

A STUDY OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS RELEASES PRODUCED
BY THE OKLAHOMA FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

By

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Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education. – *Mark Twain*

My metamorphosis from a kindergarten turnip to a squashed graduate student would not have been possible without the kind support of my family, friends, and mentors. I greatly appreciate all of you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

The Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center (FAPC) was dedicated in 1996. The mission of the FAPC is “to generate and disseminate, through educational programs and technical and business assistance, information that will stimulate and support value-added food and agricultural products processing in Oklahoma” (Hunt, 1998). The FAPC offers Oklahomans access to faculty and staff with expertise in business and technical disciplines. The FAPC also offers pilot processing facilities, research laboratories, and educational programs (Hunt, 1998).

FAPC faculty and staff work to discover value-added products and processes to enhance the value of Oklahoma agricultural commodities. FAPC faculty and staff assist food industry and entrepreneurial clients in identifying, developing, and commercializing products, as well as helping them train and educate their staff and develop business plans to expand their businesses (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

The FAPC was designed to bring together academia and the private sector in an effort to promote positive communications regarding the future of agricultural industries in Oklahoma. The communications specialist is responsible for writing and distributing

educational materials regarding the activities of the FAPC to Oklahomans (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

The FAPC communications department staff has determined that to provide effective news releases a communications audit must transpire (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004). A communications audit is a review to determine what organizational information the audience is receiving (Wilcox, 1997). Tracking the published news releases is one way to evaluate the success of a communications department in attempting to reach its target audience (Loeffler, 1993).

Public relations activities like those completed by the communications department of the FAPC have been studied by agricultural communicators. For example Miller and Skillman (2003), as well as Alexander, Melgares, and Rutherford (2003) conducted studies that measured the publication of news releases produced by the agriculture departments of universities. The studies measured the publication of news releases distributed by Kansas State University and the University of Kentucky. According to these studies, certain types of news releases are more frequently published based upon geographic regions.

Statement of the Problem

Since the FAPC inception in 1996, communications materials have been distributed to newspapers, encouraging the media to report upon the activities of the FAPC. Little is known about the success of the news releases in terms of the publication of FAPC-related news articles in Oklahoma papers.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how Oklahoma newspapers use the FAPC news releases.

Objectives

The following objectives were developed to accomplish the stated purpose:

1. Describe and categorize news releases distributed by the FAPC.
2. Describe the news publications that publish news releases in terms of circulation.
3. Describe the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases.
4. Determine the number of copies of FAPC news stories that were made available to the public based upon the newspapers' circulation and articles printed.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined.

1. Circulation: The number of newspapers a publication distributes (Newsome, Scott, and Turk, 1993).
2. Communications audit: A systematic analysis used to measure how well an origination's communications are reaching its objectives (Seitel, 1997).
3. News release: A one- to two-page news story sent to media sources in an effort to gain greater publicity for an organization (Loeffler, 1993).

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in a four-month period from September 10 through December 8, 2004, and a limited number of news clippings were collected.

Significance of the Study

This study provided the FAPC communications department with data that increased its awareness of Oklahoma newspapers publishing stories as a result of news releases distributed by the FAPC. Adding to the knowledge base regarding the subject of news releases distributed by university agricultural entities aided communications specialists in their efforts to improve their news release writing operations, thus ultimately enabling them to distribute agricultural news successfully.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of related literature provides the theoretical basis for this study. Researching the use of news releases as a public relations tool was fundamental in determining the value of communications materials produced by the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center.

Researching the objectives and goals of the FAPC allowed the researcher to better understand the specific communications needs of the center. It was also necessary to explore the basic components of communications evaluation, in particular the measuring of news releases as public relations tools. In addition, literature related to the role of communications specialists in development of public relations materials was gathered. The purpose of public relations in communicating with the FAPC's target audiences and an explanation of the descriptive analysis methodology as an evaluation tool was gathered to evaluate the impact of news release writing as a form of public relations.

To assess the news releases of academic agricultural entities, one method practiced is the use of communications audit, which can apply to a descriptive analysis methodology for measurement and evaluation (Seitel, 1998).

FAPC Background

Mission and Objectives

The FAPC was dedicated in 1996 with the mission “to generate and disseminate thorough educational programs and technical and business assistance, information that will stimulate and support value-added food and agricultural products processing in Oklahoma” (Hunt, 1998). The FAPC offers Oklahomans access to faculty and staff with expertise in business and technical disciplines, as well as offering pilot processing facilities, research laboratories, and educational workshops (Hunt, 1998).

