service editorial staff determine how much and what kind of agricultural information to supply Arkansas

newspapers.

It should help the staff decide how present efforts to supply agricultural news compares with competing news sources as to the quantity and quality of information supplied to Arkansas newspapers.

Since a diverse and wide range of subject matter is involved in the Extension Service outreach, it is impossible to cover them all with the present editorial staff. To add staff members would be costly. Research which would reveal what agricultural and Extension news newspaper editors will print should help the Editorial Office to better supply that news, preferably without additional employees. This would provide a more efficient service to the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service program outreach.

The Smith-Lever Act passed in 1914 states that a major function of the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is "...to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture..."³ Hopefully, this research will help the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service editorial staff to better fulfill this function.

FOOTNOTES

¹"APME Poll Indicates Cut in the News Hole," Editor & Publisher, Vol. 106 (October 13, 1973), p. 66.

²William B. Ward, Reporting Agriculture (2nd ed., New York, 1959), p. vii.

³Lincoln D. Kelsey and Cannon C. Hearne, Cooperative Extension Work (2nd ed., New York, 1955), p. 29.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most complete studies on the subject of reaching families with agricultural news was done by the Statistical Laboratory at Iowa State University. The survey indicates that people get 58.2 percent of their agricultural news from farm papers and 25.7 percent from newspapers.¹ Thus, it seems appropriate to study the attitudes of newspaper editors toward agricultural news.

Several studies examining the attitudes of newspaper editors toward agricultural news already have been done. One was made in Arkansas in 1936, but a documented up-to-date study has not been made by the present Extension editorial staff.

The 1936 Arkansas study questioned 107 rural newspaper editors about their preferences regarding extension service news releases. The editors wanted stories of individual and group accomplishment and achievement by farmers and farm women. More than half wanted mats to illustrate extension news. A majority preferred to get news from county extension agents. Articles of one typewritten page in length were preferred to longer ones.²

Other related studies undertaken by various states can be categorized into six areas — those related to

(1) amount of newspaper space devoted to agricultural news, (2) factors affecting use of agricultural news, (3) types of agricultural news most popular with editors, (4) intended audience, (5) major sources of agricultural news, and (6) use and evaluation by newspaper editors of agricultural news disseminated from college and university information offices.³

Space Devoted to Agricultural News

A 1934 study by J. M. Stedman showed that the amount of newspaper space devoted to agricultural news increased between 1914 and 1930.⁴ In his sample of 58 daily newspapers in 13 states, Stedman compared the amount of agricultural news printed during one week in 1914 and one week in 1930. He found 66 percent more agricultural news articles in 1930 than in 1914. However, individual agricultural stories had become shorter during those 16 years. In terms of column inches, agricultural lineage increased 45 percent between the two time periods.

In a Wisconsin study of 63 United States dailies in 1948, it was found that agricultural news made up 0.3 to 2.3 percent of all non-advertising space.⁵ In a related analysis of 38 Vermont newspapers in 1954, G. Gross found that dailies devoted 3.6 percent of their total news space to agriculture. Daily editors there also indicated that Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were the heaviest agricultural news days.⁶ Paul J. Deutschmann's 1959 analysis of

five Ohio dailies showed agricultural news made up 0.2 to 2.4 percent of the total news and editorial space.⁷

James F. Evans indicated in 1966 that, although most editors did not consider farm news pages as "money-makers," they planned to continue printing about the same amount of agricultural news.⁸

David J. Miller, in 1967, examined Missouri newspaper editors' attitudes toward news and information distributed by the University of Missouri Agricultural Office. Miller found a relatively low use of daily releases. On the average, editors in his study used about one-fourth of this material. He concluded that perhaps fewer releases of more general interest would be worth considering.⁹

Missouri newspaper editors were surveyed again in 1974 by David McAllister. Nearly a third of Missouri editors provided more space for agricultural news in 1973, than they did in 1972, and nearly half expected to use more agricultural news in 1974.¹⁰

Michael W. Sampson reported in 1974 that about three-fourths of Washington state's daily and weekly editors said they plan to use the same amount of agricultural news in the coming year, and about one-fourth plan to use more. Only eight percent of weekly editors said they wanted less agricultural news from all sources.¹¹

Factors Affecting Use

In his 1961 study of agricultural news usage, in

certain Illinois daily newspapers, James Haskell White found that editors with a heavy use of farm news were more inclined to feel that farm news could contribute to the profitability of their newspapers.¹²

White indicated the editor's background had little to do with the use of farm news, and that mechanical problems such as sending news to the wrong person at the newspaper did not necessarily influence its use.¹³

Miller's research indicated that editors wanted column material that did not exceed one and one-half to two typewritten, double-spaced pages.¹⁴

In a 1969 Georgia study, Donald J. Johnson found that newspaper editors for the most part use agricultural news items mainly on the bases of reader interest and local adaptation. Even at that time, Johnson found that about a third of daily and weekly editors thought their non-farm readers were becoming more interested in agricultural news.¹⁵

Forrest D. Cress, in a 1973 California survey, found that local angle, dependability of source and subject matter were ranked in that order by most dailies as top considerations to print agricultural news releases. The same three considerations were ranked in slightly different order by weekly editors — local angle, subject matter and dependability of source, respectively.¹⁶

Sampson found that Washington's daily and weekly editors ranked reader interest and adaptability to a local

situation as key factors in deciding whether to use a particular news story.¹⁷ This corresponds with Johnson's Georgia data, in which 95.8 percent of the weekly editors and 83.4 percent of the daily editors in that state considered reader interest as important in deciding to use a story.¹⁸

Camera-ready copy was a factor that appeared in McAllister's study in 1974. Forty-eight percent of the editors said they wanted "more" or "much more" camera-ready copy.¹⁹

Preferred Types of Agricultural News

Results of several studies pointed out that dailies stress agricultural articles about events and economics.

In a 1942 Wisconsin study, a survey was made of agricultural news used in two issues of 63 daily newspapers from 31 states. According to the study, those newspapers which employ a full-time, trained farm editor present agricultural news most effectively. Farm editors seek out stories about actual farm experiences, play up those of economic importance, and rely mostly upon the extension service, both local and state.²⁰

In a 1950 study of 41 New York dailies, Alfred N. Schwartz found that marketing and economic topics made up 42 percent of all agricultural news printed. Rural-life topics made up 36 percent, and stories about agricultural production made up the remaining 22 percent.²¹

Gross found that dailies used spot news more than subject matter stories (those on agricultural topics but not related to a specific event or "news peg"). He concluded that economic subjects proved most popular among newspapers he sampled in Vermont.²²

Holim Kim found in a trend study of agricultural news in New York there was a significant rise in research reports. He also found a decrease (eight percent) in reports about persons, awards and announcements.²³

Less emphasis on economic articles was apparent in Howard Frisbee's 1961 study of Ohio daily editors. The 51 editors he interviewed listed the following in order of preference: youth organizations, crops, adult organizations, animals, conservation, forestry and wildlife, food buying and nutrition, lawn and garden, food marketing, clothing, engineering, and interrelationship of town and country.²⁴

P. J. Tichenor, G. A. Donohue and C. N. Olien concluded in a 1963 Minnesota report that "...event stories received preferential display in comparison to subject matter articles." Thirty-six percent of the weekly newspapers sampled preferred event stories, whereas seven percent of the dailies wanted event stories. Nearly half the special event stories were located on page one of the sampled weekly and daily papers. Only 14 percent of the subject matter stories got page-one treatment. Among the daily papers, 10 percent of the event stories were located on page one, and only 3 percent of the subject matter stories received this

play.²⁵

In a 1967 Arizona study, George Alstad reported that daily editors showed stronger preference for agricultural stories than for family living stories. Weekly editors showed over-all preference for 4-H stories.²⁶

Suggestions made by editors in Miller's study included writing localized stories for four-or-five-county areas, and being more specific in releases and feature stories.²⁷

The 1974 study by McAllister showed that daily editors ranked subject matter first as to the use of an agricultural story. Local adaptability was first with weekly editors.²⁸

Intended Audiences

Kim's New York study showed that 11 percent more agricultural stories were written for a general audience in 1960 than in 1955.²⁹

Joel Wolfson's 1960 study of Midwestern dailies in metropolitan areas indicated that farm editors of eight metropolitan papers were writing for both the city reader and farm reader.³⁰

Frisbee reported that three-fourths of the 164 Ohio weekly and daily editors he sampled aimed their agricultural news at rural readers. He found that two-fifths tried to reach suburban readers and one-sixth tried to appeal to urban readers. Editors used local names, individual farmer's problems and short local stories to appeal to rural readers. Suburban and urban readers were reached

through stories of wide interest — about significant events, well-known people or very unusual situations.³¹

Evans' Illinois study indicated about three-fourths of printed agricultural news items were directed mainly toward farmers. About one-half were placed in identified agricultural news sections. Nearly one-third of these farm news stories were in the fourth quarter of the editions.³²

Sources of Agricultural News

Several studies were found which questioned where newspaper editors get their agricultural news.

Schwartz's study showed that newspapers' own staffs provided 22 percent of the agricultural news; county extension agents, 20 percent; wire services and syndicates, 15 percent; state department of agriculture and markets, 15 percent; and the state extension service, 6 percent. Farm organizations and commercial firms provided the remaining 22 percent. The source of each kind of news story was generally interpreted. Newspaper staffs provided agricultural news about rural life; county extension agents and the state extension service supplied farm production information; wire services and syndicates, state department of agriculture and markets, and farm organizations and commercial firms produced the bulk of economic and marketing news. The majority of news stories dealt with items of specific local rural interest.³³

William B. Ward found in a 1941 study of 63 daily newspapers from 31 states that these newspapers were using more agricultural news from county extension agents than any other source, with state extension services not far behind.³⁴

Frisbee's study indicated that "...although numerous sources were named, the Ohio Agricultural Extension Service, including county and state offices and 4-H clubs, was listed as the most important source of (agricultural) news..." for the 164 Ohio newspapers sampled.³⁵

Evans found Illinois dailies relied more heavily on wire service material and less heavily on Cooperative Extension Service material.³⁶

Johnson found that the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service was rated second only to county extension agents as the most important source of agricultural news for Georgia newspapers. Johnson concluded that, with the passing of the "farm editor" on the staffs of most Georgia newspapers, agricultural news sources such as the Extension Service were depended upon to provide the necessary information to keep editors and the state abreast of developments and over-all situations in agriculture.³⁷

All 31 active members of the Newspaper Farm Editors of America responding to a 1971 survey conducted by J. Cordell Hatch at Pennsylvania State University said they received news material from county extension agents, and 90 percent said they received material from agricultural college

editors. Ninety-six percent reported receiving releases each week from county agents, with 14 percent of the editors saying they would use "much more" material and 32 percent saying "some more" material.³⁸

Hatch also reported a similar study in 1971 surveying members of the American Agricultural Editors Association which brought responses from 82 members. Of this total, 99 percent received material from Agricultural college editors, and 61 percent received material from county extension agents.³⁹

In the 1973 survey of California newspapers, Cress found that one-third of the dailies replying to his mail questionnaire said they used 50 percent or more of the news releases sent by the California Agricultural Extension Service. Three quarters of them used 25 percent or more of the stories. Stories covered areas on environmental quality and protection, local 4-H activities, plant and animal pests and diseases, plant and animal production, county farm and home advisor activities, and family and consumer science.⁴⁰

Sampson studied the relative importance of agricultural news sources to weekly and daily editors in Washington and found that the county extension agent is the number one source by a large percentage. He also found farmers ranked second by daily and weekly editors, although in the case of daily editors, the Washington State University Cooperative Extension Service tied for second with farmers.⁴¹

Miller found Missouri editors did not expect anything in particular from the Agricultural Editor's Office. The office should feel free to make necessary changes in its service without fear of alienating editors, he concluded.⁴²

McAllister's 1974 study of Missouri editors revealed that the county or area extension specialists were the most important agricultural news source for daily and weekly editors. Farmers ranked second as the most important news source. Daily releases from the UMC Agricultural Editor's Office ranked fourth with dailies and last with weeklies.⁴³

Evaluation of Agricultural Information

In a 1963 study, Janet L. Wallace concluded that, although the weekly agricultural news packet sent out by the University of West Virginia had some shortcomings, it was judged a worthwhile service by both newspapers and extension agents. She said it had to be of high quality to compete with all other news that editors received.⁴⁴

Editors in Johnson's study rated the material received from Georgia extension news editors as "good" on a scale of excellent-good-fair-poor. The most frequent suggestion for improving the extension news services was that more local-interest material be provided.⁴⁵

Cress concluded that California's daily newspapers generally value - and make considerable use of - information in Agricultural Extension news releases. Agricultural Extension is recognized by the state's newspapers as being

a most important source of agricultural news.⁴⁶

In his 1967 study, David Miller found that only one-fourth of the daily releases were used.⁴⁷

The editors in Sampson's study in Washington state ranked the four areas of subject matter, timeliness, story length and style on a scale ranging from "excellent" to "poor." For the most part, the editors there ranked the four areas as "good."⁴⁸

McAllister found that the UMC Agricultural Editor's Office news releases were rated between "average" and "good" in usefulness. About 38 percent of the editors said they were using more than one-fourth of the agricultural material sent to them.⁴⁹

Summary

There are several general conclusions which may be drawn from the literature reviewed in regards to newspaper editors' use of agricultural news.

