

A PROFILE ANALYSIS OF READER INTEREST
IN THE DAILY O'COLLEGIAN AT
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

By

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PREFACE

This study attempted to provide some insight into the readership of, and reader interest in, a variety of news areas carried in The Daily O'Collegian. It also indicated what types of readers preferred what areas of news. Though exploratory in nature, the study also attempted to identify commonalities among the types of readers and general news areas.

This study is dedicated to the two groups that will hopefully benefit most from studies such as this one: the O'Collegian readership and the O'Collegian student editorial staff.

I wish to express sincere thanks to the publisher, associate publishers and student editors of The Daily O'Collegian who helped give this study purpose and direction.

Very sincere gratitude is extended my major thesis adviser, Dr. Walter J. Ward, Coordinator of Graduate Studies in Mass Communication at Oklahoma State University. Without his patience and research finesse, this thesis would never have reached completion. Dr. Ward also provided a research assistantship that not only supplied financial assistance but an increased appreciation, if not understanding, of mass communication research.

Acknowledgment is also due thesis committee members Dr. Harry E. Heath and Dr. James Rhea.

Special recognition is due my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Klock, for their solid support of a long thesis effort.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Daily O'Collegian and its predecessors have provided Oklahoma State University with a campus newspaper for the past 81 years. During that time, little has been done in a systematic way to ascertain reading frequency of, or interest in, various types of news and features carried in The Daily O'Collegian (hereinafter referred to as the O'Collegian).

A review of the existing literature, to be touched upon later in this chapter, made it clear that a profile analysis such as the present study offers would be useful. Thus an effort was made to collect and analyze data both on content areas preferred by O'Collegian readers and their degrees of interest in various types of content.

Background

To get a "real-life" grasp of how O'Collegian reader-feedback studies might aid the campus paper, the author interviewed a number of O'Collegian student and faculty executives, past and present.

One purpose of this reader-feedback study was to indicate how well (or how poorly) the over-all paper was being read by the campus population. Andrew Tevington, fall, 1973, editor, said O'Collegian editors have not reliably "known" the degree to which the paper is accepted by the population it claims to serve (1).

It appeared that Tevington, as other O'Collegian editors before and after him, assumed the paper was well received. Thus, a systematic study of reader feedback could provide an O'Collegian editor with indications of how "popular" the campus newspaper was with the campus community.

Indications of what specific news areas in the O'Collegian are read and not read was cited as another reason for reader-feedback studies by Tevington and Frank Ragulsky, O'Collegian adviser and associate publisher (1,2). By thus defining wide areas of reader interest, research data might stimulate over-all interest in the O'Collegian, said Barbara Niemeyer, fall, 1974, editor (3).

Such studies also could help editors to compare reader interest in campus activities with interest in such non-campus activities as city (Stillwater) and state news.

It appeared to the author that the student editorial management of the O'Collegian (defined here as the editor, managing editor and news editors) did not have any indication of what news areas readers read the most and least, and what types elicit high and low interest. Not only could such a study provide the student editorial management with such valuable data, but, when replicated over time, could reflect changes and/or trends in news areas preferred by O'Collegian readers. Of course, news area trends will reflect only current news areas carried in the campus paper and will not indicate news areas the readers might like to see the paper carry or what the editor could put in the newspaper.

Reader-feedback studies not only could help the O'Collegian provide what types of news readers say they prefer, but how they want the news

presented as well, in terms of particular reviews, editorials, specialized comment, etc. (2). Thus, feedback studies could provide information that would aid the O'Collegian's student editorial staff in shaping the final news product as to both content and form (1).

O'Collegian studies might be used to test and correct student editorial staff assumptions and conceptions about current news areas possessing high and low levels of reader interest, according to Laurie Fries, spring, 1974, editor, and Leland Tenney, O'Collegian general manager and associate publisher (4,5).

The preceding statement indicates the student editorial staff selects news items, at least partially, on the basis of personal opinions and assumptions. These news decisions are made without the use of reader-feedback data because no reliable data exists. The author's study will provide data that could aid in objective newsroom decision-making.

Reader-feedback studies might also be "educationally sound" because they would help the O'Collegian "strengthen its news coverage by pointing out the paper's weak news areas and news areas improperly covered" (5). News coverage areas could be expanded as well and the campus covered more thoroughly than in the past by the application of such data (2,4).

Harry Heath, O'Collegian publisher, said most O'Collegian editors possess "professional ethical attitudes," but they have difficulty conceptualizing how best to serve the news needs of the campus because of their "limited real-world newspaper experience" (6). As a result, Heath said, the O'Collegian tends to overlook "intermediate value" news items (6).

Thus, it appeared to the author that there was a definite need for a reader-feedback study of some type on the O'Collegian.

Earlier Research

At the time of this study, there existed a considerable void of information about the news area preferences and interests of O'Collegian readers. This void underlined the need for this study.

The author found only two earlier studies concerned solely with the O'Collegian. In 1970, Audrey Pennington wrote a master's thesis entitled "The College Press: Perceived Functions by Various Publics Within the University" (7). In 1971, Susan Carter analyzed the "Perceived Role of the Student Editor of The Daily O'Collegian" (8). Neither thesis, however, addressed itself to the problems of gathering and analyzing reliable reader-feedback data on the campus newspaper.

An undergraduate research study on O'Collegian readership was conducted by Nancy Price in 1967. This study attempted to indicate what specific stories were read, how much of each was read, and how much of each was recalled by the designated sample. The accidental sample consisted of male and female readers housed in fraternities and dormitories. However, due to inadequate definition of the problem, non-probability sampling techniques and other research design and methodological shortcomings, the findings were of limited value (9).

Thus the areas concerning reader perception of, and reader feedback on, the O'Collegian were vastly unexplored at the time of the author's study.

The author's study provided data on the reading frequency of, and reader interest in, 17 O'Collegian news areas. A systematic sample of

275 readers indicated how often they read articles in each of the 17 selected news areas (also termed types), and 220 of the 275 respondents indicated how interested they were in each news area.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The over-all aim of this study was to discover an index of popularity of The Daily O'Collegian, Oklahoma State University's daily student newspaper. Popularity was derived from the mean readership and interest ratings of 17 types of news-features carried by the newspaper.

Readership comprised the mean frequency with which respondents said they read each and all 17 types of news. Thus, "readership" and "reading frequency" are used interchangeably in this study. After respondents noted their reading frequency for each type of news, they expressed their degrees of interest. Both readership and interest were designated on five-point scales.

Types of News

All issues of The Daily O'Collegian during the Fall of 1973 and Spring of 1974 were studied to determine what types of news occurred most often. The non-advertising content carried throughout those two semesters was classified into 17 broad news-feature types, as follows:

1. Sports
2. Campus Government
3. Campus Clubs, Organizations and Social Groups
4. Oklahoma State Faculty
5. University Administration and Policies
6. University Colleges
7. Stillwater City Government
8. Non-Governmental Stillwater Activities
9. State News
10. National News

11. International News
12. Editorials
13. Editorial Cartoons
14. Letters to the Editor
15. Crossword Puzzle
16. Fine Arts
17. Campus News In Brief

By selecting somewhat broad news-feature categories that occurred most frequently, the author felt confident respondents could easily recognize and rate the news-feature types on readership and interest.

Questionnaire Scales

After pretesting two versions of the questionnaire on 126 persons enrolled in a basic advertising course, the author arrived at a 17-item version shown in Appendix C. This final version seemed to have been understood best and completed with the greatest ease by the pretest respondents.

For each of the 17 types of news, the respondents in the actual study first were asked to designate how often they read each of the 17 types of news (from 5-Always to 1-Never). Then they marked their interest in each type of news (from 5-I would like more such articles to 1-I would like less such articles.) The interest scale was placed just below the readership scale for each of the 17 types of news.

The five-point scales, then, allowed the respondents to reflect their readership and intensity of interest in each type of news, the average of which was taken as an index of The Daily O'Collegian's popularity.

The author hastens to note that the interest scale possibly served as a check on response bias. For example, if a respondent showed high interest in Sports news, but had previously indicated he never read

about sports, his ratings would have been suspect. By correlating the readership and interest scales, response bias possibly could be spotted, if and where it existed.

Only two assigned variables were built into the questionnaire: sex and the respondent's university classification. The latter was partitioned into sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students and non-students (faculty, staff and "other" university employees). Freshmen were not included in the study, on the belief they might not have been familiar enough with O'Collegian content to have established a reading pattern or assimilated an opinion.

At the questionnaire's end, personal comments were requested--to which 122 persons responded. The essence of those comments is reproduced in Appendix D.

Drawing the Sample

A sample of 571 names was drawn from the 1973-74 edition of the Oklahoma State University Student-Faculty Directory. Names and addresses of 18,562 students and 4,182 faculty, staff and other university employees were listed in the directory.

Bearing in mind the limitations and defects of mail questionnaires, a minimal number of usable returns was set at 267. Using simple random sample sizes and assuming population characteristics split 50-50, a sample of 267 has a tolerated error of plus or minus 6 per cent at the 95 per cent level of confidence.