The FAPC faculty and staff encourage the growth of value-added enterprises in an effort to enhance the value of Oklahoma agricultural commodities. They assist food industry and entrepreneurial clients to identify, develop, and commercialize products, as well as to help train and educate their staff and develop business plans; in addition, scientists work on research projects that contribute to fundamental science knowledge in agricultural commodities and food products (Gross, 2004).

The FAPC was designed to bring together academia and the private sector in an effort to promote positive communications regarding the future of agricultural industries in Oklahoma. The communications department realizes the importance of this objective and plans to tailor the writing of news releases to ensure their publication in state newspapers to improve the private sector’s awareness of the FAPC (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

FAPC Communications Specialist’s Role

The FAPC communications department keeps the private sector updated

regarding new occurrences in agricultural products, research, and technology. This is accomplished in part by the communications specialist who is responsible for producing informative materials. The communications materials produced include brochures, newsletters, flashes, fact sheets, workshop materials, conference handouts, annual reports, and Internet Web pages (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

These materials are designed to report about researchers' projects, educational workshops, and industry trends. The communications specialist, aided by three part-time student workers, covers the activities of 25 FAPC employees whose specialty areas range from agribusiness economics to food engineering (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

The purposes of the communications vary from announcing an upcoming event to publishing the results of a study. The communications are meant to inform the public and to persuade Oklahomans to become more active in the FAPC programs. Increasing awareness is a major function of many of the FAPC's communications. The communications materials announce workshops, conferences, and services provided by the FAPC (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

To meet the objective of bring together academia and the private sector, approximately 60 news releases are sent out each year. Approximately three to seven news releases are distributed each month depending on the seasonality of activities occurring at the FAPC (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004). This monthly activity encourages the media to become more aware of the activities of the FAPC. The news releases are sent electronically to daily and weekly newspapers

throughout Oklahoma. The two largest metropolitan areas in Oklahoma include Oklahoma City and Tulsa and are a major target area for the FAPC news releases.

The communications specialist believes, however, the papers with smaller circulations are more likely to run articles and most public relations activities are geared toward meeting this target audience (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

Prior to this study, student workers were responsible for reviewing the papers. Since the FAPC only had subscriptions to the *Daily Oklahoman*, *Tulsa World*, and the *Stillwater NewsPress*, a large majority of the targeted papers were not being evaluated (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

According to Seitel (1997), a communications audit provides benchmarks against which future activities can be applied and measured. The audit helps specialists understand more clearly the relationship between the organization's mission and the communications methods used to promote that mission. The audit often uses a descriptive analysis approach. This approach tracks what has been published and translates qualitative material into a quantitative form through the classification of messages (Wilcox, 1997). Prior to this research, the FAPC had not conducted communications research to ensure their news releases were being developed to promote the objectives of the FAPC.

The marketing and communications specialists play a major role as ambassadors to the public. The specialists communicate with an audience that includes processors, entrepreneurs, commodity groups, rural and urban communities, equipment manufacturers, food service companies, grant agencies, and producers (Hunt, 1998).

The FAPC communications specialist promotes the positive public image of the center through the distribution of news releases. These publications are sent to current clients, are e-mailed to the media, and are available on the FAPC Web site. The news releases are intended to be educational and give comprehensive explanations of scientific processes, business situations, and industry trends. A major role of FAPC communications specialist is that of a public relations practitioner. The specialist uses public relations to attempt to meet FAPC's goal of bring together academia and the private sector (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

Explanation of Public Relations

Public relations, according to Newsome, Scott, and Turk (1993) is "the various activities and communications that organizations undertake to monitor, evaluate, influence and adjust to attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of groups or individuals who constitute their publics" (p. 599). A communications department is often responsible for shaping public opinion through the use of public relations materials (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004). According to Plumley (1997), all public relations processes should have four stages; research, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Public relations communications enable organizations to improve community relations and encourage positive publicity. The objective is not only to inform particular audiences, but also to raise their awareness level and to change attitudes and behaviors of the audience (Plumley, 1997). The main objective of the news releases distributed by the

FAPC is to raise Oklahomans awareness about the Center (M.H. Gross, personal communication, September 28, 2004).