First, daily newspaper editors tend to place more emphasis on articles dealing with events and economics than with subject matter, when deciding use of agricultural stories.

Second, agricultural news sources continue to aim most of their material at farm readers, whereas daily newspaper editors prefer to have agricultural news directed at both urban and rural readers.

Third, agricultural news makes up a small share of

the total lineage in most newspapers, especially dailies in metropolitan areas.

Fourth, agricultural extension news sources - including county and area field specialists and college agricultural editors - compete favorably with other sources of agricultural news in getting their news printed in daily and weekly newspapers. On the whole, extension news is considered good by editors, and most of them say they want and will use more agricultural news and photos from extension sources.

Fifth, editors rate reader interest and local adaptability very high in selecting agricultural news, but also consider subject matter.

Since the situation in agricultural news has changed drastically since much of the research cited was undertaken, there is a need for current on-going studies in this area.

Although recent studies have been made in Washington, California and Missouri, they cannot be considered valid in Arkansas since each state has its own distinct problems and circumstances. A study on the general topic of newspaper editors' attitudes toward agricultural news is especially needed in Arkansas considering that the last official study was in the 1930's.

FOOTNOTES

¹Hadley Read, Getting Information to Farm Families (Urbana, Illinois, 1955), p. 22.

²Lincoln D. Kelsey and Cannon C. Hearne, Cooperative Extension Work (2nd ed., New York, 1955), p. 238.

³David Wayne McAllister, "Attitudes of Missouri Newspaper Editors Toward Agricultural News" (unpub. master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1974), p. 11.

⁴J. M. Stedman, A Study of Agricultural, Home Economics, and 4-H Club Articles in Representative Daily and Weekly Newspapers in 1914 and 1930, U. S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service Circular 202 (Washington, D. C., 1934), p. 3.

⁵Content of Selected U. S. Dailies, October 23-November 1, 1948, University of Wisconsin, Bulletin 16 (Madison, Wis., 1948), p. 19.

⁶G. Gross, The Use of Agricultural News in the Vermont Press, Vermont Agricultural College Extension Service, Pub. No. 36 (Montpelier, 1954).

⁷Paul J. Deutschmann, Newspage Content of Twelve Metropolitan Dailies (Scripps-Howard Research, New York, 1959), pp. 96-117.

⁸James F. Evans, Agricultural News in Illinois Daily Newspapers, University of Illinois, Research Bulletin 717 (Urbana, Illinois, 1966), p. 30.

⁹David J. Miller, "Newspaper Editors' Attitudes Toward Extension News" (unpub. master's thesis, University of Missouri, 1967), pp. 65-69.

¹⁰McAllister, p. 71.

¹¹Michael W. Sampson, "How Washington State Weekly and Daily Newspaper Editors Choose and Evaluate Their Sources of Agricultural, Home Economics and 4-H News" (unpub. master's thesis, Washington State University, 1974), p. 19.

¹²James Haskell White, "Factors That Influence the Use or Non-Use of Agricultural News in Illinois Non-Metropolitan Daily Newspapers" (unpub. master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1961), p. 32.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Miller, p. 91.

¹⁵Donald J. Johnson, "A Descriptive Study of Some Factors Affecting the News Services of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service" (unpub. master's thesis, University of Georgia, 1969), p. 72.

¹⁶Forrest D. Cress, University of California Agricultural Extension News Service and the State's Newspapers, University of California, Bulletin 18 (Riverside, Calif., 1973), p. 4.

¹⁷Sampson, pp. 67-68.

¹⁸Johnson, p. 27.

¹⁹McAllister, p. 71.

²⁰Lincoln D. Kelsey and Cannon C. Hearne, Cooperative Extension Work (2nd ed., New York, 1955), p. 238.

²¹Alfred N. Schwartz, An Agricultural News Survey of 41 Daily Newspapers in New York State, Cornell University, Bulletin 23 (Ithaca, N. Y., 1950), p. 5.

²²Gross, p. 4.

²³Holim Kim, A Study of the General Trend in News Content--1954-55 and 1959-60, Cornell University, Research Bulletin 113 (Ithaca, N. Y., 1961), p. 4.

²⁴Howard Frisbee, "An Analysis of How Ohio Newspapers Handle Agricultural News" (unpub. master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1961), p. 32.

²⁵p. J. Tichenor, G. A. Donohue, and C. N. Olien, Purposive Communications: A Study of Usage of County Agents' Educational Material in Minnesota Newspapers, University of Minnesota Extension Studies Series No. 6 (St. Paul, Minn., 1963), p. 21.

²⁶George Alstad, Response of Printed Media to News Releases, University of Arizona, Research Bulletin 37 (Tucson, Ariz., 1967), p. 4.

²⁷Miller, p. 92.

- 28 McAllister, p. 73.
- 29 Kim, p. 4.
- 30 Joel Wolfson, "Farm News in the Metropolitan Press," The Quill, Vol. 49 (August, 1961), pp. 15-17.
- 31 Frisbee, p. 8.
- 32 Evans, p. 30.
- 33 Schwartz, p. 5.
- 34 William B. Ward, Reporting Agriculture (Ithaca, N. Y., 1959), p. 59.
- 35 Frisbee, p. 8.
- 36 Evans, p. 30.
- 37 Johnson, p. 73.
- 38 J. Cordell Hatch, Newspaper Farm Editors Survey, Pennsylvania State University, Pub. No. 19 (University Park, Pa., 1971), p. 11.
- 39 J. Cordell Hatch, American Agricultural Editors Survey, Pennsylvania State University, Pub. No. 20 (University Park, Pa., 1971), p. 23.
- 40 Cress, p. 2.
- 41 Sampson, pp. 24-25.
- 42 Miller, p. 92.
- 43 McAllister, pp. 72-73.
- 44 Janet Lee Wallace, "Effectiveness of West Virginia University Agricultural News" (unpub. master's thesis, West Virginia University, 1963), p. 16.
- 45 Johnson, p. 73.
- 46 Cress, p. 4.
- 47 Miller, pp. 65-69.
- 48 Sampson, p. 29.
- 49 McAllister, pp. 73-74.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Arkansas borders on six other states and, as a result, links disparate physical features and life styles such as the plains of Oklahoma and Texas with the hills of Missouri and Tennessee and the heavily populated and relatively affluent agricultural states of Alabama and Louisiana.

Within its own borders, Arkansas contains one of the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas — Little Rock — as well as the agriculturally productive eastern counties and the heavily forested and hilly northern counties, called the Ozarks and Ouachitas.

Agriculture is a greater source of income for counties in eastern Arkansas and for a three-county area in extreme northwestern Arkansas than it is for the remainder of northern Arkansas.¹ This would indicate there might be a substantial difference in interest in agricultural news among newspaper editors in different parts of the state. The author suggested that this study would show significantly greater interest in such news in certain areas of the state.

Hypothesis

It is believed that this study will reveal a significantly greater interest among weekly newspaper editors for news about raw agricultural products, than among daily newspaper editors. The hypothesis is that daily editors show significantly greater interest in news about finished agricultural products than weekly editors.

Definitions

For this study, "raw agricultural products" were defined as those not yet harvested or gone to market, in other words, those which have not reached the consumer. These include grain and forage crops, hogs and feeder pigs, beef cattle, dairy cattle, and poultry and eggs.

"Finished agricultural products" refer to those closer to the consumer than to the farmer. Topics include food prices and supplies, nutrition for consumers (as opposed to nutrition for animals), food safety and canning, farm and home safety, and household information.

Basis for this hypothesis was the author's belief that daily newspapers generally are read more by non-farmers because news is aimed at a broad, diversified audience. Weekly newspapers generally are read more by farmers because news is aimed at a specific, local audience including more farmers.

Questionnaire and Related Objectives

The device used to gather data about the four basic objectives of the study, as well as testing the hypothesis, was a mail questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix A. It was designed to elicit responses from newspaper editors relevant to the objectives and hypothesis.

The first section of the questionnaire asks for the title of the person responding and the degree of his responsibility for deciding how much agricultural news is printed in his newspaper. This is to determine which person at the newspaper should receive the news releases. Each newspaper's address is on file.

The remaining 17 items on the questionnaire are specific questions designed to meet the objectives and hypothesis and other types of general information helpful to the staff of the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office.

The first objective was to determine Arkansas newspaper editors' perceived needs for agricultural information in the future. Questionnaire items related to this objective are 5, 15 and 18, dealing with editors' anticipated use of agricultural news in 1976 compared to 1975, as well as their interest in receiving daily news releases and photo releases from the Editorial Office in the coming year.

The second objective was to determine how agricultural information competes for space with other types of news in

Arkansas newspapers. Questionnaire items 8, 9, and 12 are intended to relate to this objective. They deal with placement of agricultural news in the newspaper, use of farm sections or farm pages, and how likely editors are to cut back on 10 general content categories if faced with the need to do so.

The third objective was to establish what sources of agricultural information are most important to Arkansas newspaper editors. Questionnaire item 13, covering relative frequency with which various sources of agricultural news are being used, is most closely related to this objective.

The fourth objective deals with usefulness of information presently sent out by the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office, as perceived by Arkansas editors. Questionnaire items designed for this objective included 14, 16, 17 and 19. They touch on how much use was made by editors of the two basic services of the ACES Editorial Office and how respondents evaluate each one on a range of "excellent" to "poor."

To determine whether there are regional differences in Arkansas editors' interest in agricultural news, responses to questionnaire items 3 through 6, 14, 15, 17 and 18 were compared. These items attempted to determine how much agricultural news was being used, the editors' perceived estimate of their readers' interest in such news, whether their use of agricultural news was likely to increase in 1976, and

how much use was made of the two basic services of the ACES Editorial Office.

The hypothesis that daily editors show significantly greater interest in news about finished agricultural products than weekly editors was tested by questionnaire item 7. Item 7 asked editors to check on a five-point scale their relative interest in ten agricultural news topics, five of which were about finished agricultural products and five of which were about raw agricultural products.

It should be noted that some questionnaire items were used for more than one purpose, i.e., to relate to the first objective as well as to test the hypothesis. On the other hand, some items (Nos. 1, 2, 10 and 11) asked for general kinds of information not directly related to any of the objectives nor the hypothesis.

Also, some questionnaire items were designed for multiple answers, such as Nos. 8, 9 and 10 on factors which might affect reader interest in agricultural news. However, some editors gave multiple answers to other items as well.

Sampling Procedure

According to the 1975 Arkansas Newspaper Directory, issued by the Arkansas Press Association, the state has 33 hometown dailies and 122 weeklies, including two metropolitan dailies.² Since publication of the directory, one weekly newspaper has ceased operation.

To achieve the greatest representation of editors'

attitudes toward the study topics, the author attempted to get responses from the total population of newspaper editors (154). The size and framework of the research should be manageable — not requiring a sample. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of dailies in the population, and Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of weeklies.

The questionnaire was pre-tested by persons holding advanced degrees and who are active in the field of mass communication or applied research. A number of changes were made in the final draft based on pre-test respondents' suggestions.

The first mailing was November 19, 1975, with a cover letter to the editors of the newspapers. Another mailing to non-respondents was made December 5, with a second cover letter emphasizing that the greater the return, the more meaningful the results. An addressed, postage-paid envelope was enclosed in both mailings. The second letter asked for a return by December 12, 1975. Copies of these letters are included in Appendixes B and C.