From the 571 mailed questionnaires, 275 of the 318 returned were usable for the readership analysis. Two hundred twenty were returned with both the readership and interest scales adequately marked.

A 48 per cent return was realized on the readership scale (275 out of 571). The 220 usable responses to the interest scale represented a 39 per cent return.

Kerlinger notes that "responses to mail questionnaires are generally poor. Returns of less than 40 or 50 per cent are common. Higher percentages are rare. At best, the researcher must content himself with returns as low as 50 to 60 per cent" (10, p. 397).

Per cent of return in this study, then, was not uncommon, despite several precautions taken by the author to boost the return rate. These included an introductory letter (Appendix A) mailed three days before the actual questionnaires were mailed. Too, the author remailed incorrect address returns to names held on a reserve sample list.

Further, a cover letter, bearing the Oklahoma State University School of Journalism and Broadcasting's letterhead, was constructed with a high rate of return in mind (Appendix B). The letter emphasized the independence of the study of the O'Collegian itself. Emphasis was placed on determination to find out what readers wanted in the paper and on giving them an opportunity to air likes and dislikes concerning content. Confidentiality of responses was noted.

Also with an eye to facilitating returns, a postage-free return envelope was included with each mail questionnaire.

The author did not know if the usable returns represented a random sample of the original sample of 571. Therefore, external validity cannot be claimed and any generalizations from study findings must be viewed as questionable.

Analysis Procedure

This study design called for a multi-variate analysis. The author's job was to determine the relationship of types of news and types of respondents to readership and to interest--and to readership and interest combined.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, the treatments-by-subjects analysis of variance, and elementary linkage and factor analysis comprised the basic tools of analysis in this study.

Correlations were used to determine similarity of readership and interest between males and females and between the various classes of respondents.

Treatments-by-subjects variance analysis helped to determine differences in readership and interest between sexes and various respondent classes. This tool also helped determine the measurement consistency of the 17 news-feature types, as well as their relative saliency to readership and interest responses.

The linkage-factor analysis was used to extract respondents who showed similar readership and interest patterns. For example, this analysis told the author if response patterns of students differed from those of non-students and on what types of news.

Essentially, the above procedures set out to answer the age-old question of the mass communication practitioner: What kinds of people react how to what kinds of messages?

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

The over-all question in this study was addressed to the O'Collegian's popularity. The author defined "popularity" as the combined mean of reading frequency (readership) and interest, as reported by respondents. This popularity was computed for each of the 17 news-feature types and for all the types combined.

Further, the popularity index was partitioned into several analyses designed to answer the following questions:

1. Does sex or university classification make a difference in how often all the 17 types of O'Collegian news, combined, are read? Does sex or classification make a difference in degree of interest?
2. Does sex make a difference in how often specific types of news are read?
3. Does sex make a difference in the degree of interest in specific types of news?
4. Does university classification make a difference in how often specific types of news are read?
5. Does university classification make a difference in the degree of interest in specific types of news?
6. Among the five classifications of respondents, are there some which are more alike than others in terms of how frequently they read various types of O'Collegian news?
7. Among the five classifications of respondents, are there some which are more alike than others in terms of how interested they are in various types of O'Collegian news?

Popularity

Table I shows a mean readership of 3.54 and a mean interest of 3.52. The average of the mean readership and interest ratings netted a mean popularity rating of 3.53. On a five-point scale, this rating could be translated into "somewhat-to-very" popular.

The fourth column of Table I indicates the amount of correlation between the respondents' readership of, and interest in, each type of news. For example, the correlation between the respondents' readership of, and interest in, Editorial Cartoons was .58 ($df=218$, $p<.01$). We can see that for the correlation coefficients in the fourth column of Table I, readership and interest for all 17 areas were related significantly. The correlation between the 17 mean reading frequency and 17 mean interest scores in Table I is .68 at $df=15$, $p<.01$.

TABLE I
MEAN POPULARITY RATINGS OF EACH OF 17 TYPES
OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS

Type of News	Mean Reading Frequency	Mean Interest	Mean Popularity	Intra-item Correlation
Editorial Cartoons	4.43	4.05	4.25	.58
Letters to Editor	3.98	3.86	3.92	.65
Editorials	3.92	3.79	3.85	.62
News In Brief	3.89	3.99	3.94	.69
Univ. Adm. & Pol.	3.89	3.81	3.85	.64
State News	3.61	3.59	3.60	.69
Univ. Colleges	3.54	3.56	3.55	.64
National News	3.81	3.69	3.75	.74
International News	3.52	3.36	3.44	.77
Univ. Faculty	3.45	3.37	3.41	.71
City (non-govt.)	3.46	3.41	3.44	.71
Campus Clubs, Org. & Social Groups	3.41	3.40	3.41	.72

TABLE I (Continued)

Type of News	Mean Reading Frequency	Mean Interest	Mean Popularity	Intra-item Correlation
Sports	3.31	3.57	3.44	.70
Fine Arts	3.30	3.34	3.32	.80
City Govt.	3.21	3.11	3.16	.70
Campus Govt.	3.09	3.10	3.10	.59
Crossword Puzzle	2.30	2.21	2.26	.65
Mean Total	3.54	3.52	3.53	.68

A treatments-by-subjects variance analysis of Table I showed differences among several of the types of news ($F=17.8$, $df=16/18$, $p<.01$). This indicated the author probably chose an adequate sample of types of news. At least, he can say the types of news tended to draw consistent readership and interest from respondents.

Not all types of news, however, showed a significant difference in popularity. A critical difference of .20 was required in popularity ratings for any two types of news to be considered significantly different.

To illustrate the relative popularity of types of news, Table II, page 14, lists the number of types of news that any particular type equaled or surpassed in popularity. Table II should be read row by row from left to right. For example, Editorial Cartoons netted a popularity rating equal to or greater than all the other 16 types of news.

As pointed out later, the Editorial Cartoons were read most frequently by undergraduate respondents to this study.

Ranking second in popularity were Letters to the Editor,

TABLE II

TYPES OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS TO WHICH EACH TYPE IS
EQUALLY OR MORE POPULAR
(Critical Difference of .20)

[illegible]

Editorials, National News, Campus News In Brief and news about University Administration and Policy matters. The popularity of "Letters" was highest among undergraduates, while graduates and non-students tended to read about the administration and university policy matters more frequently. Editorials, Campus News In Brief and National News tended to be equally popular across all classes of respondents.

Seven types of news were ranked third in popularity, equalling or surpassing 10 or 11 other types of news. These comprised a mixture of "hard" and "soft" news, including stories about the world, the state, Oklahoma State University colleges and faculty, non-governmental city news, campus social life and sports.

Three of these third-ranked types of news were most popular among graduate students and non-students. They were news of University Colleges, University Faculty and Sports. Undergraduates contributed most to the popularity of State News and campus and social activities. International News was equally popular among all types of readers.

Fine Arts, City Government, Campus Government and the Crossword Puzzle were the least popular content types in the O'Collegian. Undergraduates accounted for what little popularity the Crossword Puzzle did receive, while graduate students and non-students gave the biggest boost to City Government news' popularity. Fine Arts and Campus Government received an equally low popularity among all types of respondents.

Readership by Sex and Classification

A total of 121 females and 154 males gave reading frequencies for the 17 types of O'Collegian news. Mean readership for each sex was recorded for each classification: sophomore, junior, senior, graduate

student and non-student, as shown in Table III.

TABLE III
MEAN READING FREQUENCY ACROSS ALL 17 O'COLLEGIAN TYPES
OF NEWS BY SEX AND UNIVERSITY CLASSIFICATION

Classification*	Males' Mean Reading Frequency	Females' Mean Reading Frequency	Over-All Mean Frequency
Sophomore	3.35	3.57	3.46
Junior	3.56	3.65	3.59
Senior	3.59	3.56	3.58
Graduate Student	3.73	3.54	3.63
Non-Student	3.37	3.54	3.43
Over-all Mean	3.51	3.57	3.54

*Number of respondents by sex and classification who responded. Female--sophomores, 30; juniors, 28; seniors, 25; graduate students, 11; non-students, 27. Male--sophomores, 26; juniors, 27; seniors, 42; graduate students, 24; non-students, 35.

On the author's five-point scale, the over-all mean of 3.54 in the lower right corner of Table III lies between "somewhat-read" and "frequently-read" by all types of readers.

The over-all mean difference of .06 between males and females (3.51 vs. 3.57) was negligible. Further, over-all mean differences in reading frequencies among the five groups of readers were small, ranging from 3.43 for non-students to 3.63 for graduate students.

With caution, one could say that, over-all, graduate students, juniors and seniors displayed a similar and somewhat higher reading frequency than did sophomores and non-students.

These over-all findings, however, tended to hinge on sex and some classifications to interact. Most of these interactive tendencies were related to the relatively high mean reading frequency of 3.73 recorded by male graduate students.