According to Dilenschneider (1990), an important aspect of public relations is the marketing of communications to the general public. The FAPC attempts to distribute information to the general public via news releases written to attract the attention of Oklahoma news editors. Authoritative sources of information shape public opinion; for people to be aware of the current issues, they must be correctly informed and have access to information they can trust to represent the facts accurately (Newsome, Scott, and Turk, 1993).

A communications specialist must be able to market his or her group's information to the media in a manner that will encourage public knowledge of the organization. One common public relations tool is the news release, a one- to two-page news story sent to media sources to gain greater publicity for an organization (Loeffler, 1993). According to Loeffler (1993), a news release can be written to improve image and create inquiries and is one of the best investments to make when promoting products or services. The purpose of a news release is to generate an editorial mention (Loeffler, 1993).

Publicity is a potent force in marketing because people are more inclined to believe what they read or hear in an editorial context than to accept the same information in advertising. To undertake this kind of communication requires a strong marketing orientation (Dilenschneider, 1990, p. 83).

Public Relations Research

A public relations campaign must be reviewed periodically to make sure it is meeting the objectives of the communications department and is in line with the mission of the institution. Monitoring the impact of the news releases sent out by an organization will ensure the communications department is meeting its goals (Seitel, 1997).

According to Loeffler (1993, p. 101) “often failure is a result of improper monitoring, not lack of ability. To avoid coming toward the end of a program and finding out that goals have not been met, give the program attention throughout its timespan.”

Public relations can be effective only if there is sound research to support it; producing communications materials without a thorough understanding of the target audience, purpose, and media vehicle decreases the effectiveness of the public relations effort (Newsome, Scott, and Turk, 1993).

Dilenschneider (1990, p. 86) supports this viewpoint: “research is of strategic importance in public relations. Research helps public relations target information to strike responsive chords and to produce credible effects in its targeted audiences.” Conducting research can lead to the discovery of factual clues that benefit the communications department in its efforts to determine the most effective methods of distributing valuable organizational information to the public.

According to Seitel (1997), researching the impact of a public relations campaign may prove useful in determining if there is a need for changes in direction, reallocation of resources, or redefinition of priorities. The research and evaluation steps of public relations are important in determining if the activities of the department have been

effective in meeting the goals and objectives of the organization (Newsome, Scott, and Turk, 1993).

Communications Research

The study of evaluating public relations is becoming increasingly important as almost all organizations and institutions in the United States have public relations as one of their formal functions (Dilenschneider, 1990). Communications investigators have long been aware of the value of public relations in improving an organization's image and promoting positive public awareness. A role of any public relations activity is evaluation. The communications department must monitor every effort to make sure the institution's objectives are being met in the most effective manner possible (Newsome, Scott, and Turk 1993).

Although many specialists cite the importance of research that proves the value of public relations activities, Seitel (1997) points out that "public relations may never reach the point at which its results can be fully quantified." Yet, he is a strong advocate of continued research as it is important for encouraging management's confidence, proving effectiveness, and making future public relations decisions (Seitel, 1997). Determining the merit of public relations activities that are often completed within a communications department has led to studies that compare it with other information-spreading efforts such as advertising. Vessenes (2004) supports the belief that public relations is an effective communications tool with these ideas: public relations efforts are 10 times more believable than advertising efforts, have 10 times the memory retention factor of advertising, and takes \$10 in advertising costs to match \$1 in public relations costs.

Supporting the idea that public relations are an effective communications activity, a recent study reported that 40% of all news content comes from public relations specialists (McCleneghan, 1999). This statistic illustrates that communications practitioners serve as agenda setters for a large portion of information that is available to the public. They determine the news communities receive and serve as knowledge gatekeepers (McCleneghan, 1999).

News releases are communications tools that allow practitioners to spread news of their institution and influence the public's awareness. A function of many communications departments is sending releases to newspapers. In a research study of articles prepared by the communications department of Oklahoma State University, Morton (1984) found dailies were less likely to publish provided news items. Of the articles sent to them, daily newspapers published an average of 7.6%; newspapers published twice-weekly, 21.6% and papers published weekly, 9.0%. Morton (1984) concluded that the odds of getting articles published in twice-weekly and a weekly newspaper are better than in daily newspapers and that practitioners should not focus on daily newspapers.