The hypothesis--that of an expected difference in interest in raw vs. finished agricultural product news among daily and weekly editors--was tested using an analysis of variance and correlation ratio.

Where deemed appropriate, probability tests were used, especially where data applied to the hypothesis. The question of geographical variation in interest in agricultural news across the state was tested with a t-test, which

measured whether there was a significant difference in the mean interest scores of the highest and lowest sections of the state.

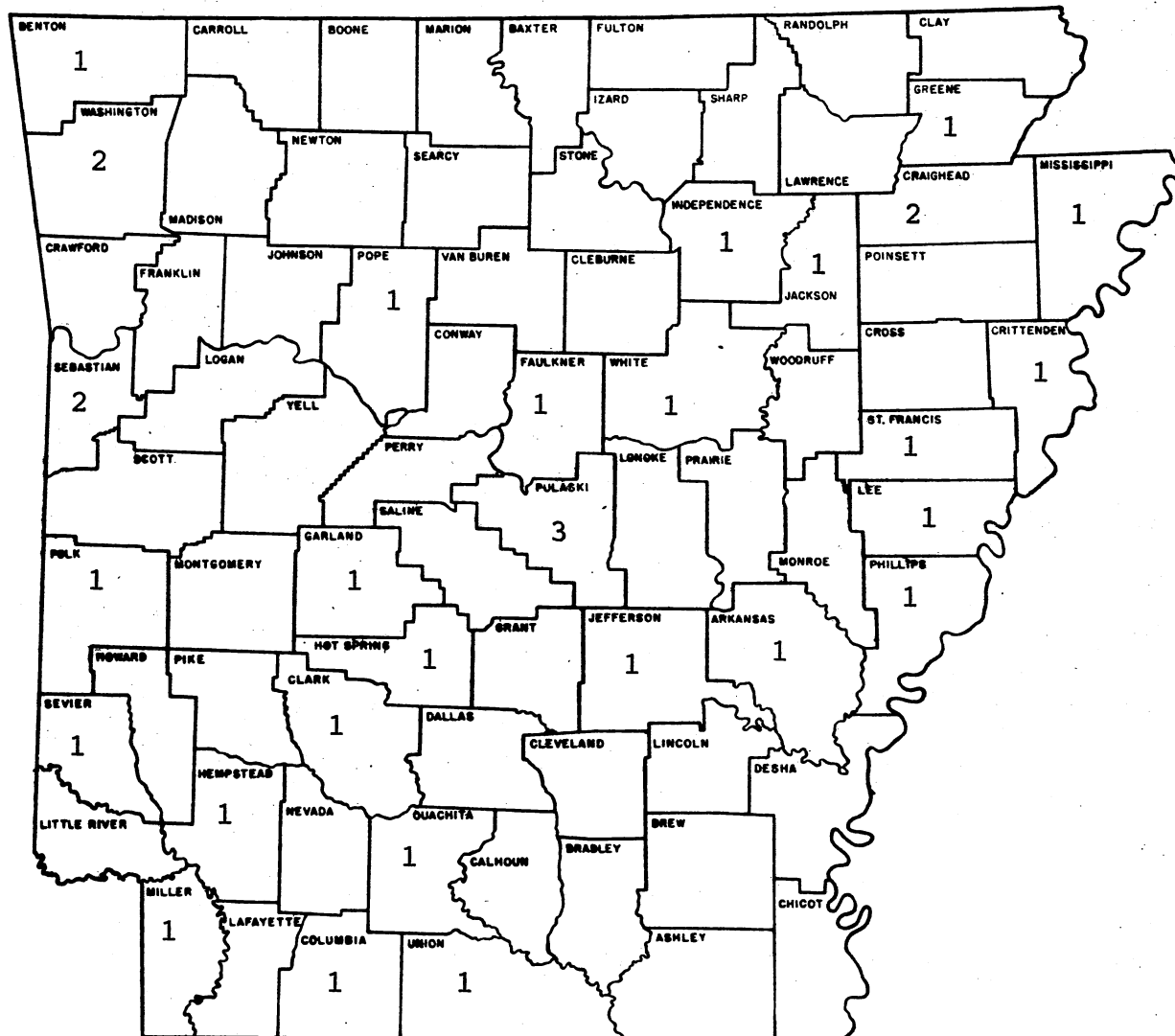


Figure 1. Number and Location of Daily Newspapers in Arkansas

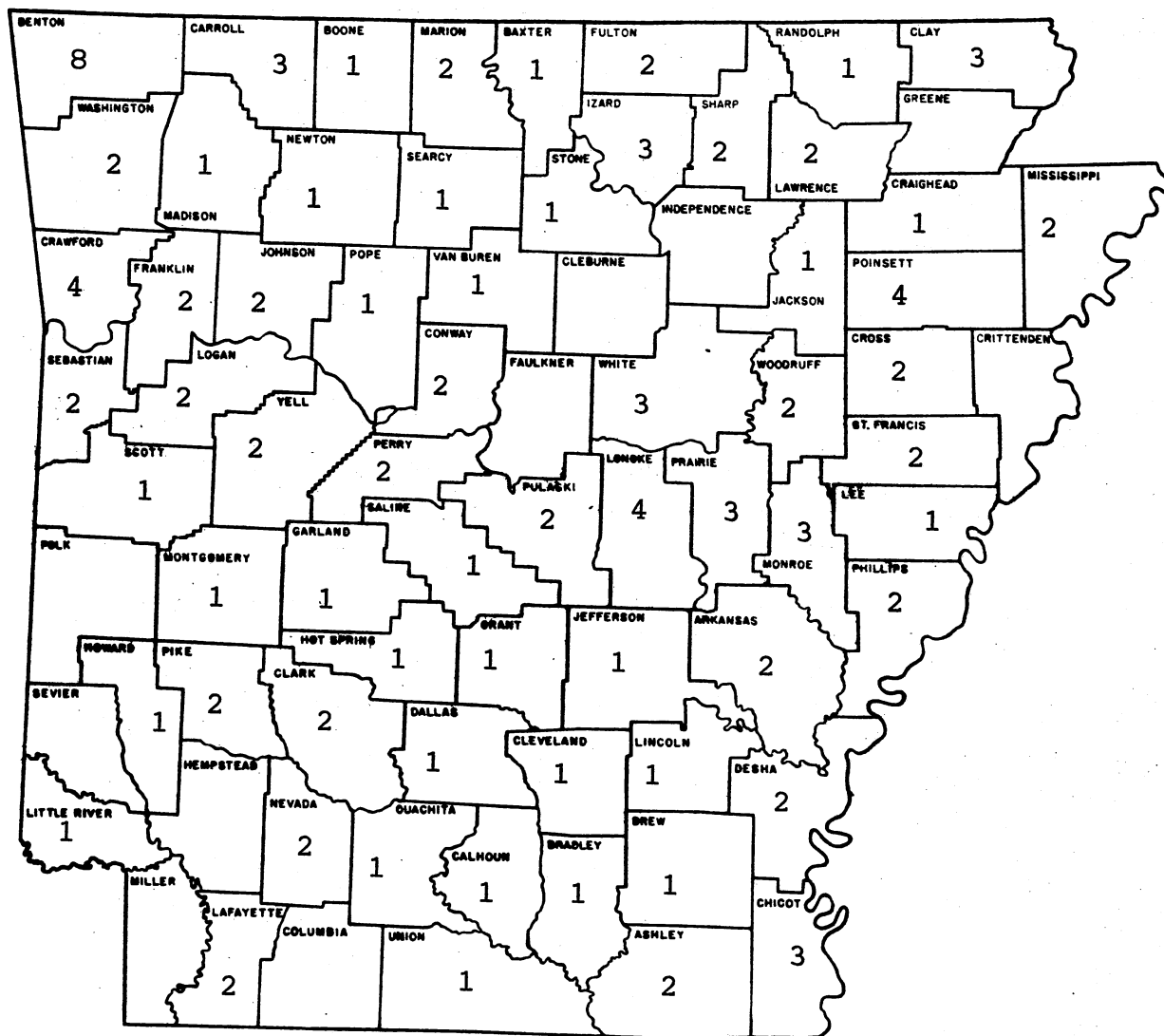


Figure 2. Number and Location of Weekly Newspapers in Arkansas

FOOTNOTES

¹U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1974 Agricultural Statistics for Arkansas, Report Series 221 (Little Rock, 1975), pp. 1-40.

²Arkansas Press Association, Arkansas Newspaper Directory - 1975 (Little Rock, 1975), p. 5.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The population of 33 daily newspapers and 121 weeklies were mailed questionnaires. A return of 63.6 percent was recorded for daily newspapers; 21 of the 33 questionnaires were returned. Of 121 questionnaires mailed to weekly newspapers, 58 were returned. One editor returned a questionnaire stating that the items checked applied to 3 other newspapers which he edited. This established a return rate of 50.4 percent for weeklies (61 of 121).

Figures 3 and 4 show the locations of the newspapers that returned the questionnaire.

Titles of persons returning the questionnaire varied. The most mentioned titles among dailies were editor (18) and reporter (2). The title publisher was mentioned once.

Titles from weeklies listed more than once included editor (31), publisher (12), editor-publisher (7), owner-editor (4) and assistant editor (2). Titles mentioned only once among weeklies were business manager, newspaper titles and respondent's name. Two were blank.

Most respondents reported they perform the editing duty; therefore, the term "editors" will be used in reference to respondents hereafter.