For example, graduate students, over-all, tended to read the O'Collegian news types more frequently than sophomores and non-students. A closer look at Table III shows that this higher reading frequency occurs among male graduate students. In fact, the mean frequency for female graduate students (3.54) was about the same as for female sophomores, seniors and non-students.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, graduate students, seniors and juniors read the O'Collegian types with nearly equal frequency. But this similarity among the groups does not hold true for both sexes. The similarity between graduate students and juniors resulted from male graduate students reading more often than male juniors (3.73 vs. 3.56), whereas female graduate students read less often than female juniors (3.54 vs. 3.65). A similar interactive pattern existed between graduate students and seniors.

Readership of Types of News by Sex

From Table IV, the author was interested in how often males and females read each type of news. An arbitrary difference of .50 between the male and female reading frequency of any one type of news was considered worthy of discussion. Only two such types of news distinguished male and female readership, as designated by the underlined differences in the fourth column of Table IV.

TABLE IV
MEAN READING FREQUENCY OF EACH TYPE OF
O'COLLEGIAN NEWS BY SEX

Type of News	Male	Female	Total Mean	Difference
Editorial Cartoons	4.41	4.44	4.43	-.03
Letters to Editor	3.98	3.98	3.98	.00
Editorials	3.88	3.94	3.92	-.06
News In Brief	3.73	4.05	3.89	-.32
Adm. & Policies	3.89	3.87	3.88	.02
State News	3.58	3.72	3.61	-.14
University Colleges	3.45	3.62	3.54	-.17
National News	3.78	3.83	3.81	-.05
International News	3.46	3.56	3.51	-.10
University Faculty	3.36	3.55	3.45	-.19
City (non-govt.)	3.42	3.48	3.45	-.06
Campus Clubs, Org. & Social Groups	3.24	3.58	3.41	-.34
Sports	3.78	3.02	3.40	<u>.76</u>
Fine Arts	3.04	3.55	3.30	<u>-.51</u>
City Government	3.33	3.09	3.21	.14
Campus Government	3.19	3.05	3.12	.14
Crossword Puzzle	<u>2.21</u>	<u>2.40</u>	<u>2.30</u>	<u>-.19</u>
Mean Total	3.51	3.57	3.54	

Fine Arts were read more often by females than males, while males attended more to Sports.

Noteworthy is that the three most read types of news--Editorial Cartoons, Letters to the Editor and Editorials--drew nearly equal readership from both sexes.

Over-all, readership of most types of news was similar for both sexes, as witnessed by the relatively high correlation between their mean reading frequencies ($r=.74$, $df=15$, $p<.01$), coupled with the small mean difference across all types of news (3.51 vs. 3.57).

Readership of Types of News by Class of Respondent

If sex made little difference in readership of different types of news, what about the respondents' classification? Analysis of Table III readership data helped answer this question.

As indicated earlier, there was only a tendency toward readership differences among the five classes of respondents ($F=2.17$, $df=4/64$, $p>.05$). In the author's treatments-by-subjects analysis of Table V, types of news were treated as subjects. Differences among those "subjects" were significant ($F=18$, $df=16/64$, $p<.01$). This means that different types of news, over-all, were consistent in commanding attention from all classes of respondents. . . and some types commanded more attention than others.

TABLE V

MEAN READING FREQUENCY OF EACH TYPE OF O'COLLEGIAN
NEWS BY UNIVERSITY CLASSIFICATION

Type of News	Soph.	Junior	Senior	Grad.	Non-Student	Total Mean
Editorial Cartoons	4.52	4.49	4.55	4.43	4.14	4.43
Letters to Editor	3.92	4.11	4.18	3.74	3.96	3.98
Editorials	3.85	3.85	3.98	3.92	4.00	3.92
News In Brief	3.85	3.90	4.02	3.91	3.79	3.89
Adm. & Policies	3.61	3.93	3.79	4.05	4.06	3.89
State News	3.73	3.71	3.72	3.72	3.18	3.65
Univ. Colleges	3.38	3.42	3.35	3.81	3.74	3.54
National News	3.73	3.91	3.91	4.16	3.32	3.81
International News	3.41	3.60	3.33	4.14	3.10	3.52
Univ. Faculty	3.01	3.27	3.36	3.76	3.87	3.45
City (non-govt.)	3.25	3.46	3.45	3.73	3.39	3.46
Campus Clubs, Org. & Social Groups	3.49	3.65	3.66	3.09	3.15	3.41
Sports	3.70	3.72	3.44	2.99	2.72	3.40
Fine Arts	3.07	3.18	3.52	3.46	3.26	3.30
City Government	2.91	3.21	3.05	3.37	3.53	3.21
Campus Government	3.15	3.04	3.09	2.95	3.20	3.09
Crossword Puzzle	<u>2.22</u>	<u>2.57</u>	<u>2.40</u>	<u>2.43</u>	<u>1.90</u>	<u>2.30</u>
Mean Total	3.46	3.59	3.58	3.63	3.43	3.54

Despite the over-all readership similarity among the five classes of respondents, some classes tended to be more like each other in their readership of some types of news than they were like other classes.

Clusters of Respondents on Readership

Correlation and elementary linkage analysis and factor analysis of Table V data revealed a tendency toward different readership patterns. First, mean reading frequencies of the 17 types of news for each class of respondent were inter-correlated. The product-moment coefficients among the five classes of respondents are shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI
INTER-CORRELATIONS OF FIVE CLASSES OF RESPONDENTS ON HOW
FREQUENTLY THEY REPORTEDLY READ EACH OF 17 TYPES OF
O'COLLEGIAN NEWS

	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Grad.St.	Non-Students
Sophomores	1.000	.952	.941	.697	.670
Juniors	.952	1.000	.951	.270	.661
Seniors	.941	.951	1.000	.552	.763
Graduate Students	.697	.270	.552	1.000	.777
Non-Students	.670	.661	.763	.777	1.000

Product-moment correlations at $df = 15$ must equal .497 and .623 to exceed chance at the .05 and .01 significance levels, respectively.

Using McQuitty's elementary linkage and factor analysis procedures (11, pp. 207-229), the author extracted two types of readers from the inter-correlations in Table VI. Each type tended to show a different readership pattern.

The first type of respondent comprised persons in the sophomore, junior and senior classifications, while Type II comprised graduate students and non-students. But knowing what classifications of people make up Type I and Type II readers would not help an O'Collegian editor much. Additionally, the editor must know what types of news are preferred by each type of reader.

This information lies in Table VII which lists the mean reading frequency for each type of news by each type of reader. The underlined entries in the "Difference" column of Table VII enabled the author to discuss how Type I and Type II readers differed most in how often they read the various types of O'Collegian news.

TABLE VII

MEAN READING FREQUENCIES OF TYPES I AND II READERS FOR
EACH OF 17 TYPES OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS

Types of News	Type I Mean Reading Frequency	Type II Mean Reading Frequency	Difference
Editorial Cartoons	4.52	4.29	<u>.23</u>
Letters to Editor	4.07	3.85	<u>.22</u>
Editorials	3.89	3.96	<u>-.07</u>
News In Brief	3.92	3.85	<u>.07</u>
Adm. & Policies	3.78	4.06	<u>-.28</u>
State News	3.72	3.45	<u>.27</u>
University Colleges	3.38	3.78	<u>-.40</u>
National News	3.85	3.74	<u>.11</u>
International News	3.45	3.62	<u>-.17</u>
University Faculty	3.21	3.82	<u>-.61</u>
City (non-govt.)	3.39	3.56	<u>-.17</u>
Campus Clubs, Org. & Social Groups	3.60	3.12	<u>.48</u>
Sports	3.62	2.86	<u>-.76</u>
Fine Arts	3.26	3.36	<u>-.10</u>
City Government	3.06	3.45	<u>-.39</u>
Campus Government	3.09	3.08	<u>.01</u>
Crossword Puzzle	2.40	2.17	<u>.23</u>
Total	3.54	3.54	

Type I: sophomores, juniors and seniors; Type II: graduate students and non students ($r = .76$ at $df = 16$, $p < .01$)

Over-all, the O'Collegian commanded as much attention from Type I readers as it did from Type II, as shown by the total mean reading frequency of 3.54 for each type.

As one looks at the mean reading frequencies of each type of news, however, some news tended to be read more frequently by one type of reader than the other, as follows:

Type I readers--sophomores, juniors and seniors--tended to expose themselves more frequently to:

- Editorial Cartoons
- Letters to the Editor
- State News
- Campus Clubs, Organizations and Social Groups
- Crossword Puzzle

Type II readers--graduate students and non-students--tended more often to read news about:

- University Administration and Policies
- University Colleges
- University Faculty
- Sports
- City Government

Both Type I and Type II readers exposed themselves about equally often to the following types of news:

- Editorials
- Campus News In Brief
- National News
- International News
- Fine Arts
- City Government

The reader is reminded that the above readership patterns did not appear in sharp focus. The over-all mean frequency between the two types is identical. Additionally, the two types of readers showed a high correlation ($r = .76$, $df = 16$, $p < .01$).