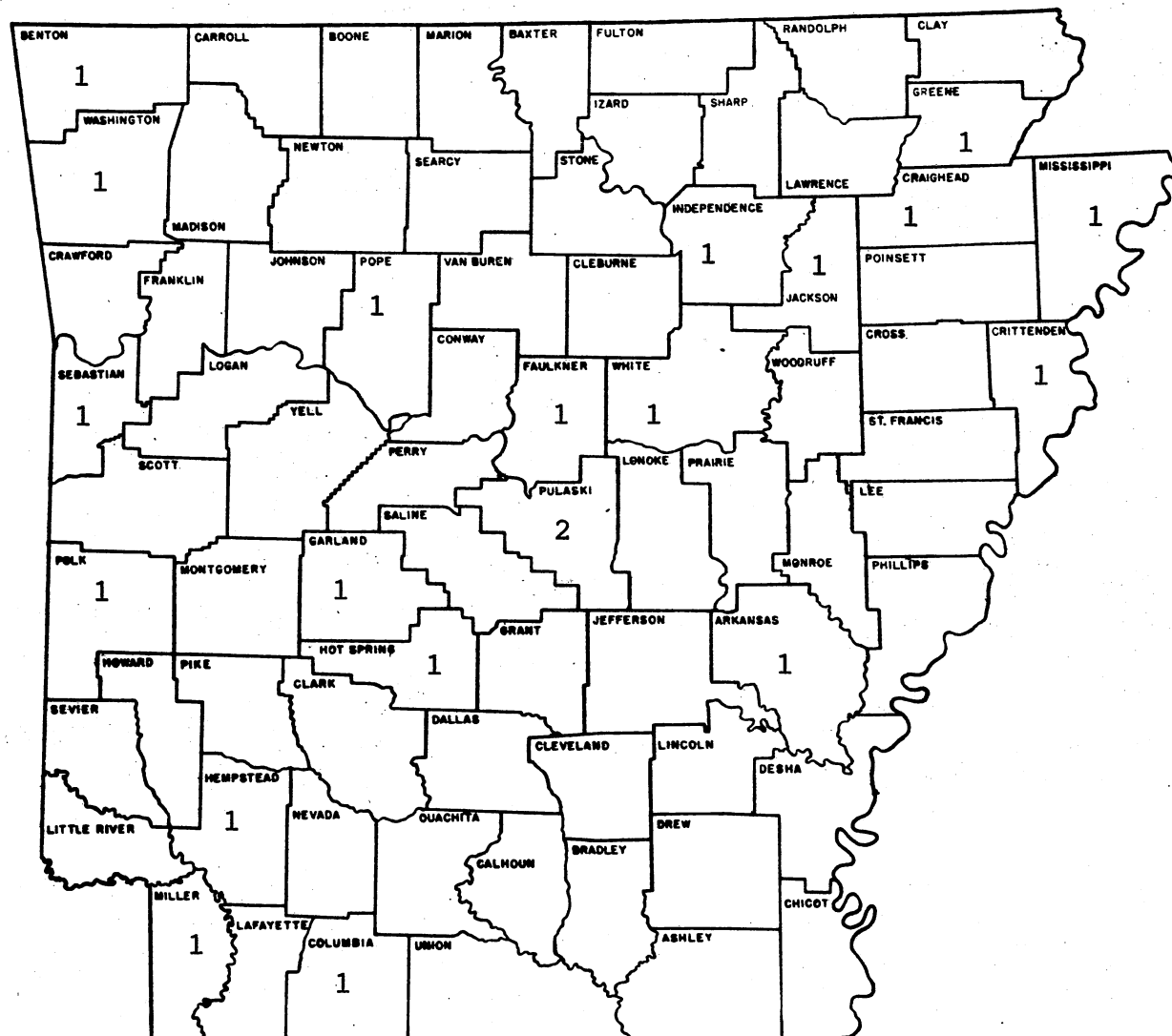


Figure 3. Location of 21 Daily Newspapers Returning Questionnaire

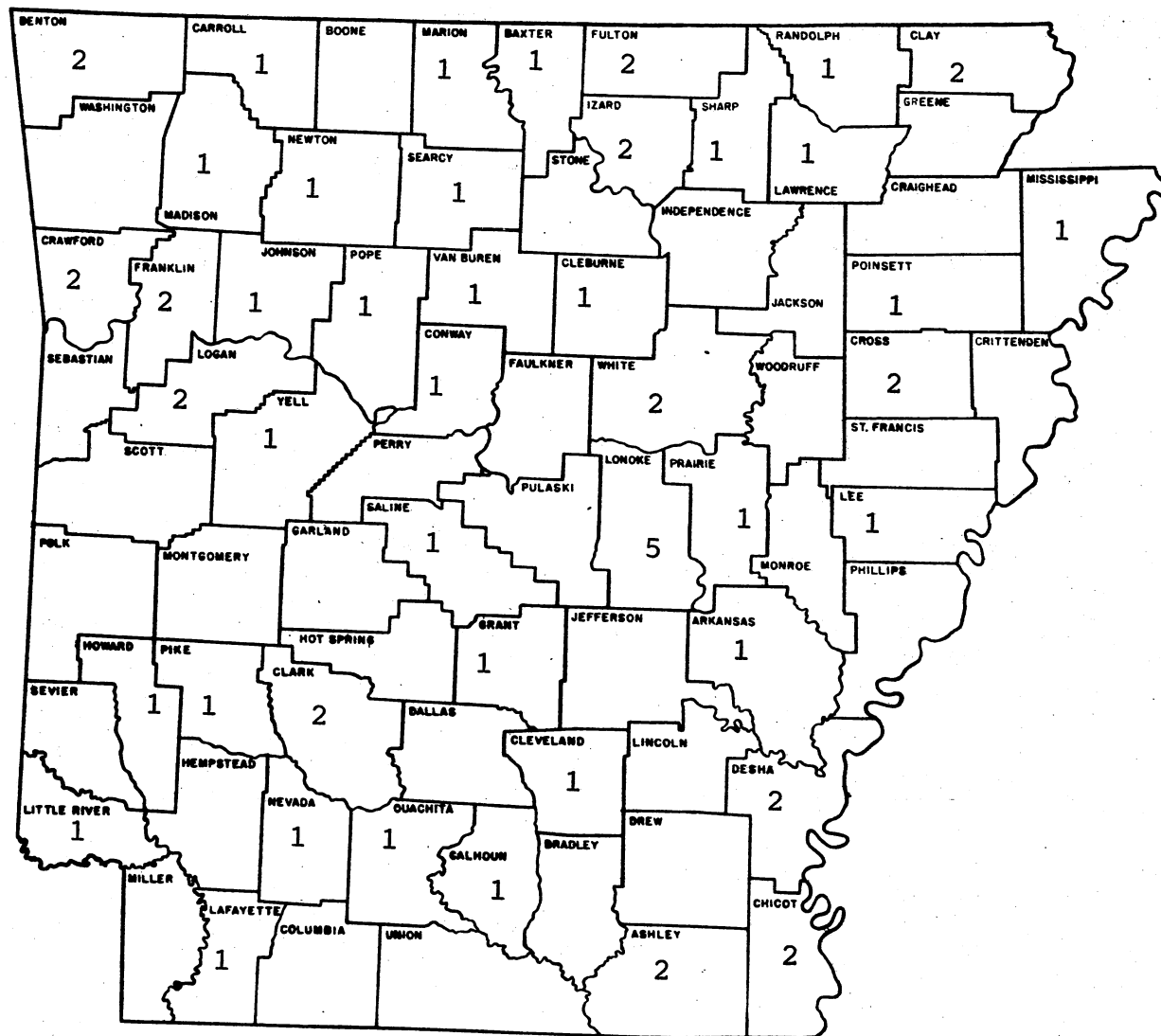


Figure 4. Location of 61 Weekly Newspapers Returning Questionnaire

More than half the editors (66 percent) said they had "complete" responsibility for deciding how much agricultural news to print. Another 26 percent said they had "most" of the responsibility, and 6 percent said they had "some." Two editors said they had "little" responsibility.

Agricultural News Use and Reader Interest

The question "What percentage of your issues contain agricultural news?" produced the following responses: 40 percent said 81 to 100 percent; 12 percent responded with 61 to 80 percent; 10 percent, 41 to 60 percent; 15 percent, 21 to 40 percent; and 23 percent replied 0 to 20 percent of their issues.

Comparing their use of agricultural news in 1974 with 1975, 60 percent of the editors said they used "about the same" each year. However, 21 percent said they used "a lot more" in 1975, and another 19 percent said they used "more." None said they used more in 1974.

Less than half the editors (46 percent) said they would print more agricultural news in 1976 than they did in 1975. About 43 percent said they would not, and another 11 percent gave answers such as "it depends," "no data," "maybe," and "don't know."

Editors were asked to rate their readers' interest in agricultural news on a scale of one to seven. One indicated no interest and seven, extremely interested. Daily editors gave their readers' interest a 5.33 rating,

indicating a moderate to high interest in agricultural news. Weekly editors rated their readers as slightly less interested with a 4.72 rating. Several editors responded with "no data," "haven't been here long enough to tell," and "don't know."

Editors' Interest in Agricultural Subjects

Editors rated their interest in 10 different agricultural news subjects on a five-point scale from "very high" to "very low." Table I shows distribution of responses from daily editors. Table II shows responses from weekly newspaper editors.

TABLE I
 NUMBER OF DAILY NEWSPAPER EDITORS' RESPONSES IN
 EACH OF FIVE POSSIBLE DEGREE-OF-INTEREST
 CATEGORIES FOR TEN AGRICULTURAL
 NEWS SUBJECTS

Subjects	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Grain and forage crops	5	3	10	2	0
Hogs and feeder pigs	2	1	9	6	2
Beef cattle	5	4	7	3	1
Dairy cattle	4	4	4	6	2
Poultry and eggs	5	3	5	4	3
Food prices and supplies	11	3	5	0	1
Nutrition for consumers	3	4	9	2	1
Food safety and canning	3	5	8	3	0
Farm and home safety	3	4	9	3	1
Household information	3	4	10	1	1

TABLE II
 NUMBER OF WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS' RESPONSES IN
 EACH OF FIVE POSSIBLE DEGREE-OF-INTEREST
 CATEGORIES FOR TEN AGRICULTURAL
 NEWS SUBJECTS

Subjects	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Grain and forage crops	4	11	30	9	4
Hogs and feeder pigs	2	9	22	19	8
Beef cattle	10	26	17	6	1
Dairy cattle	3	12	19	10	16
Poultry and eggs	3	10	18	14	14
Food prices and supplies	6	27	22	4	1
Nutrition for consumers	6	8	37	8	2
Food safety and canning	10	16	28	6	0
Farm and home safety	7	14	29	9	1
Household information	6	21	25	6	1

The hypothesis stated there would be significantly greater interest among weekly newspaper editors for news about raw agricultural products than among daily newspaper editors. It was also hypothesized that daily editors would show significantly greater interest in news about finished agricultural products than would weekly editors. This hypothesis was based on the assumption that daily newspapers

put more emphasis on news for consumers while weeklies emphasize news for farmers.

The first five items in Tables I and II were defined in Chapter III as making up raw agricultural products, while the last five items make up finished agricultural products. A raw interest score was compiled to see how each item compared over all. Scores for each response and item were computed by assigning values to the possible answers as such: 5 for "very high," 4 for "high," 3 for "moderate," 2 for "low," and 1 for "very low." Average interests for daily and weekly editors in each of the 10 items are presented in Table III. The differences in each average between dailies and weeklies are also given.

TABLE III
 DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS'
 INTEREST IN, AND MEAN DIFFERENCE
 BETWEEN, TEN AGRICULTURAL
 NEWS SUBJECTS

Subject	Dailies	Weeklies	Difference
Food prices and supplies	3.95	3.49	+ .46
Grain and forage crops	3.38	2.89	+ .49
Beef cattle	3.29	3.57	- .28
Food safety and canning	3.10	3.44	- .34
Farm and home safety	3.10	3.23	- .13
Household information	3.05	3.31	- .26
Nutrition for consumers	3.00	3.13	- .13
Poultry and eggs	3.00	2.48	+ .52
Dairy cattle	2.95	2.56	+ .39
Hogs and feeder pigs	2.62	2.59	+ .03
Averages	3.14	3.07	+ .07

5 = Very High 4 = High 3 = Moderate
 2 = Low 1 = Very Low

The average interest of weekly newspaper editors exceeds that of daily newspaper editors in five categories (Table III), four of these being in the finished product news category.

Daily and weekly editors' averages are close on all news subjects. Neither the daily editors nor weekly editors expressed a greater interest in every subject. One could conclude that daily newspapers are directed to the farmer as much as are weekly newspapers. The data do not support the hypothesis of a difference between daily and weekly editors' preferences for raw and finished product news.

The highest interest category for dailies was "food prices and supplies" with a high interest score of 3.95. "Beef cattle" was the category of most interest to weekly newspaper editors, with a 3.57 average.

Daily and weekly editors' interest differed the greatest on poultry and egg news. Dailies rated it 3.00 (moderate) while weeklies rated it 2.48 (low). The difference between means was not statistically significant. These differences could occur by chance more than 5 times in 100 similar samples. None other differences exceeded chance expectation.

A 2 x 2 crossbreak is presented in Table IV, showing the average interest of editors in raw and finished agricultural product news.

TABLE IV
 DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS' INTEREST
 COMPARED BETWEEN RAW AND FINISHED
 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT NEWS

Type of News	Dailies	Weeklies
Raw agricultural product news	3.05	2.82
Finished agricultural product news	3.24	3.32

A two-dimensional factorial analysis of variance was applied to data presented in Table IV to determine any significant relationship. Differences between the two types of news, between the two types of editors, and the interaction of all four were not significant. Therefore, frequency of publication and interest in two kinds of agricultural news probably are not related.

Use of ACES News Releases

In compiling daily and weekly newspapers editors' use of news releases from the Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office, twelve editors said they used more than 75 percent of these releases in 1975. Sixteen used 51-75 percent. Fourteen said they used 26-50 percent, and twenty-two said they used 1-25 percent. One editor used

none. Eight editors said they received fewer than 10 news releases and nine answered they didn't know. Table V shows that weekly editors used a greater percentage of news releases than did dailies.

TABLE V
1975 ACES NEWS RELEASE PERCENT OF USE BY
DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS

Percent of Use	Number of Daily Editors	Number of Weekly Editors	Number Combined
More than 75%	3	9	12
51 to 75%	3	13	16
26 to 50%	4	10	14
1 to 25%	8	14	22
None	1	0	1
Total	19	46	65

Sixty-one percent of the editors said they preferred about the same number of news releases in 1976 as in 1975. Thirteen editors (16 percent) said they wanted more, and one wanted fewer. About 11 percent specified requests such as adapt to local situation, prefer "how to" articles and more with local interest.

Use of ACES Photo Releases

About 18 percent of the editors said they used from 1 to 25 percent of the photo releases from the ACES Editorial Office in 1975. Table VI shows results.

TABLE VI

1975 ACES PHOTO RELEASE PERCENT OF USE BY
DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS

Percent of Use	Number of Daily Editors	Number of Weekly Editors	Number Combined
More than 75%	2	11	13
51 to 75%	2	9	11
26 to 50%	4	5	9
1 to 25%	5	10	15
None	1	9	10
None received in 1975	4	9	13
Total	18	53	71

Thirty-three percent of the editors said they wanted more glossy photos from the ACES Editorial Office in 1976. However, 21 percent wanted no more in 1976. Eleven percent wanted "many more." Twelve editors answered "fewer" or

"none" to this question. Twelve editors did not answer.

Newspaper Space Competition

Editors were asked where agricultural news appears in their newspapers. Several editors indicated more than one location, but the most frequent response was "scattered throughout," (58 times). "In a special farm section or farm page" was marked 18 times, and none indicated "on page one."

Twelve editors said they ran a special farm section or page in every issue. One ran it every other issue; one ran it monthly; and 34 said "never." Other responses to this question generally indicated an "irregular" use of agricultural news.

To determine how agricultural news competes for space, editors were asked how they would cut back on 10 general subject categories, including agriculture, if faced with the need to reduce news space. Responses are shown in Tables VII and VIII. An emphasis on local news and advertising is indicated in both tables. Most all subject categories were found in dailies, whereas national news, international news, and syndicated features predominated as the most unused news by weeklies.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF DAILY EDITORS INDICATING LIKELIHOOD
OF CUTTING BACK ON TEN SUBJECT CATEGORIES

Type of Subject	Very Likely	Likely	Don't Use	Not Likely	Would Not Cut
Local news	0	0	0	7	14
State news	0	5	0	10	4
National news	5	11	0	3	1
International news	9	7	0	2	1
Sports	0	12	1	4	2
Agricultural news	0	8	0	10	1
Society or women's	1	6	1	10	1
Syndicated features	7	10	0	2	0
Editorials	1	2	2	6	6
Advertising	0	0	0	4	15

TABLE VIII

NUMBER OF WEEKLY EDITORS INDICATING LIKELIHOOD
OF CUTTING BACK ON TEN SUBJECT CATEGORIES

Type of Subject	Very Likely	Likely	Don't Use	Not Likely	Would Not Cut
Local news	0	0	0	5	50
State news	19	16	6	14	1
National news	25	6	23	2	0
International news	26	6	23	1	1
Sports	5	7	2	32	10
Agricultural news	2	14	1	29	9
Society or women's	2	15	0	20	15
Syndicated features	26	7	18	4	2
Editorials	10	6	3	16	21
Advertising	0	1	1	5	49

A numerical index of daily and weekly editors' interests in each of the ten subject categories was obtained by assigning values of 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 to responses of "don't use," "very likely," "likely," "not likely" and "would not cut," respectively. A comparison and rank order of interest in the 10 categories for daily and weekly editors are given in Table IX. Dailies and weeklies ranked local news first with advertising second for each. State news was third with dailies and seventh with weeklies. Dailies ranked

agricultural news fourth and showed the least degree of interest in syndicated news, which ranked eighth for weeklies. Agricultural news was fifth with weeklies. National news ranked last for weeklies.

TABLE IX
DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER
EDITORS' INTERESTS
IN TEN SUBJECT
CATEGORIES

Type of Subject	<u>Daily Editors</u> Rank	<u>Score*</u>	<u>Weekly Editors</u> Rank	<u>Score</u>	<u>Combined</u> Rank
Local news	1	3.67	1	3.53	1
State news	3	2.67	7	1.59	7
National news	8	1.91	10	0.71	8
International news	9	1.57	9	0.74	10
Sports	7	2.10	3	2.54	6
Agricultural news	4	2.38	5	2.51	3
Society or women's	6	2.24	6	2.49	5
Syndicated features	10	1.57	8	0.98	9
Editorials	5	2.24	4	2.53	4
Advertising	2	3.43	2	3.49	2

*4 = Would not cut

3 = Not likely

2 = Likely

1 = Very likely

0 = Don't use

Use of Agricultural News Sources

Editors were asked how often they use seven different sources of agricultural news. Possible responses included "very much," "often," "sometimes," "little" and "never."

Dailies and weeklies had a mean use score compiled for each agricultural news source by assigning the values 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively to the possible responses listed above. A rank position for each is shown in Table X.

The Cooperative Extension Service was ranked number one by dailies and fourth by weeklies. As expected, the County Extension Agent was the most useful as an agricultural news source with the weeklies and sixth with dailies. Area farmers were second place with weeklies and fifth with dailies. Dailies and weeklies reported the Arkansas Farm Bureau to be the least-used source of agricultural news. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Arkansas ASCS Office and the Soil Conservation Service were ranked second, third and fourth respectively by dailies. Weeklies placed them sixth, fifth and third respectively.

Editors named other sources such as the Agricultural Experiment Station, Associated Press, Crop Reporting Service, farm organizations and implement dealers.

TABLE X
DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS' USE
OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS SOURCES

News Source	Daily Editors		Weekly Editors		Combined Rank
	Rank	Score*	Rank	Score	
Area farmers	5	3.05	2	3.71	5
County Extension Agent	6	3.00	1	4.31	2
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	2	3.62	6	2.95	6
Arkansas ASCS Office	3	3.43	5	3.41	4
Soil Conservation Service	4	3.33	3	3.62	3
Arkansas Farm Bureau	7	2.86	7	2.87	7
Coop. Extension Service	1	3.81	4	3.56	1

*5 = Very much

4 = Often

3 = Sometime

2 = Little

1 = Never

News Selection Factors

There were some differences in the way daily and weekly editors evaluated news from their sources. Reader interest was most important to dailies, while most weekly editors preferred local adaptability. Table XI shows how editors ranked seven different agricultural news selection factors. Writing style and available space ranked either last or next to last for most editors, probably because editors could rewrite or make space available as needed.

TABLE XI

DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS' VALUE OF
SEVEN FACTORS USED IN THE SELECTION
OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS

Factors	Daily Editors		Weekly Editors		Combined Rank
	Rank	Value*	Rank	Value	
Subject matter	3	3.43	2	3.56	2
Timeliness	4	3.38	4	3.26	4
Style of writing	6	2.14	7	1.71	7
Reader interest	1	3.62	3	3.28	3
Local adaptability	2	3.57	1	3.72	1
Available space	7	1.71	6	2.39	6
Source credibility	5	2.62	5	2.71	5

*4 = Very much 3 = A lot 2 = Somewhat

1 = Little 0 = Not at all

Local adaptability was ranked first by Arkansas editors. Sampson and Johnson, in their study of Washington state and Georgia editors, also found reader interest and local adaptability rated high.

ACES Services Evaluation

Questionnaire items number 16 and 19 related to evaluation of two ACES Editorial Office press services — news and photo releases. News releases were evaluated on their

subject matter, length, style and variety; both services were evaluated on usefulness and timeliness. Photo and outline quality evaluations applied only to photo releases.

Composite results of the two questionnaire items are presented in Table XII. Values of 5 for "excellent," 4 for "good," 3 for "average," 2 for "fair" and 1 for "poor" were assigned for computation. A 3.50 rating should be considered as "average to good."

News releases were rated highest on subject matter (3.77) by weeklies. Dailies rated length of news releases highest (3.42). The lowest rating (2.68) was given to style of news releases by daily editors. Style also ranked lowest of all combined scores. Usefulness of news releases ranked lowest with weeklies (2.92).

Dailies and weeklies differed the greatest on subject matter. Dailies gave subject matter a 3.11, compared to 3.77 by weeklies. This might relate to the fact that weeklies prefer stories built around local situations.

Dailies and weeklies rated quality of photo releases exceptionally high, 3.47 and 3.83 respectively. Photo quality was rated highest of all (3.65) when daily and weekly editors' ratings were combined.

Except for style and usefulness, the ACES Editorial Office is perceived as doing a slightly better than average job in providing news and photo services to editors.

TABLE XII
DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EDITORS' EVALUATION
OF TWO ACES SERVICES ON EIGHT CRITERIA

	Dailies	Weeklies	Combined
<u>Subject Matter</u>			
News Releases	3.11	3.77	3.44
<u>Timeliness</u>			
News Releases	3.16	3.62	3.39
Photo Releases	3.27	3.62	3.46
<u>Length</u>			
News Releases	3.42	3.32	3.37
<u>Style</u>			
News Releases	2.68	3.17	2.93
<u>Variety</u>			
News Releases	3.21	3.23	3.22
<u>Usefulness</u>			
News Releases	3.00	2.92	2.96
Photo Releases	3.20	3.26	3.23
<u>Photo Quality</u>			
Photo Releases	3.47	3.83	3.65
<u>Cutline Quality</u>			
Photo Releases	3.27	3.74	3.51

5 = Excellent

4 = Good

3 = Average

2 = Fair

1 = Poor

Area News Interest

Responses to several questionnaire items were analyzed to get a numerical indication of Arkansas newspaper editors' interest in agricultural news by state areas. Each possible response was assigned a different value as follows:

No. 3 "What percentage of your issues contain agricultural news?" 81-100% = 5 points; 61-80% = 4 points; 41-60% = 3 points; 21-40% = 2 points; 0-20% = 1 point.

No. 4 "Compare your use of agricultural news in 1975 with 1974." Used a lot more in 1975 = 3 points; used more in 1975 = 2 points; used about the same = 1 point; used more in 1974 = minus 1 point; used a lot more in 1974 = minus 2 points.

No. 5 "Do you think you will print more agricultural news in 1976 than you did in 1975?" Yes = 2 points; no = 1 point.

No. 6 "How interested do you think your readers are, as a whole, in agricultural news today?" A 7-point scale was used ranging from extremely interested = 7 points to not interested = 1 point.

No. 14 "How many of the Cooperative Extension Service news releases did you print in your paper in 1975, in whole or in part?" More than 75% = 4 points; 51-75% = 3 points; 26-50% = 2 points; 1-25% = 1 point; none = 0 points.

No. 17 "How many of the glossy photos from the Cooperative Extension Service have you printed in your paper in 1975?" More than 75% = 4 points; 51-75% = 3

points; 26-50% = 2 points; 1-25% = 1 point; none = 0 points.

No. 18 "How many glossy photographs from the Cooperative Extension Service would you like to be getting compared to 1975?" Many more = 3 points; more = 2 points; no more = 1 point; fewer = minus 1 point; none = minus 2 points.

Using the point system described above, a maximum 28 points was possible.

Daily newspaper scores ranged from a low of 8, for papers in Conway, a city of 15,510 just north of Little Rock, and Hot Springs, a city of 35,631 located 50 miles west of Little Rock, to a high of 25 for Stuttgart, a city of 10,477, about 60 miles southeast of Little Rock, and Searcy, a city of 10,867, about 50 miles northeast of Little Rock.

The relatively low score for Conway possibly is due to its location near the largest metropolitan area and capitol of the state. Therefore, this paper may aim its news more at urban than farm readers. Hot Springs is a resort city and therefore, not oriented to agricultural news.

The Hot Springs Sentinel Record editor said, "...but we only use a limited amount (of agricultural news) since we're not a primarily agricultural county." Hot Springs is located in Garland County, in the Ouachita mountains.

The high interest in agricultural news for Stuttgart and Searcy seems natural. Stuttgart is in the rice and soybean production belt of the state. Livestock and poultry

are big income producers for Searcy in White County.¹

Based on the rating procedure previously outlined, the 21 daily newspapers had an average interest of 16.00 in agricultural news. Daily editors' scores are plotted in Figure 5. High and low scores are scattered making it difficult to detect any area differences in agricultural news interest. However, Figure 6 shows a grouping of scores into "high," "moderate" and "low" ranges, making it easier to see a pattern of area variation.

"High" interest, indicated by "A" in Figure 6, includes daily editors with scores ranging from 20 to 25 (5 of the 21 daily editors). "Moderate" interest, indicated by "B," includes the 8 scores from 14 through 19, and "low" interest, designated as "C" on the map, includes 8 editors with scores from 8 through 13.

The "A" newspapers on the map are in the east central area of the state, from Central Pulaski County to the most eastern County of Mississippi. These counties are generally in row crop agriculture. The west central area of the state shows a moderate ("B") interest in agricultural news. Except for Greene and Craighead Counties, the "B" counties are generally livestock and poultry oriented. The "C" newspapers are too scattered to make any generalizations about them.