With this precaution noted, the author suggested the two types of readers, in the main, could represent a readership split between

"Student Interests" in the case of the Type I undergraduates, and "Administrative Interests" in the case of Type II Graduate Student and Non-Student readers.

Interest

The preceding section has indicated that readership and interest in the O'Collegian were highly related. That is, the types of news which the respondents read most frequently were the types in which they were most interested.

This is hardly startling news, but it does say something for the author's measurement instrument. Table VIII, for example, shows a mean interest of 3.52 out of a possible 5.00 in all types of O'Collegian news, across all types of respondents. Table III, page 16, showed a mean readership or reading frequency rating of 3.54. Also, in Table VIII, females tended to be slightly more interested than males. Likewise in Table III, females tended to read the O'Collegian somewhat more frequently.

TABLE VIII

MEAN INTEREST IN ALL TYPES OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS BY SEX
AND UNIVERSITY CLASSIFICATION

Classification	Males' Mean Interest	Females' Mean Interest	Mean Total
Sophomore	3.35	3.56	3.46
Junior	3.57	3.69	3.63
Senior	3.53	3.65	3.59
Graduate Student	3.70	3.43	3.57
Non-Student	<u>3.21</u>	<u>3.51</u>	<u>3.36</u>
Mean Total	3.47	3.57	3.52

Table VIII further shows that juniors, seniors and graduate students tended to have a similar degree of interest. This degree of interest tended to be somewhat higher than the interest shown by sophomores and non-students. Table III showed the same pattern for readership.

The interactive pattern between sex and classification on degree of interest was similar to that for readership. The differences in interest shown by the male and female graduate student provided much insight into what appeared to be slight differences between sexes and among classes of respondents.

Table VIII shows the male graduate student tended to be more interested in O'Collegian news than his counterpart in any other classification. However, the female graduate student tended to be less interested than her female counterpart in any other classification.

From the above interactive pattern, we can interpret better the tendency of junior, senior and graduate students to show higher interest, over-all. For the juniors and seniors, the higher interest was due mostly to the female, while with the graduate students, the male accounted for the high interest. The relatively low and similar interest shown by sophomores and non-students was due mostly to the male "apathy" . . . a pattern shown in the findings on readership.

Interest In Types of News by Sex

How closely associated were males and females in their interests in each type of O'Collegian news? The over-all interests showed by the two groups correlated at .84, $df = 15$, $p < .01$; somewhat higher than they did in readership ($r = .74$).

As in the readership analysis, the author chose an arbitrary

difference of .50 to distinguish the interest males and females showed for any type of news. The underlined type of news in Table IX shows that only Fine Arts separated the sexes, carrying more interest for females than males. Fine Arts also was favored by females in readership.

TABLE IX
MEAN INTEREST IN EACH TYPE OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS BY SEX

Type of News	Males'	Females'	Total Mean	Difference
Editorial Cartoons	4.04	4.04	4.04	.00
News In Brief	3.94	4.07	4.01	-.13
Letters to Editor	3.83	3.83	3.83	.00
Adm. & Policies	3.78	3.86	3.82	.08
Editorials	3.72	3.91	3.82	.19
National News	3.64	3.83	3.74	.19
State News	3.57	3.67	3.62	.10
University Colleges	3.43	3.80	3.62	.37
Sports	3.68	3.34	3.51	.34
City (non-govt.)	3.40	3.47	3.44	.07
International News	3.37	3.51	3.44	.14
University Faculty	3.25	3.48	3.37	.23
Campus Clubs, Org. & Social Groups	3.30	3.41	3.36	.11
<u>Fine Arts</u>	3.11	3.67	3.39	<u>.56</u>
City Government	3.24	2.96	3.10	.28
Campus Government	3.02	3.10	3.06	.08
Crossword Puzzle	<u>2.69</u>	<u>2.72</u>	<u>2.71</u>	.03
Total Mean	3.47	3.57	3.52	

Also noteworthy from Table IX is that Editorial Cartoons and Letters to the Editor were among the top three most interesting types and were liked about equally by both sexes. The same pattern was evident in readership ratings.

Interest in Types of News by Class of Respondent

Like sex, respondent classification made little difference in the degree of interest in O'Collegian news. However, types of news drew a

consistent response in interest, as they did with readership. The total mean interest in types of news ranged from 2.70 for the Crossword Puzzle to 4.04 for Editorial Cartoons, as shown in Table X.

TABLE X
MEAN INTEREST IN EACH TYPE OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS
BY UNIVERSITY CLASSIFICATION

Type of News	Soph.	Junior	Senior	Grad.	Non-Student	Total Mean
Editorial Cartoons	4.33	4.24	4.13	3.83	~3.68	4.04
News In Brief	3.89	4.22	3.99	4.10	~3.85	4.01
Letters to Editor	3.75	4.04	4.07	3.63	~3.67	3.83
Adm. & Policies	3.54	3.84	3.74	3.88	~4.12	3.82
Editorials	3.82	4.02	3.79	3.70	3.76	3.82
National News	3.84	3.77	3.91	4.18	3.00	3.74
State News	3.89	3.76	3.73	3.83	2.90	3.62
University Colleges	3.24	3.76	3.51	3.80	~3.76	3.61
Sports	3.68	3.69	3.50	3.10	3.58	3.51
City (non-govt.)	3.34	3.39	3.57	3.68	3.22	3.44
International News	3.40	3.48	3.23	4.15	3.03	3.46
University Faculty	2.86	3.32	3.41	3.55	~3.68	3.36
Campus Clubs, Org. & Social Groups	3.44	3.65	3.62	2.98	3.11	3.36
Fine Arts	3.27	3.43	3.45	3.55	3.25	3.39
City Government	2.62	3.15	3.18	3.40	3.14	3.10
Campus Government	3.02	3.16	3.30	2.78	3.04	3.06
Crossword Puzzle	<u>2.87</u>	<u>2.75</u>	<u>2.90</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>2.46</u>	<u>2.70</u>
Total Mean	3.46	3.63	3.59	3.57	3.37	3.52

Clusters of Respondents on Interest

Correlation and elementary linkage and factor analysis of respondent classes from Table X revealed very little, if any, tendency toward different interest patterns. The product-moment correlations among the five classes of respondents are shown in Table XI.

TABLE XI
INTER-CORRELATIONS OF FIVE CLASSES OF RESPONDENTS
ON THEIR DEGREES OF REPORTED INTEREST IN EACH
OF 17 TYPES OF O'COLLEGIAN NEWS

	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Graduate Students	Non-Students
Sophomores	----	.878	.863	.539	.433
Juniors	.878	----	.870	.659	.705
Seniors	.863	.870	----	.596	.596
Graduate Students	.539	.659	.596	----	.460
Non-Students	.433	.705	.596	.460	----

Product-moment correlations at $df = 15$ must equal .497 and .623 to exceed chance at the .05 and .01 significance levels, respectively.

Patterns of readership tended to cluster sophomores, juniors and seniors on the one hand, and graduate students and non-students on the other. Patterns of interest, however, did not cluster as obviously. Using McQuitty's linkage and factor analysis procedures (11, pp. 207-229), only one type of reader emerged, as far as interest in types of news was concerned. What this means is that all classes of readers showed a similar interest in each and all types of O'Collegian news.

The class of reader who was most like all classes of readers in type of news interest, on the average, was the junior. This was true in the readership analysis of readership patterns also. In the readership analysis, the junior was representative of the Type I reader who also comprised sophomores and seniors. In other words, those respondent classes most closely associated with juniors in frequency with which they read the O'Collegian were sophomores and seniors. A similar pattern held true for the respondents' degrees of interest. Sophomores

and seniors were most like juniors. Graduate students and non-students were less like juniors than were sophomores and seniors, but still more like the latter three, on the average, than they were like each other.

What all this means is that, for all intents and purposes, the five classes of respondents were pretty much alike in degrees of interest shown in the 17 types of O'Collegian news.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This was a study of the popularity of 17 types of news carried by The Daily O'Collegian, Oklahoma State University's student newspaper.

Two hundred seventy-five persons from a sample of 571 taken from the 1973-74 Oklahoma State University Student-Faculty Directory returned mail questionnaires indicating how often they read each of the 17 types of news. This was their index of readership. Two hundred and twenty of the respondents who designated their readership frequency also marked their degree of interest in each item. Both readership and interest were designated on five-point scales, running from a high of 5 to a low of 1.

The average of the mean readership and interest scores was considered an index of the O'Collegian's popularity.

Readership, interest and over-all popularity were compared with the respondents' sex and university classification (sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student and non-student).

The 17 types of news rated by the respondents represented the most frequent types carried by the O'Collegian during the Fall semester of 1973 and Spring semester of 1974. They were:

1. Campus Government
2. Campus Clubs, Organizations and Social Groups
3. Sports
4. Oklahoma State Faculty
5. University Administration and Policies
6. University Colleges

7. Stillwater City Government
8. Non-Governmental Stillwater Activities
9. State News
10. National News
11. International News
12. Editorials
13. Editorial Cartoons
14. Letters to the Editor
15. Crossword Puzzle
16. Fine Arts
17. Campus News In Brief

Popularity

The mean readership of 17 types of news across all respondents was 3.54. Mean interest was 3.52. The average of two indices netted a popularity rating of 3.53, falling between "somewhat" and "quite" popular on a five-point scale.

Difference between readership and interest was no more than could be expected by chance. Further, the correlation between these two indices was .63, which would occur by chance less than 1 time in 100 in a random sample. Furthermore, the 17 types of news appeared consistent in their ability to elicit degrees of readership and interest. This meant the news types selected for this study probably represented a fairly adequate distribution of all types of news carried by the O'Collegian.

The above findings lent support to the author's claim that readership and interest represent a single response dimension which he chose to label "popularity".

Table II, page 14, shows that Editorial Cartoons were the most popular type of content. This was due mostly to the undergraduate patronage. The same was true for Letters to the Editor, another highly popular area of content.

News of Oklahoma State University Administration and Policies also was highly popular--but mostly among graduate students and non-students. However, the above three news types were highly popular among all respondents.

High-to-moderately popular types among all classes of respondents were Campus News In Brief, National News and Editorials. News types carrying very low popularity among all readers were Fine Arts and Campus Government.

Moderate-to-low popularity types included Campus Clubs, Organizations and Social Groups, Non-Governmental Stillwater Activities, Sports, University Colleges and University Faculty. The latter three types were more popular among graduate students and non-students, while the first two types were more popular among undergraduates. International News was moderately popular among all classes.

The low popularity of Stillwater City Government news came mostly from undergraduates, while graduate students and non-students helped most to put the Crossword Puzzle at rock bottom.

Readership

A mean reading frequency of 3.54 out of a possible 5.00 put the O'Collegian between the "somewhat" and "frequently-read" point on a five-point continuum. Females tended to read the campus newspaper more than males (3.57 to 3.51), but the difference was not significant. In fact, the correlation between the two sexes was .74, significant at the .01 level of probability in a random sample. Females tended to read more about Fine Arts, while males tended to read more Sports.

Sex and classification tended to interact on readership response,

as pointed out in Table III, page 16. Male graduate students tended to "outread" male juniors and seniors, while female graduate students showed a lower readership than female juniors and seniors.

Editorial Cartoons, Letters to the Editor and Editorials ranked among the top in readership--among all classes of respondents.

Elementary factor analysis extracted what was called a "Student Interest" type of reader. This group comprised sophomores, juniors and seniors. They read news types more closely related to student activities and interests more than did the Type II reader (graduate students and non-students) who was labeled the "Administrative Interest" type. (See Page 22 for the types of news most read by the two types of respondents.)

Interest

A mean interest of 3.52 across all respondents placed the O'Collegian between "somewhat" and "quite" interesting.

Males and females were more highly correlated on interest ($r = .84$) than they were on readership ($r = .74$). Only a slightly higher interest in Fine Arts news by females tended to distinguish the two sexes.

As with readership, sex and classification tended to interact on the interest response. Again, this was due mostly to male graduate students showing more interest and female graduate students showing less interest than their counterparts in other classes.

Elementary factor analysis showed the five classes of respondents were more homogeneous on interest than on readership. Only one type of reader emerged.

The most representative reader, from the standpoint of interest in

different types of news, was the Oklahoma State University junior. He also was the most representative of the Type I "Student Interest" reader in the readership analysis, in which sophomores and seniors followed his pattern. A similar pattern emerged on interest ratings. Sophomores and seniors were more related with the representative junior than were graduate students and non-students.

So, regarding interest in O'Collegian news, one "student interest" type emerged. However, graduate students and non-students were less like the representative junior than were sophomores and seniors.

Conclusions

Regarding content priorities, the editor of The Daily O'Collegian, at the time of this study, probably would be wise to continue to allocate a comparable or increased newshole space to Editorial Cartoons, Letters to the Editor, Editorials, Campus News In Brief and news about Administration and Policies of the University.

These were the five most popular types of news content with the average reader.

The Crossword Puzzle, Campus Government, City Government, Fine Arts and Sports were the least popular news areas, over-all.

Between these highly popular and highly unpopular types of content were: State News, news about University Colleges, National News, International News, news about University Faculty, Non-Government City news and news about Campus Clubs, Organizations and Social Groups, in that order.

From personal interviews with several past O'Collegian editors, the author was able to speak generally about similarities with, and

contrasts to, actual news area priorities and those suggested by this study.

At the time of this study, the editorial page was thought by the editors to be a rather popular news section with the readers. The relatively high popularity ratings accorded Editorial Cartoons, Letters to the Editor and Editorials by the respondents would tend to support that assumption. (See Appendix D for reader comments on the editorial page.)

Further, news about the university administration and university policies, as well as Campus News In Brief, were thought by the editors to be of considerable importance to the O'Collegian readership. This assumption was also given credence by the findings of this study.

The study findings, however, also tended to display some marked contrasts to some of the news area priorities assumed by the editors.

The Crossword Puzzle, generally considered to be a "bread and butter" content type, was rated last in popularity by the respondents to this study. It must be noted, however, that the crossword puzzle might not have been perceived as a news type in the same sense as the 16 other news types, and this might account partially for the crossword's low rating.

The popularity ratings for City Government and Campus Government also were far below what an O'Collegian editor might have expected. Campus government activities usually were given consistent front page coverage. City government activities likewise usually were given front page priority. Study findings indicate that coverage and priority given these two types are perhaps undeserved and need re-examination. (See Appendix D for reader comments on city and campus government areas.)

Fine Arts usually was given one to three pages one day per week. Sports usually was given one to three pages daily. In light of their relatively poor popularity ratings (especially Sports), an editor might consider re-examining the amount of news space allotted these two sections. (See Appendix D for reader comments on entertainment and sports areas.)

The basic news area emphasis at the O'Collegian during the time of this study centered on campus activities. City activities, as a whole, held a distant second in news priority, and state, national and international news areas were used extremely sparingly and often as "fillers".

But State, National and International News, as a whole, exhibited popularity ratings in the study far above what an O'Collegian editor might have expected. The findings tend to indicate the editor might want to take a second look at the quantity of, and space allotted to, State, National and International News in the campus newspaper. (See Appendix D for reader comments on news about state, national and international events.)

In essence, the popularity ratings of the previously mentioned O'Collegian news areas tended to support some preconceived editorial assumptions about news areas popular with O'Collegian readers while rendering other assumptions controvertible.

Suggested Research

It is further suggested that the observations made in this study serve as a basis for further research on The Daily O'Collegian as time, personnel and financial resources permit. The following areas are

presented for consideration:

1. Studies dealing with reading frequency and reader interest in O'Collegian news types and sections be performed periodically, perhaps once every two years at the maximum. Through such studies, readership and interest trends can be empirically observed and the newspaper made more responsive to the campus community it serves. If mail questionnaires are utilized to gather such data, it is further suggested that questionnaire design and techniques studies, such as the ones found in Appendix E, be used to refine the research instrument.

2. Studies other than ones concerning readership and reader interest be performed on the O'Collegian in order to strengthen the paper's entire structure. Possible areas of exploration include use and size of photographs, placement of advertisements, layout designs, headline styles and various type sizes.

3. All future O'Collegian studies, whatever their research topic area, be done to maximize their internal and external validity. This could be done through the utilization of adequate research design techniques such as proper and thorough sampling of the selected population. Findings with great internal and external validity will, in the author's opinion, prove to be the most beneficial to the campus paper.

4. That the traditional methods of reader input to the O'Collegian--letters to the editor, phone calls, personal comments--be analyzed to determine how representative they are of over-all O'Collegian reader opinion and interest.

5. Systematic studies be performed to determine what types or areas of news readers would like to see carried in the campus newspaper that do not currently appear. This could be expanded to include the

the news types or areas the student editorial management of the O'Collegian would like to put in the paper if they could. Such studies would promote innovation in both paper content and form.

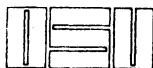
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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
INTRODUCTORY LETTER



Oklahoma State University

School of Journalism and Broadcasting
STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74074
Department of Media Research

Dear

We are asking your help in an independent research project to help improve the news content of the Daily O'Collegian and better serve the university community.

In a few days you will receive our simple, easy-to-fill-out questionnaire. It will take but a few minutes and your confidential answers will be of the greatest importance to the success of the survey.

We would greatly appreciate your aid and cooperation.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

William R. Steng

William R. Steng
Director of Media Research

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE COVER LETTER

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER**

School of Journalism and Broadcasting
(405) 372-6211, Exts. 477, 478, 479

74074

We are conducting an independent survey among Oklahoma State students, employes and faculty members. The purpose of this study is to find out what you and other readers like to read in the Daily O'Collegian, the campus newspaper.