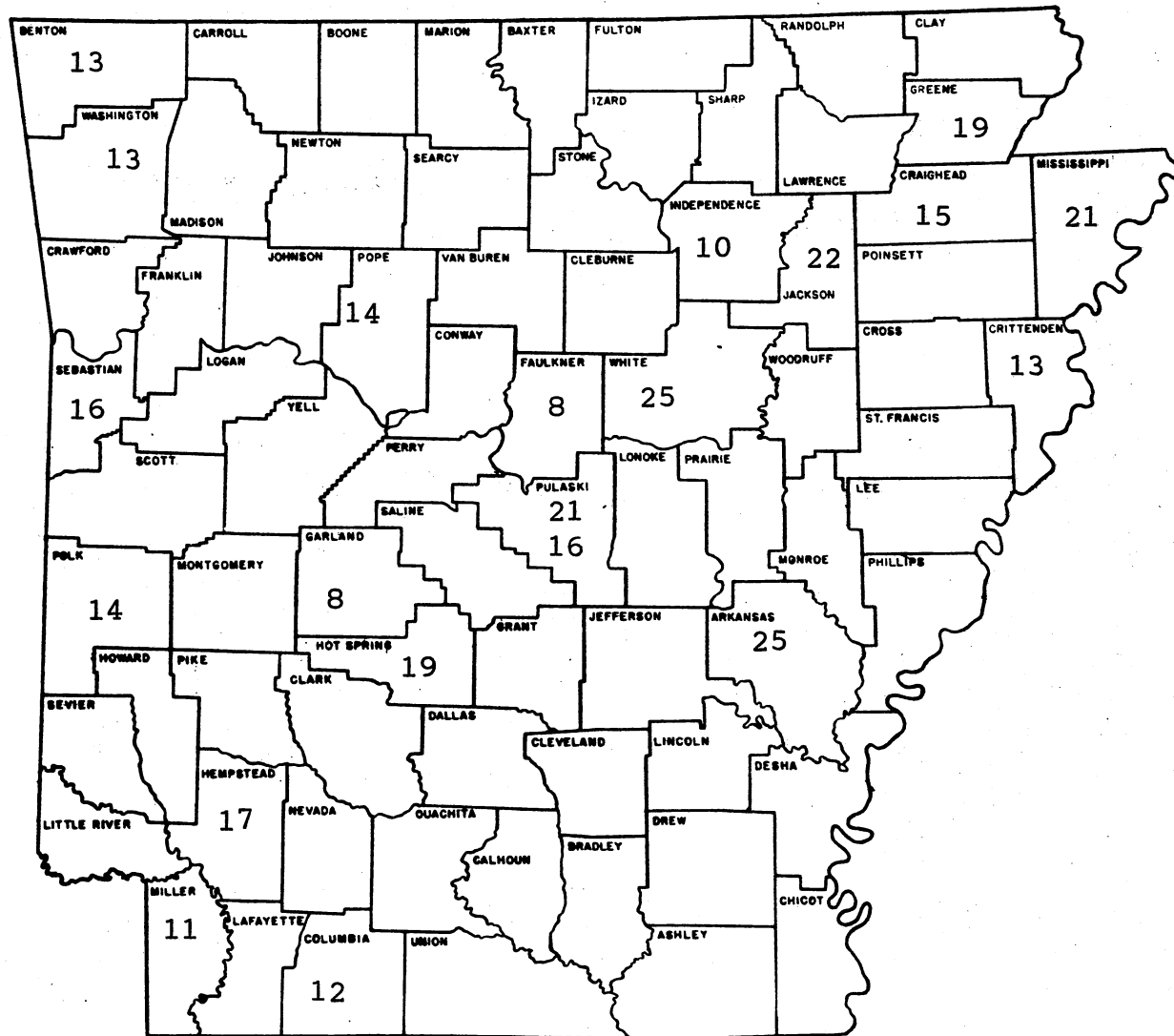


Figure 5. Plotted Scores for Interest in Agricultural News Among Daily Newspapers Returning Questionnaire

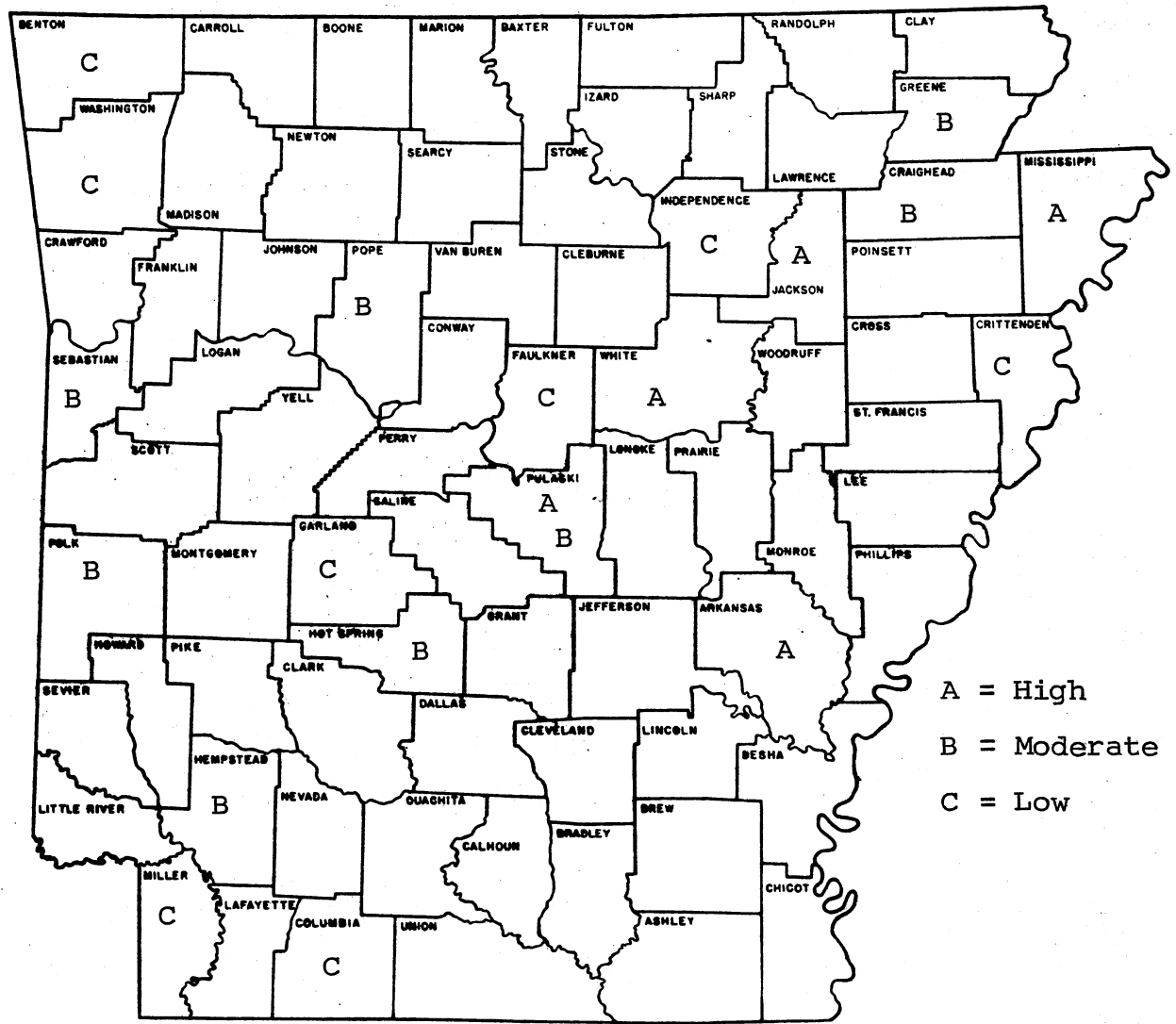


Figure 6. Relative Degree of Interest in Agricultural News Among Daily Newspapers Returning Questionnaire

Weekly newspaper scores shown in Figure 7 averaged 15.13. Scores ranged from a low of 4 in Ouachita County to a high of 25 in Poinsett and Chicot Counties. Ouachita County is noted more for forestry products than agricultural products.² The highest scores are generally in the eastern half of the state.

Scores for weekly newspapers were grouped into ranges indicated in Figure 8. The "high" range from 19 to 25 is indicated by "A," while "B" shows "moderate" scores ranging from 12 to 18. Scores ranging from 4 to 11 indicate a "low" interest in agricultural news. "Low" scores are represented by "C" on the map.

The interest of weekly editors seems highest in the northern half of the state and in the southeastern corner. Low interest shows the greatest around the metropolitan area of Ft. Smith in Sebastian County. Agricultural production in this area is low compared with other areas of the state. There was a "moderate" interest in agricultural news scattered over the state.

A small difference was noted in average scores for weeklies in north and south Arkansas. Weeklies in north Arkansas averaged 16.10 while those in south Arkansas averaged 14.60. Average scores in eastern (15.00) and western (15.46) Arkansas were closer to the state-wide average of 15.13. Differences in mean scores for northern and southern newspapers were not significant.

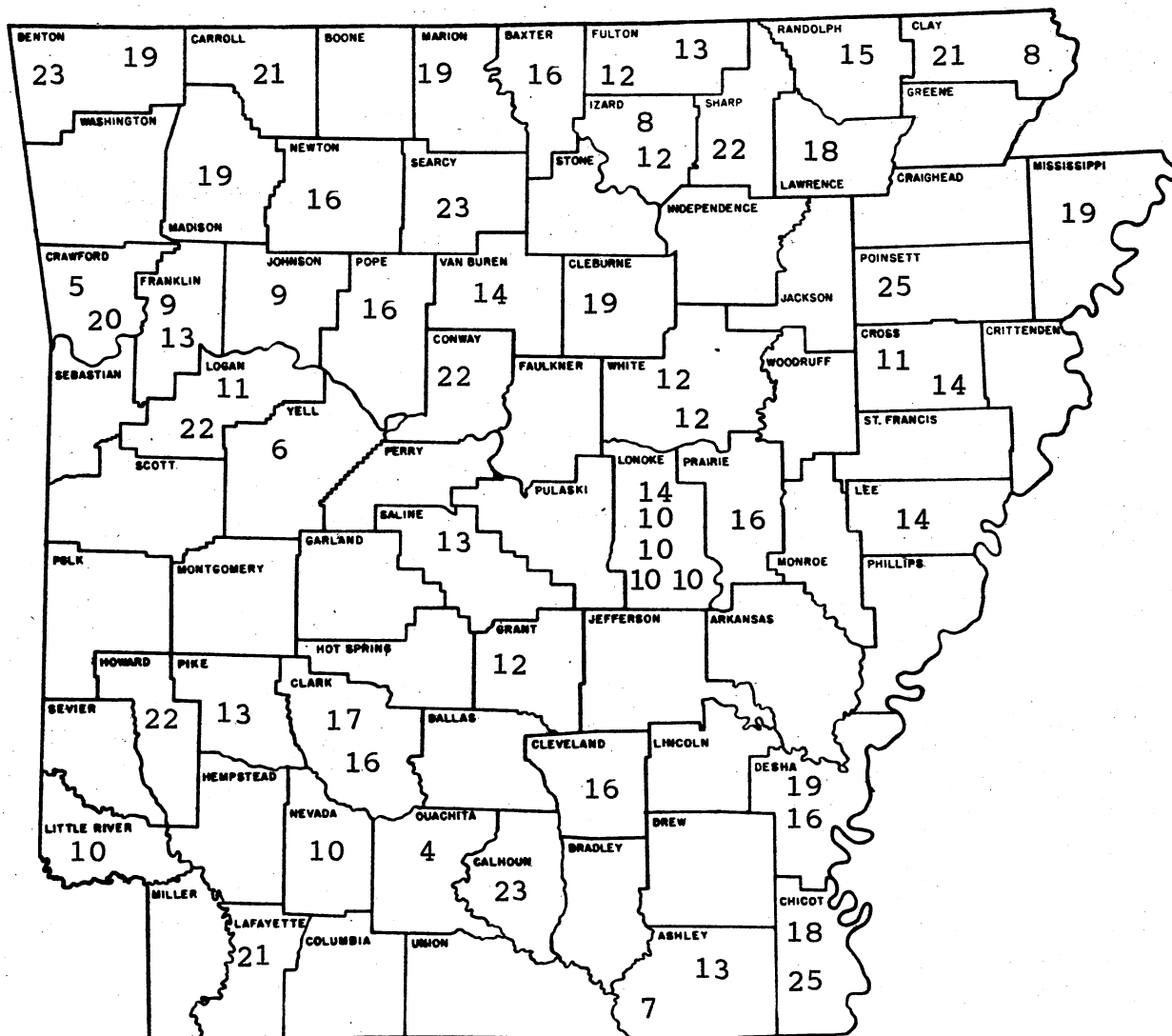


Figure 7. Plotted Scores for Interest in Agricultural News Among Weekly Newspapers Returning Questionnaire

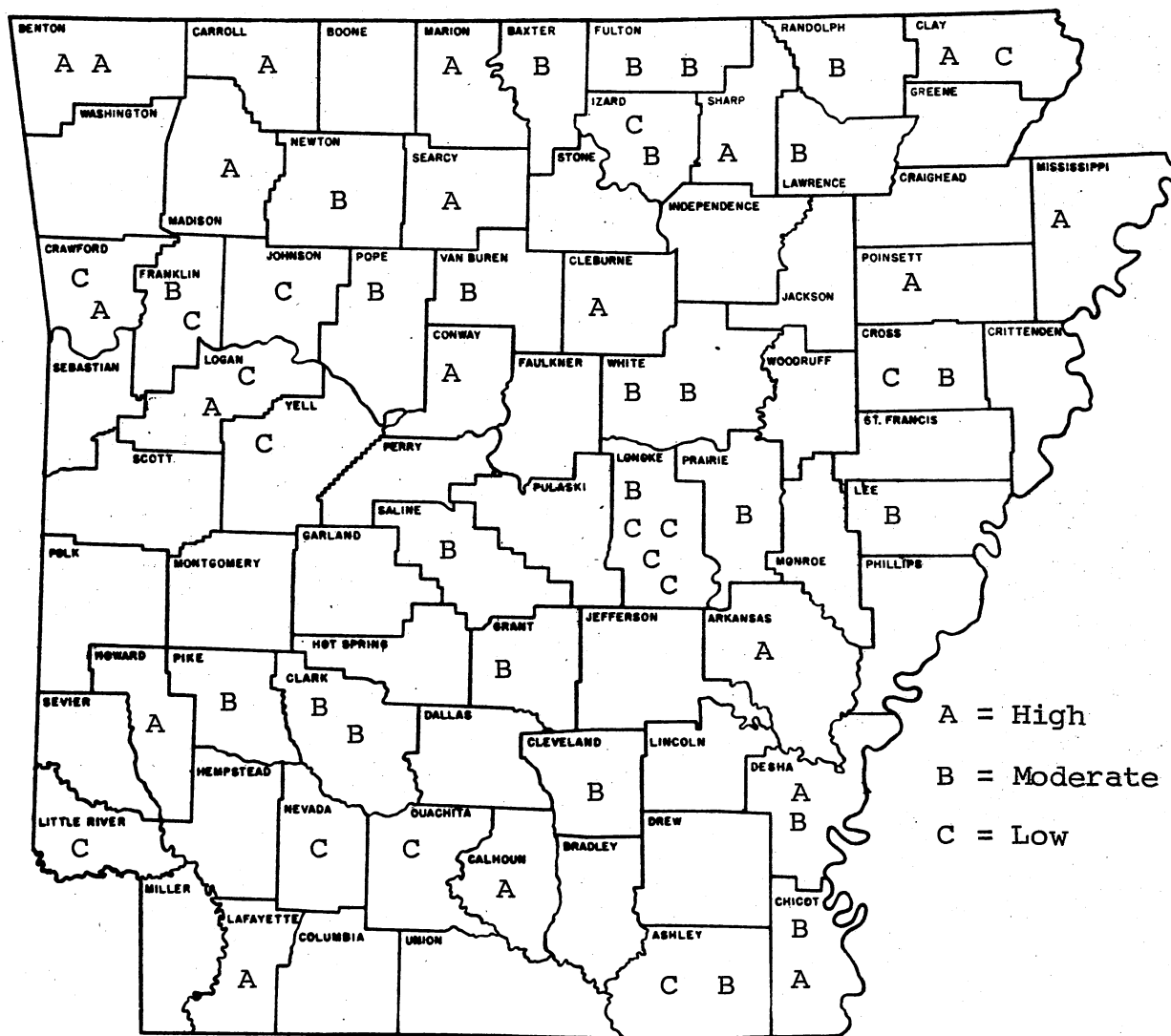


Figure 8. Relative Degree of Interest in Agricultural News Among Weekly Newspapers Returning Questionnaire

There seems to be a greater interest in agricultural news in certain areas of the state than in others. Statistically, there is not a significant difference in interest for agricultural news between areas of the state.

Perhaps this means that the Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office should continue to supply agricultural news to all parts of the state and expect area variation in editors' interest.

A discussion of the data and their relation to the four stated objectives of this study is presented in Chapter V.

FOOTNOTES

¹U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1974 Agricultural Statistics for Arkansas, Report Series 221 (Little Rock, 1975), pp. 15-39.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study of Arkansas newspaper editors' attitudes toward agricultural news had four basic objectives: to determine (1) what Arkansas newspaper editors foresee as their needs for agricultural news in 1976, (2) how agricultural news competes for space with other types of news in Arkansas newspapers, (3) what sources of agricultural news are most important to Arkansas newspaper editors, and (4) the usefulness of the information supplied by the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office in 1975 as perceived by Arkansas newspaper editors.

A 19-item questionnaire, asking for responses related to study objectives, was mailed in late 1975 to 33 daily and 121 weekly newspapers. Sixty-three percent of the dailies and 50 percent of the weeklies returned the questionnaire.

Objectives: Relevant Findings

Regarding the first objective on perceived needs for agricultural information in 1976, nearly half the editors (46.3 percent) said they planned to use more agricultural news in 1976 than they did in 1975. In M. W. Sampson's

1971 survey (see Chapter II), only one-fourth of the Washington state editors said they expected to use more agricultural news in the coming year.¹

Nearly one-fourth of the Arkansas editors used more agricultural news in 1975 than they did in 1974, and 72 percent thought their readers were interested in agricultural news. These findings seem to indicate that agricultural news sources should supply at least the same amount of news as in the previous year.

The study revealed editors had different feelings about the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service news services provided by the Editorial Office. Nearly 75 percent said they did not want the number of news releases increased in 1976. Sixteen percent said they wanted more. This study seems to show that the ACES Editorial Office should not reduce its output of news releases and possibly should increase the output when news situations require it.

Editors were split almost 2-to-1 on the question of wanting more photo releases from the ACES Editorial Office. Twenty-one percent said they wanted "no more," and 48 percent said they would like "more" or "many more." Only two editors said they wanted fewer in 1976.

The second study objective — to determine how agricultural news competed for space with other types of news in Arkansas newspapers — was accomplished by asking editors where agriculture news was placed in their newspapers and how they would cut back on news if faced with that problem.

Agricultural news was scattered throughout most newspapers, in addition it was found in special farm sections or farm pages, and sometimes on page one. Less than half the editors said their newspaper contained a special farm section, or farm page. Thirty-five percent said they ran a special farm section or farm page occasionally.

How agricultural news competed with other kinds of news was revealed by its being ranked fourth in ten categories for dailies and fifth for weeklies. Local news and advertising, respectively, outranked agricultural news in both daily and weekly newspapers. State news for dailies outranked agricultural news as did sports news and editorials for weeklies.

The third objective was to determine agricultural information sources most important to Arkansas newspaper editors. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service was named by daily editors as most important. However, weekly editors chose the County Extension Agent. Studies in Washington, California and Georgia produced similar results.

Area farmers ranked second most important as an agricultural news source for weeklies and fifth for dailies. Daily editors named the U. S. Department of Agriculture as their second choice.

In conjunction with this objective, an examination was made of the relative value that editors placed on seven factors in selecting agricultural news. Subject matter, timeliness, reader interest and local adaptability were the four

top choices for both dailies and weeklies, but not in the same order. Daily editors ranked reader interest first, local adaptability second, subject matter third, and timeliness fourth. Local adaptability was first with weekly editors, followed by subject matter, reader interest and timeliness. Other values checked included style of writing, available space and source credibility. Daily and weekly editors ranked source credibility fifth.

The fourth objective was to determine editors' perceived usefulness of information supplied by the ACES Editorial Office.

Two press services supplied by the editorial office were rated on timeliness, length, style, variety and usefulness. Also, photo and cutline quality were rated for photo releases only. On a scale of 1-to-5 ("poor" to "excellent"), usefulness received the lowest rating, 2.92. Editors as a whole found usefulness of the two press services "average."

David J. Miller, in his 1966-67 study, found only one-fourth the daily releases was used.² Findings were similar in this study. For those editors receiving at least 10 news releases in 1975, one-fourth used up to 25 percent, less than a fourth used up to 50 percent, and almost 35 percent used more than half. More than 51 percent of the editors said they were using more than one-fourth the news releases.

Local adaptability seemed to determine the usefulness

of photo releases. Although nearly half the editors indicated they wanted to receive more photo releases from the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service than in 1975, many editors said local angle would dictate their use. Photos of local people, events or situations had a much better chance of being used than non-local photos.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were unavoidable in this study. The best way to determine what Arkansas newspaper editors think is to talk to them all. This would be very expensive and time-consuming. Therefore, a mail questionnaire was sent to all Arkansas newspaper editors. Since there were only 154 newspapers, the tabulations would be manageable and margin for error would be reduced by not using a sample. The return rate was average, though still beneficial. If all editors had returned questionnaires, it is possible that results would have been somewhat different.

Hopefully, editors answered each item accurately, but it is difficult to remember many facts asked for in certain questionnaire items. For example, how many news releases were used in 1974. There was no practical way to confirm answers.

This study related to editors and their attitudes. It did not attempt to measure effectiveness or impact of news on readers.

This study related only to Arkansas editors' attitudes

toward agricultural news. Although many of the findings of this study were similar to studies in other states, results cannot be applied necessarily to editors in other states.

Questionnaire items in this study were designed to elicit concise responses, not always allowing explanations. An editor's choice is, no doubt, influenced by many undeterminable factors such as the letterhead on the questionnaire.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A few conclusions and recommendations can be made from the study results.

Since the Cooperative Extension Service and local County Extension Agent are the most important agricultural news sources, it would be beneficial to improve the reporting skills of specialists in these positions. Also, since local adaptability was the number one factor influencing use of agricultural news, it would be most advantageous to direct news releases toward a local angle.

The ACES Editorial Office is responsible for providing two days of communications training to new extension staff. An expansion of this training for new employees and refresher courses for more experienced extension staff would be in order. Special training should be provided in the use of cameras and group arrangement in photos.

County Extension Agents should be constantly reminded

of their power to influence editors' choices and use of agricultural news in their local newspapers. Frequent face-to-face communication with their local editor could be a decided advantage.

Since editors seemed to prefer stories and photos of local interest, extension personnel should publicize their local programs by providing frequent localized stories and photos of the highest possible quality.

Increasing quality and output without increasing staff and time is a great concern of extension administration. Some states have area information specialists to help extension agents prepare materials for the mass media.

Frequently, the ACES Editorial Office sends fill-in news releases to county staffs suggesting that they localize and retype them before submitting them to local editors. A concentrated effort in this area would improve extension's chances of getting news in the local newspaper.

Some editors have indicated a concern about length of stories. Agricultural story lengths should be maintained at a competitive level with other types of news.

Stories must be localized. This point was stressed over and over by editors. Local angle news stories and photographs from any agricultural news source had the best chance of being printed.

The Cooperative Extension Service Editorial Office should be alert to what editors want and will use. New trends and problems continually influence editors'

decisions. As different situations affect Arkansas newspaper editors' attitudes toward agricultural news, the findings of this study will become outdated. Therefore, studies should be made continually in certain areas.

FOOTNOTES

¹Michael W. Sampson, "How Washington State Weekly and Daily Newspaper Editors Choose and Evaluate Their Sources of Agricultural, Home Economics and 4-H News" (unpub. master's thesis, Washington State University, 1974), pp. 67-68.

²David J. Miller, "Newspaper Editors' Attitudes Toward Extension News" (unpub. master's thesis, University of Missouri, 1967), pp. 65-69.