Your answers will enable you to air your likes and dislikes concerning the types of news carried in the O'Collegian. You can have a significant effect on what appears in the paper through your responses to the enclosed questionnaire.

Your name appeared in a scientifically selected sample, and you represent more than 100 other members of the campus community. So your answers are very important to the accuracy of our research even if you are not an avid reader of the O'Collegian.

It will take only a short time to answer the simple questions and return the completed survey in the postage-free envelope today.

Of course, all answers are strictly confidential and will be used only in combination with those of other respondents.

Please return the completed survey as soon as possible so the Daily O'Collegian can begin to better serve your news needs. Thank you.

Sincerely,

William R. Steng

William R. Steng
Director of Media Research

APPENDIX C

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

 DAILY O'COLLEGIAN NEWS CONTENT PREFERENCE STUDY

Please answer all questions. Just check the answer that you feel describes most accurately how often you read a particular type of content in the newspaper.

1. I read the sports articles :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
—	—	—	—	—
I would like more such articles				I would like less such articles

2. I read articles about campus government, such as the Student Senate :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
—	—	—	—	—
I would like more such articles				I would like less such articles

3. I read articles concerning various campus clubs, organizations and social groups :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
—	—	—	—	—
I would like more such articles				I would like less such articles

4. I read articles about Oklahoma State faculty members :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
—	—	—	—	—
I would like more such articles				I would like less such articles

(OVER, PLEASE)

5. I read articles about the university administration and its policies :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

6. I read articles about the seven colleges in the university, such as the College of Arts and Sciences :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

7. I read articles concerning Stillwater city government in the O'Collegian :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

8. I read articles about non-government Stillwater activities in the O'Collegian :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

9. I read articles concerning state news in the O'Collegian :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

(NEXT PAGE, PLEASE)

10. I read the national news articles in the O'Collegian :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

11. I read the international news articles in the O'Collegian :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

12. I read the editorials on the O'Collegian editorial page :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more editorials	—	—	—	I would like less editorials

13. I look at the O'Collegian's editorial cartoons :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more cartoons	—	—	—	I would like less cartoons

14. I read the O'Collegian's Letters To The Editor section on the editorial page :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more letters	—	—	—	I would like less letters

(OVER, PLEASE)

15. I attempt to work out the O'Collegian crossword puzzle :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more puzzles	—	—	—	I would like less puzzles

16. I read the fine arts articles and reviews :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more such articles	—	—	—	I would like less such articles

17. I read the Campus News In Brief section in the O'Collegian :

<u>Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
I would like more news in brief	—	—	—	I would like less news in brief

18. Sex : Female _____ Male _____

19. I am a : sophomore _____ junior _____ senior _____ graduate _____
faculty member _____ staff member _____ other _____

NO MORE QUESTIONS --- Thank you for your help and cooperation. We would appreciate any comments or suggestions you care to make about the news content of the Daily O'Collegian.

APPENDIX D

RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS

Respondents' comments found on 122 of the 275 mail questionnaires were divided into eight broad categories: General Content, Editorial Areas, Local-State-National-International News, Entertainment Areas, Student and Campus Activities and Services, Bias and Inaccuracy, Sports and Photography. All comments are verbatim, except where noted.

General Content

You do a good job writing up the news, but don't put so much trivial Stillwater news in--such as that article you had last year (Spring, 1974) about the shoe repairman. Also, those long, continuing articles about sunglasses were pretty boring. (Female, sophomore)

Wish it were a bigger paper. Like the way students have a chance to voice their feelings. (Female, sophomore)

I enjoy reading (it). I find the O'Colly often contains more information concerning news items than the (Stillwater) News-Press. I appreciate this. (Female, staff member)

I think the O'Colly should cover all these (study) items even though I don't necessarily read them all. The O'Colly should also give equal time to all organizations and it should not cater so much to the Greeks (fraternity and sorority members). (Female, senior)

The Daily O'Collegian is a well-rounded newspaper reflecting on the constantly improving OSU Journalism School. (Male, faculty member)

You're doing a good job! Keep it up! (Male, junior)

An encouraging review of what people are doing to "get it together" with themselves. The community, campus and other related activities would be ideal in implementing a program of people awareness in which many interesting people could participate if they wish. (Male, graduate)

A daily paper which represents all campus interests is essential in bringing together large groups of students and faculty. This paper has been most effective. (Female, senior)

More university policy and procedure information should be put in the O'Colly. Most students, faculty and staff are very uninformed on these matters.... All Stillwater, state, national and international news items are exact duplicates of what I read in The Daily Oklahoman the day before or hear on the TV news. The O'Colly is not #1 in fast news breaks nor is it much for originality. I would like more editorials if they were sincere, thought-provoking and intelligent. Unfortunately, most of them sound like they come from radical, smart-assed kids--not what I expect from college students.... They definitely do a poor job of representing OSU and lack professionalism. More Letters to the Editor are needed. Most are sincere, thought-provoking and intelligent. They have something important to say. They are not last minute attempts to fill space as editorials appear to be. Overall, I do enjoy reading the O'Colly. I do not expect it to be as good as a professional paper, but I feel it could be better. (Female, sophomore)

I think The Daily O'Collegian should print more human interest stories so that other students can be inspired. (Male, junior)

As I have been comparing it with other campus newspapers, The Daily O'Collegian is the best. Keep up the good work. (Female, graduate)

I thought, as a whole, the O'Collegian was pretty good. I especially liked articles with pictures of campus activities. (Female, sophomore)

A suggestion you might think about is having some guest writers

who are in the national limelight. (Male, senior)

The O'Colly should devote a larger section to the Letters to the Editor. Also, a larger space should be given to fine arts, concert schedules, and information on fun things happening in Stillwater.

(Male, sophomore)

About the only thing I read is Want Ads and what's on at the movies. Occasionally you all come up with an article on something [not three days running on what happened to the observatory dome (Fall, 1973)] that I'll read, but not often. I'm not knocking your paper, I just don't want to read about what you print. (Male, senior)

Editorial Areas

I would like to see more editorials and student letters since students really make campus news (not so much national scene.) (Male, senior)

I think the O'Colly is pretty good about coverage over the various fields. I especially like the editorials and feel that the student voice is helped considerably by the paper. I hope the O'Colly will always be open to the student to voice his opinion. (Male, junior)

Doing a great job, but once or twice a week is more than sufficient for the editor to write and print an editorial. Many of us became tired of seeing the editor get space almost every day. Let other staff members have this space or let students and faculty (especially faculty) have this space some of the time. (Male, sophomore)

I think editorials should first outline the topic or problem under consideration and show facts on both sides of the argument before advancing the editor's opinion. This defines the field of discussion so

everybody starts at the same point. (Male, graduate)

Encourage more letters to the editor through such things as surveys either written in the O'Collegian or personal interviews. (Male, faculty member)

Probably not possible, but carrying a syndicated columnist or two might be of interest. (Male, faculty member)

In the past, letters to the editor have tended to lean more towards one side instead of equal representation. The editorials tend to be the same way, and they usually support a more "liberal" point of view, i.e. support of (Senator George) McGovern's appearance and condemnation of (former President) Nixon's. (Male, junior)

I would like to see the letters to the editor screened more carefully. Some of them are an insult to the reader's intelligence. (Male, faculty member)

The (editorial) cartoons and editorials have brightened many students' faces at seven in the morning. (Female, sophomore)

The editorial cartoons usually excel the quality of news. However, I feel we need more social news and better sports reporting! (Male, senior)

I enjoy the editorial page the most. This is the page that I read most thoroughly. (Female, staff member)

I like the satirical editorials such as Cornelius Cowboy (Spring, 1974). (Female, sophomore)

Local-State-National-International News

The news reports of national events seemed too broad last year. There was not enough detail. However, I realize there is less space

available for these reports than in a regular newspaper. (Female, sophomore)

I would like to see less local, state and national news as it receives limited coverage and I read an Oklahoma City paper daily. (Female, sophomore)

I read the O'Collegian for campus news, not for state, national or international news. (Male, junior)

I read most city, state, national and international news in other newspapers and would prefer articles (in The Daily O'Collegian) not seen elsewhere. (Female, staff member)

The state news item was checked "Seldom" due to poor quality of state news in the O'Colly. I prefer to use another newspaper as a source. It is not necessarily the quantity that is not enough but the quality for both state and national news. (Male, senior)

I seldom read state, national or international news articles. They are usually repeats of articles read in other newspapers. I am more interested in local college news and activities. (Female, senior)

As a whole, I think the paper is good. But their attempts to report international and national news are ridiculous. They may be days late with reporting it and it is old news by then. (Male, sophomore)

If the students want to participate in city government, then I think there should be more city news. (Male, senior)

Objective, open coverage of campus activities is best suited to the O'Colly. National and state news is not necessary since local papers, state papers and magazines, as well as television and radio, give more coverage anyway. State and national news in the O'Colly is usually a reiteration of that already heard on the radio. (Male, senior)

I feel the scope of the O'Colly's news coverage needs to be enlarged, though emphasis on local news is understandable. A person relying on the O'Colly for information would have a minimal knowledge of national and international happenings. (Male, senior)

Less state, national and international stories, as they are covered in more detail in other places. (Male, faculty member)

I especially appreciate your coverage of local events that the (Stillwater) News-Press does not cover. (Male, faculty member)

Since the O'Colly is the only newspaper many of the students read, it should contain a lot of world, national and state news as well as local and campus news. (Male, sophomore)

While I do not read city, state or national news in the O'Collegian often, I feel it is important because many students read only the O'Collegian while I read the Stillwater, Oklahoma City and Tulsa papers. (Female, faculty member)

The Daily O'Collegian should serve mainly as a chronicle for campus news. Very little space need be devoted to national and international news, as these are available elsewhere. Intensive reporting of local events and news important to students and staff should be emphasized. A little controversy occasionally makes things more interesting. (Male, faculty member)

Entertainment Areas

How about putting a television program schedule in every day? I know personally of many people who would appreciate it, not to mention me. (Male, sophomore) (Author's Note: such a schedule was started in Fall, 1974).