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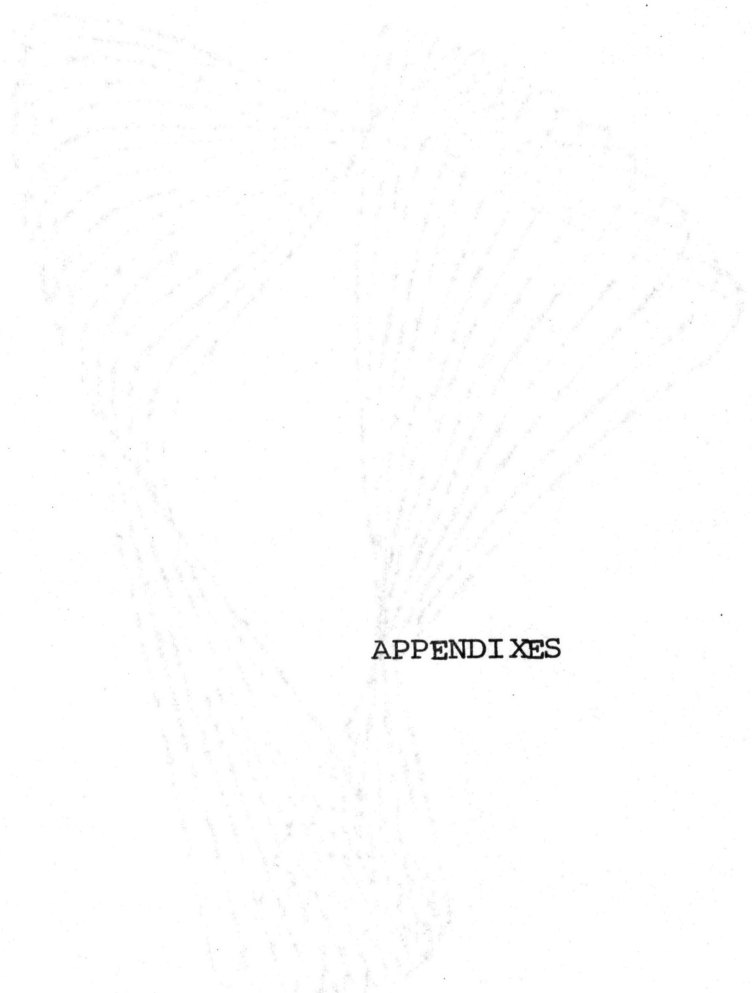
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APPENDIXES

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

These Bond

100% COTTON FIBRE



APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

ENGLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Thesis Board

100 / COLLEGE DRIVE



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS Division of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

ARKANSAS NEWSPAPER EDITORS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your title _____
2. How much responsibility do you have for printing agricultural news in your newspaper?
Complete _____ Most _____ Some _____ Little _____ None _____
3. What percentage of your issues contain agricultural news?
81-100% _____ 61-80% _____ 41-60% _____ 21-40% _____ 0-20% _____
4. Compare your use of agricultural news in 1975 with 1974:
_____ a) used a lot more in 1975 _____ d) used more in 1974
_____ b) used more in 1975 _____ e) used a lot more
_____ c) used about the same _____ in 1974
5. Do you think you will print more agricultural news in 1976 than you did in 1975? Yes _____ No. _____
6. How interested do you think your readers are, as a whole, in agricultural news today? (Check only one space.)
Extremely Interested _____ 7 _____ 6 _____ 5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ Not Interested
7. How great is your interest in running a news story on each of the topics listed below?

	Very High	High	Mod-erate	Low	Very Low
Grain and forage crops:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hogs and feeder pigs:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Beef cattle:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dairy cattle:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Poultry and eggs:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Food Prices and supplies:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Nutrition for consumers:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Food safety and canning:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Farm and home safety:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Household information:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Where in your paper does agricultural news generally go?
_____ a) in a special farm section or farm page
_____ b) on page one
_____ c) scattered throughout
_____ d) other (specify) _____
9. How often do you run a special farm section or farm page?
_____ a) every issue _____ d) never
_____ b) every other issue _____ e) other (specify) _____
_____ c) monthly _____

- 2 -

10. What length agricultural news story do you prefer (typed)?

- a) one-half page d) no preference
 b) one page e) other _____
 c) two pages

11. How much do each of the following considerations contribute to your decision to use or reject an agricultural story?

	Very much	A lot	Some- what	Little	Not at all
Subject matter:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Timeliness:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Style of writing:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Reader interest:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local adaptability:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Available space:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Source credibility:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. If you were faced with the need to reduce your news space, how likely would you be to cut back on each type of general news category listed below?

	Very likely	Likely	Don't use	Not likely	Would NOT cut
Local news:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
State news:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
National news:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
International news:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sports:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Agricultural news:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Society or women's:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Syndicated features:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Editorials:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Advertising:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

13. How often do you use each of the following sources of agricultural news for your paper?

	Very much	Often	Some- times	Little	Never
Area farmers:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
County Extension Agent:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
U.S. Dept. of Agric.:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Arkansas ASCS Office:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Soil Conser. Service:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Arkansas Farm Bureau:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Coop. Extension Service:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other (specify) _____:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

14. If you have received as many as ten Cooperative Extension Service news releases (on the blue letterhead) this year (1975), how many of them did you print in whole or in part?

- a) more than 75% d) 1 to 25%
 b) 51 to 75% e) none
 c) 26 to 50% f) received fewer than 10

- 3 -

15. Compared to the number of Cooperative Extension Service news releases (on the blue letterhead) in 1975, how many would you like to get in 1976?
 _____ a) more _____ c) fewer _____ e) other _____
 _____ b) about the same _____ d) none _____

16. How would you rate the Cooperative Extension Service news releases (on the blue letterhead) you received in 1975?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
a) subject matter:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b) timeliness:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c) story length:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
d) style:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
e) variety:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
f) usefulness:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

17. How many of the glossy photos from the Cooperative Extension Service have you printed in your paper this year (1975)?
 _____ a) more than 75% _____ d) 1 to 25%
 _____ b) 51 to 75% _____ e) none
 _____ c) 26 to 50% _____ f) didn't receive any in 1975

18. How many glossy photographs from the Cooperative Extension Service would you like to be getting compared to 1975?
 _____ a) many more _____ d) fewer
 _____ b) more _____ e) none
 _____ c) no more

19. How would you rate the photo releases you received in 1975 from the Cooperative Extension Service?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
a) photo quality:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b) outline quality:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c) usefulness:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
d) timeliness:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Thank you very much for taking time to give us your responses to these questions. Please feel free to make additional comments on the back of this sheet or on a separate sheet.

The results of this study should be available in a few weeks. If you would like a copy of them, please check here: _____

CJ/dgc
2272-12-75

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER MAILED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS Division of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

1201 McALMONT P. O. BOX 391 LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72203 (501) 376-6301

November 19, 1975

Dear Editor:

We in the Editorial Office of the Cooperative Extension Service have enjoyed working with the Arkansas press in the past and look forward to another pleasant working relationship in 1976.

We always appreciate feedback from you so that our service to you can be improved and updated from time to time. Would you please take a few minutes of your time this week to respond to the enclosed questionnaire. Your newspaper is a part of a sample of Arkansas newspapers in this study, and a high return will help the results be meaningful to all the state's newspapers.

Our objectives are fourfold:

1. To determine what Arkansas newspaper editors foresee as their needs for agricultural news in 1976.
2. To determine how agricultural news competes for space with other types of news in Arkansas newspapers.
3. To determine what sources of agricultural news are most important to Arkansas newspaper editors.
4. To evaluate the usefulness of the information sent out in 1975 to Arkansas newspapers from this office.

A stamped self-addressed envelope is provided for your convenience in returning the questionnaire to us.

Would you please return the questionnaire by December 1. Thank you for your help---it is extremely valuable to us.

Sincerely,

Charles M. Johnston
Assistant Extension Editor

CMJ:fw
Enc.

APPENDIX C

SECOND COVER LETTER



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS Division of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

1201 McALMONT P. O. BOX 391 LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72203 (501) 376-6301

December 5, 1975

Dear Editor:

We have received a good return so far on the questionnaire we mailed to Arkansas newspapers on November 19 asking for responses to questions concerning agricultural news. Arkansas newspaper publishers and editors are interested in receiving in 1976.

We have not yet, however, received back the questionnaire we mailed to your newspaper (unless it has crossed in the mail with this letter). We are most eager to hear from your newspaper so that our study can be as meaningful as possible.

We realize you have a busy schedule, but we desperately need your reply. Would you, therefore, please take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire. Another copy is enclosed in case you can't put your hands on the one we originally sent. We would be very appreciative if we could hear from you by December 12.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Charles M. Johnston

Charles M. Johnston
Assistant Extension Editor

CMJ:owa
Enclosure

APPENDIX D


SAMPLES OF THE TWO NEWS SERVICES TO NEWSPAPERS
FROM THE ACES EDITORIAL OFFICE

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

NEWS

EDITORIAL OFFICE
 P.O. Box 391
 Little Rock, Ark. 72203
 Telephone (AC 501) 376-6301

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE AND UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATING


 David E. Ryker
 Extension Editor
 November 6, 1975

ATTN: NEWS EDITOR

For Release: Wednesday, November 12, 1975

BEEF PRODUCER PREFERS "POUR ON" FOR GRUB CONTROL

MELBOURNE, ARK.---Cledis Martin, a beef producer of the Brockwell Community in IZARD County, has been well pleased with the results he is getting by using Co-Ral as a pour on, according to Erby L. Cathey, county Extension agent - staff chairman.

He has been able to get excellent control of grubs, horn flies, and lice for the past five years following the Extension Service recommendations.

The pour on method is much easier for him than spraying and he feels that his results have been better, too. He likes to get this job done in the fall prior to October 15.

He uses toxaphene for tick control throughout the summer months and worms the herd after the first killing frost. This program is working real well for him.

- 30 -

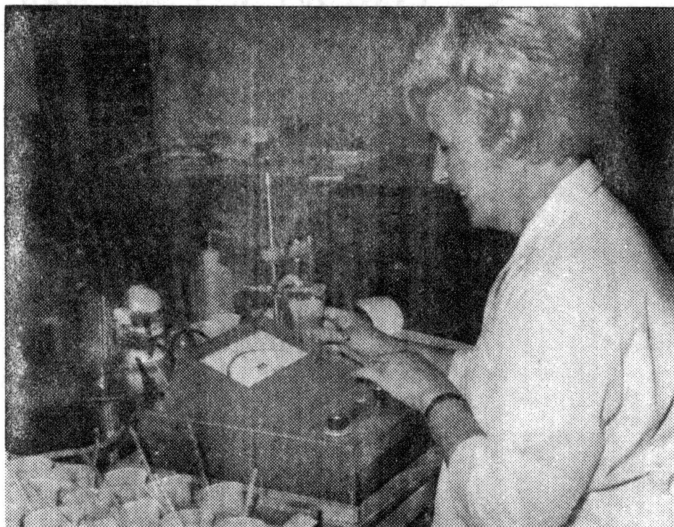
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EDITORIAL OFFICE
P.O. Box 391
Little Rock, Ark. 72203
Telephone (AC 501) 376-6301

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

NEWS

August 24, 1974



Mrs. Betty Floyd, staff technician, demonstrates the soil densitometer used to detect the chemical properties in soil. The University of Arkansas Soil Testing Laboratory at Marianna tested its one millionth soil sample on August 20, 1974. The service began in 1954.

VITA

Charles Milton Johnston
Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: ARKANSAS NEWSPAPER EDITORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD
AGRICULTURAL NEWS

Major Field: Mass Communication

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Crossett, Arkansas, February 26,
1940, the son of Wesley H. and Gladys Johnston.

Education: Graduated from Crossett High School,
Crossett, Arkansas, in May, 1958; received Bachelor of Science degree in Radio and Television Broadcasting from the University of Houston in 1961; enrolled in master's program at Oklahoma State University in 1974; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1976.

Professional Experience: Student Assistant, KUHT-TV, University of Houston, 1958-61; TV Director, KTHV, 1961-63; TV Production Specialist, U. S. Army, 1963-65; TV Production Director, KBMT, 1965-66; TV Producer Director, KETS, 1966-69; Assistant Extension Editor, University of Arkansas, 1969-76.