A list of daily events on campus and in Stillwater, i.e., art festivals, movies, speakers, etc. (Female, senior)

I would like to see more opinions on the restaurants in town, and some reviews of the different movies showing in town. (Male, graduate)

I would like to see more reviews of movies currently in Stillwater, not long before they come or after they leave. (Male, sophomore)

Most crossword puzzles stick with one subject. I wish the O'Colly's would! (Female, junior)

The Daily O'Collegian does not present "fair and accurate" critiques or reviews of various activities such as talent shows, singing acts, etc. They are too quick to condemn! (Female, senior)

I would like to see the summer (1974) feature "Calendar of Events" run year-round. It is highly beneficial for off-campus students. (Female, senior)

Student and Campus Activities and Services

Make articles shorter and more interesting when they deal with dull subjects such as the Student Senate, etc.! (Female, sophomore)

I think more news about students and their activities, on and off campus, would make The Daily O'Collegian more interesting. I would also suggest a more fair attitude towards the fraternity system. In the past it has seemed an O'Collegian policy to print only bad news or no news at all about the fraternities. (Male, senior)

I would like to see more news about the minority races on campus. Things like their activities. Also news about more campus activities. (Male, sophomore)

Would like to see more O'Colly recognition of campus services

rendered to public and vice-versa. Examples: reading clinic, speech and hearing clinic, physical education programs, arts and crafts programs, etc. (Female, graduate)

Regular coverage of events and campus activities that are currently happening on all the other Big Eight Conference and major Oklahoma university campuses in order that there may be a better understanding and working relationship between those campus communities and Oklahoma State University. (Male, staff member)

Employ some minority reporters (Blacks and Indians) to cover activities in their campus communities. Consult with Black faculty and staff to do worthwhile coverage of Black History Week, etc. Develop special sections after consulting with Blacks, Indians and Internationals that will give them a campus voice. Integrate the O'Collegian! (Male, graduate)

Please, more investigative journalism concerning OSU administration and OSU Board of Regents activities! (Male, graduate)

Better reviews on art department. There could be more interesting news gathered there if looked for. News about unusual student talents or stories about everyday campus people would make interesting reading. (Female, senior)

Would like to have more campus news since this is a campus paper. (Female, junior)

I would like to see more emphasis placed on the positive side of campus activities, such as organizations doing charity and volunteer work, tutoring services that are available and services offered by staff members for students. Perhaps even "personal glimpses" of staff or faculty members to help students know these people better. (Female, staff member)

I am most interested in news which has to do with me as an OSU student. I am very dependent on the O'Colly for news about the whens and wheres of upcoming events both on and off campus. (Female, sophomore)

Don't let the paper be a mouth organ of the administration. Student opinions and actions are what the paper is for. (Male, senior)

... present policy does not give enough advance notice about speakers. Same day or one day notice is not time enough to plan or remind students in class when I usually see them only every-other day. This deficiency is the most seriously bad policy of the O'Collegian. (Male, faculty member)

I think the newspaper ought to be strictly a campus newspaper, with politics and national news left to the bigger newspapers such as the Tulsa Daily World. (Male, sophomore)

I would like a section devoted entirely to graduate student news and policies. A feature once or twice a month about a student's research would be interesting. (Male, graduate)

Official notices should appear in several issues and on the front page. (Female, senior)

Your newspaper is not covering any intelligent or cultural activities of OSU students. Nice boys' and girls' pictures are not important to the college paper. (Male, graduate)

Bias and Inaccuracy

More unbiased news. Tell all the facts clearly and understandably. (Male, sophomore)

Need to realign views on what's important. Would like to see more

student involvement and more on Greek life. Seems like you just try to stir up trouble and carry it too far, i.e. Open Meetings Law, loss of astrology dome, etc. (Male, senior)

Some of the articles in the recent past have been somewhat vulgar. (Female, staff member)

The anti-Greek sentiments propagated by some O'Collegian editors are greatly despised by myself and a couple of thousand other Greeks. (Male, junior)

I find it extremely upsetting that readers of the O'Collegian take the stories contained therein at face value, because I know from personal experience that in many instances these stories contain inaccurate information. For example, in my job I work for an executive who was interviewed several times last year by O'Colly reporters. In these interviews, the reporters exhibited little or no preparation, and although they took notes, they did not seem able to take them correctly. Surely it would be possible for a reporter to check out possible points of error before printing a story. I would not call publishing inaccurate stories a justified use of "freedom of the press," nor would I call double-checking to get one's facts straight "censorship." (Female, staff member)

The O'Colly should give more unbiased views on various articles, such as administration views and policies. (Male, senior)

I feel the O'Colly censured and distant from the true desires of the student body, and in an attempt to be automatically super-journalists, its participants are hellbent on negativism that would sell a daily. (Male, junior)

I am interested in the "Cowboy" news. Your paper must be printed

by "Frats" because no matter how good the Rodeo Team does or what the agriculture majors do, it's not important enough to be in the O'Collegian. (Female, junior)

Do not mistake the O'Collegian and its staff with a newspaper that knows something. (Male, faculty member)

This institution is just like its state, and the O'Collegian is a carbon copy of its institution: very conservative. You are the reflection of the Institution and the NEWS is a reflection of you. (Female, sophomore)

Improve the factual accuracy of your news reporting, get the quotes right, reduce the editorial content of news reporting and people will have confidence in you and your work. (Male, faculty member)

Sports

I think that a larger amount of time and consideration could be devoted to the sports page. In particular, more comments about the other Big Eight (Conference) teams. (Male, senior)

I would like to see more sports events other than collegiate ones. Examples are rodeos, city sports events, etc. (Male, senior)

Sports department is lacking; more emphasis on intramural sports and on students in general. (Male, senior)

I would like to see better coverage of RHA (Residence Hall Association) intramural sports. The Greeks always get a lot of ink, and they make up such a small percentage of the students who participate in intramural sports at OSU. (Male, senior)

Photography

You need better photographers. (Male, senior)

Photographs often have cutlines virtually identical to related story lead paragraphs. (Male, senior)

Love those pictures on the front page concerning the campus. They really are eye-catching! (Female, junior)

I enjoy the pictures and think you have talented photographers.
(Female, staff member)

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND TECHNIQUE STUDIES

This section contains the results of some previous mail questionnaire studies that were considered before, and utilized when, mail questionnaires were used in the author's Daily O'Collegian study.

Stanley Robin proposed a procedure in 1965 for securing a high number of mail questionnaire returns. His procedure consisted of two to five contacts with the potential respondents.

First, a pre-questionnaire letter was sent to all sample members. This letter explained that the individual was being requested to assist in research. Included in the letter was a simple explanation of the research, its importance and possible applications (12, p. 26).

Robin noted it seemed effective to remind the potential respondent of the questionnaire in the sentence preceding the complimentary close as well as elsewhere in the body of the letter.

The second contact was via the questionnaire and cover letter. The cover letter could remind the respondent of the previous communication and largely reiterate its contents. It also might be effective to thank the respondent for his help in such a manner that his commitment was taken for granted (12, p. 26).

Instructions for the questionnaire's completion was included with the questionnaire itself, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope was also included (12, p. 26).

Robin also utilized first, second and third follow-ups. These brief, letterheaded notes reminded the subject of his lack of response and the importance of his response to the research. Also mentioned was the stamped envelope he had received for his convenience (12, pp. 26-27).

Robin generalized a few points from his ten independent samples

responding to mail questionnaires in five separate studies. Each letter had the subject's name typed in after the salutation. The content of the follow-ups shifted from the importance of the research to the individual's response to the questionnaire. The follow-ups contained more emphasis on the confidentiality of name and data, too (12, p. 27).

As for intervals between mailings, Robin suggested that a high proportion of the returns were available in a week. Thus, a seven-day interval between mailings would permit maximum response to each stage (12, p. 28).

Finally, Robin noted that written responses (no checks, circles or one word responses) were less likely to be answered and returned. He also suggested questionnaires be as short as possible (12, p. 28).

Levine and Gordon said three phases were necessary to maximize mail questionnaire returns. The three phases were: respondent preparation and involvement, questionnaire design and construction, and follow-up procedures (13, p. 569).

For "to obtain a respondent's involvement and cooperation it is necessary to impress him with the seriousness and importance of the project" (13, p. 569).

Levine and Gordon claimed their experience testified to the importance of respondent preparation. In their survey of five Blue Cross plans, they sent their letters one week before the questionnaires were actually mailed. An additional letter accompanied the questionnaire (13, p. 570).

The questionnaire itself had to draw and hold the respondent's interest, avoid ambiguity, and hold answering effort to a minimum.

Appearance often determined whether it was read or discarded. Printing was better than mimeograph, because mimeos were very often treated as throwaways. Printing also allowed for more design flexibility (13, p. 571).

To enhance the appearance and effectiveness of the questionnaire, they suggested separating questions via dotted lines, extra space and use of boldface type; varying type to emphasize words and phrases; the convenient arrangement of check lists, fill-ins and multiple choice questions; and making it look as short as possible (13, p. 571).

The degree to which a questionnaire elicited the desired information depended considerably on the questionnaire's construction. The design, wording and logical order of the questions influenced the degree, quality and rate of response (13, p. 571).

Levine and Gordon suggested the following question-formulating guides: questions should be clear, simple, in common language, relevant and meaningful, and answers should cover all possibilities; the position of a question in relation to other questions frequently affects the responses; it is best to keep the first few questions simple and easy to answer; questions should not "lead" the respondent; and simple and convenient answer systems should be used (13, p. 572).

The time before follow-ups begin would vary with the length and nature of the questionnaire, respondent characteristics, season of the year and others. Researchers should have a tentative time schedule and begin follow-ups at the time planned (13, p. 572).

Tallent and Reiss noted a study done with 1,567 psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers that garnered a 95 per cent return rate (14, p. 579).

They cited a number of reasons for the very high return rate. The questionnaires covered an area in which potential respondents demonstrated professional concern. The cover letter was addressed personally to the respondent. An enclosed, self-addressed, postage-free envelope minimized the return effort (14, p. 579).

They also noted the simple method used in indicating response choices, the provision of space for additional comments and the establishment of a deadline for the return of the forms (14, p. 581).

John and Jeanne Gullahorn investigated the effects of mailing class, questionnaire color and type of return envelope postage on questionnaire returns (15, p. 294).

They found first class mail elicited significantly more returns than did third class mail. Stamped return envelopes were significantly more effective than business reply envelopes, and the color of the questionnaire had no significant effect (15, p. 295).

They concluded first class postage underlined the import of the questionnaire, while stamped envelopes invoked a sense of obligation and thus obtained higher returns (15, p. 296).

Roehrer, in 1963, conducted a 400-respondent sample survey on services for the handicapped to see if he could effectively increase questionnaire response.

He used a personally-typed and endorsed letter of explanation. It suggested to the individual his opinions were important. It was also mentioned his name was chosen as one of a select group (16, p. 300).

Recognition was given to the demand on the subject's time, and in consideration of this, the form had been reduced to a minimum number of items (16, p. 301).

Roeher believed the element of official association with an apparent formal program would increase returns. His belief tended to have merit.

He cited the critical factor in achieving a high frequency of returns as the "personalized" element in communications with each subject, and noted a high concomitant variation existed between the degree of response and the subject's sense of receiving individual and personal consideration (16, p. 302).

Linsky investigated four factors that might induce response to mail questionnaires. He looked at personalization of the cover letter via handwritten personal salutation and signature, argument for importance or social utility of research, an explanation of the place and importance of the respondent in the study and an appeal to help those conducting the study (17, p. 183).

The only factors found to be significant were personalization and explanation of the respondent's place in the study (17, p. 187).

Bruce Eckland looked at the effects of prodding to increase mail returns. He sent 1,332 questionnaires to men who had been freshmen at a large state university in 1912 (18, p. 166).

He used three waves of questionnaires and then followed-up with telephone calls and/or certified mail.

He thought prodding might affect the veracity of late returns, but telephone and certified mail contacts did not lower the response reliability when used to elicit higher return rates (18, p. 169).

Champion and Sear conducted a survey study on questionnaire response in three cities in Tennessee. The study examined questionnaire length, type of postage employed in initial contact and follow-ups and

the type of cover letter incentive that would elicit the greatest response (19, p. 335).

They used two types of postage, questionnaires of three different lengths and an egotistical and altruistic type of appeal in the cover letter (19, p. 337).

The regular and special delivery postage showed the best response rates, respectively. Longer questionnaires were returned more frequently, and the egotistical appeal won out over the altruistic appeal (19, p. 338).

Champion and Sear noted some 15 percent of the surveys were not delivered because the addressee had moved or due to directory mistakes (19, p. 337).

In 1970, Alan Andreasen used three types of cover letters in a study on personalization in mail questionnaires. He believed the greater the impersonality of the correspondence accompanying the questionnaire, the greater the return rate (20, p. 275).

He concluded the costs of personalization usually are not justified by their benefits, while in some studies and for some respondents, the expenditure will produce effects opposite to those desired; i.e., a high rate of return (20, p. 277).

But another "personalization study" was done by Kawash and Aleamoni in 1971. Their basic premise was some procedures for securing replies from non-respondents may be viewed as harassment and yield distorted information. It might be better for the researcher to construct his questionnaire in such a way as to insure the highest possible initial return rate (21, p. 589).

Their study attempted to clarify the nature of the effect of

personalization (sender's signature) on the initial return rate. They used a survey mailed to 3,091 University of Illinois faculty members (21, p. 590).

They discovered the presence of a handwritten signature had little effect on the initial return rate of the questionnaires even when the rank of the faculty member was identified (21, p. 591).

Kawash and Aleamoni made the following speculations: the content of the letter was sufficiently personal to counteract the effect of the signature; no single variable was very effective in inducing high return rates and it might be that combinations of variables are more effective (such as types of letterheads used and prestige or authority of the signee) (21, p. 591).

Longworth used an eight-page questionnaire about sharing in marriage. He did a series of six pre-tests, using 50 people per test, various stamp denominations, personal note and letterhead, related newspaper clippings and telephone follow-ups (22, p. 311).

It might be worth noting he increased his response rate 37 percent by the use of telephone follow-ups (22, p. 312).

Hochstim and Athanasopoulos had a few good points to make about non-response bias, personal follow-up and mail research in general.

They noted mail surveys are less expensive than personal interviews, did not require recruiting, training and supervising of interviewers and did not suffer from interviewer bias and variability.

But possible bias due to non-response was critical in a mail survey because response rates tend to be lower than in personal interviews with repeated call-backs (23, p. 71).

In a mail survey, personal contacts could be made with all or a

sample of the persons who fail to respond. In some instances, they noted, a better approximation to the population distribution may be worth the additional cost and effort in personal follow-ups (23, p. 80).

But one must be careful to note the similarity between mail respondent, total sample and the population may be peculiar to the particular research situation (23, p. 81).

Sletto, working with a questionnaire sent to 1,600 former University of Minnesota students, noted the great value of pre-testing questionnaires. He used pre-tests to ferret out four problems: effective survey length, cover letter appeal, follow-up techniques and questionnaire design (24, pp. 196-198).

He found that pre-testing provided a means for detecting procedural errors before they exact heavy penalties in the form of low returns lacking in reliability and validity (24, p. 200).

Seerley Reid noted the non-response problem in mail questionnaires in 1942. He said most educational researchers realized answers of non-respondents, if they could be determined, might differ markedly from respondent answers and alter the survey results (25, p. 87).

He performed a survey of radio in Ohio schools. The respondents were broken down into three groups: initial respondents, follow-up respondents and respondents to intensive follow-ups (randomly selected) (25, p. 91).

There was, in this case, a significant variation from group to group in the percentage of affirmative answers.

Seerley Reid felt his findings implied the following: there should be provisions for at least one follow-up to correct bias in the

first set of respondents and so estimations of probable answers of non-respondents can be made; it is not necessary to poll all non-respondents, as a representative sample can be statistically selected and the responses of all non-respondents can be interpreted from the sample (25, p. 95).

Clausen and Ford tackled the job of controlling the bias in mail questionnaires in 1947.

There were two aspects to their problem. First, responses could be maximized by every means possible to cut down the size of the non-respondent group whose attitudes and characteristics were unknown. A researcher could also make allowances or corrections for any bias that might exist in incomplete returns (26, p. 499).

In other words, maximizing the possible return rate was always desirable in order to minimize the impact of response bias on the study.

The authors systematically used follow-ups in all mail surveys and experimented a bit on the effects of using extra postage and personalizing cover letters in securing a high return rate (26, p. 500).

The cover letter tried to indicate the purpose of the survey, the importance of the views of the addressee as a representative of many persons and the uses to which the data would be put (26, p. 500).

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