It has been reported, however, that some practitioners have publication rates of 30% or higher (Morton, 1993). In a quest to discover the cause of discrepancy in the publishing success rates of public relations practitioners, researchers have conducted many studies regarding this phenomenon. Three major components in publishing success rates include writing targeted releases, backing up information with expert accounts, and evaluating results (Morton, 1993). Targeted releases are designed with the audience in mind and are geared toward meeting the criteria by which editors judge communications.

They are not news releases written to fit the wishes of the organization or institution. Instead, their main focus is meeting the needs of the public and either informing, persuading, educating, or entertaining the group based upon its specific needs. The audience for every public relations effort must be precisely defined, and the news releases must be crafted to reach them for the releases to be successful.

Editors are exceedingly aware of the interests and needs of their readers. They are able to eliminate the releases written by practitioners who are merely seeking free advertising or a medium for self-promotion. In a study published in *Public Relations Quarterly*, the need for targeted news releases was explained by Elfenbein (1993, p. 16): “Press releases without a local hook were severely criticized by editors who suggested very strongly that the offending PR practitioners should familiarize themselves with the receiving papers’ circulation areas and interest before inundating them with useless press.”

Questioning editors via surveys is a common method of news release research. Studies of editors’ comments have illustrated a need for better release production. The studies have proven certain organizations have more inherent success in sending out releases in terms of publishing success rate. “Some say they pick and choose based on the name of the firm on the envelope and their history with the firm.” (Marken 1994, p. 9). The image of the organization can be the deciding factor, which is why groups understand the considerable importance of a communications department. Developing a healthful relationship with editors who control the amount of news coverage a group receives is a major goal of a practitioner (Marken, 1994). One way a communicator can improve his or her group’s image is by producing high-quality, error-free new releases,

which are supported by expert testimony or research.

Having research readily available also shows editors and producers that you've done your homework. They will be less likely to cry 'fluff' if the numbers are right in front of them. For these reasons, research is often a boon to new product introductions, re-introductions, and political and educational campaigns (Linzer, 1988, p. 29).

Article Type and Publication

Descriptive analysis is a beneficial tool in enabling researchers to assess trends in publication (Creswell, 2002). It allows for the compiling of historical data and the measuring of results as a means of synthesizing the findings into quantifiable conclusions. Morton (1984) conducted a study of the publication rates of news releases in Oklahoma newspapers; studying seven kinds of releases and discovered that editors were more likely to publish timely topics, research stories, coming events, and consumer information; the publication rates ranged from consumer information with 24% to timely topics with 9%. Morton suggested that these types of articles provide a service to the public and that is why news editors use them more often. In contrast, articles like institutional releases, features, and past events receive little coverage.

In a study of the releases distributed to Kentucky newspapers by Agricultural Communications Services at the University of Kentucky, Miller and Skillman (2003) found the most-printed story category was weather related with the least-printed subject being environmental issues. This research supports the claim made by Morton: the most

published release is the one the editor believes to be of the most immediate value to the readers (1993).

Geographic Regions and Publication

Miller and Skillman (2003) broke down the success of certain topics by the region of the state they represented. From the research it was possible to see that the university was getting the most releases printed in the central part of the state and the least in the eastern part of the state. This study gives the practitioners a road map for future improvements in release publication rates for the eastern part of the state.

Alexander, Melgares and Rutherford (2003) studied news releases from Kansas State Research and Extension and tracked the use of stories based upon geographic regions. The study showed that the largest users of releases were southwest Kansas newspapers with about 27% and the smallest users of releases were Northwest Kansas newspapers with about 15%. The researchers said these marked differences in regional use of releases could point to many factors, such as the willingness of editors to print university news, the subject matters' prevalence in the area, and the locality of news events to the area.

In a study by Minnis and Pratt (1995) of the printing habits of weekly newspapers, it was reported that local releases made up 57% of the releases printed and the lack of local angle was the reason the editors rejected 72% of the releases. Morton (1984) found a negative relationship between proximity to the information source and rate of publication. Morton found that newspapers between 0 and 49 miles from the university published the fewest articles.

Similarly, Mitchell (1960) tracked the use of hometown releases sent out by the public information office of Oklahoma State University he found that 13% of all releases used by weekly papers were from releases written to meet the needs of the specific paper in terms of outlining the local importance. According to Morton (1993), “hometowners” are releases written for an individual’s hometown paper, and a majority of the information is geared toward meeting the interest of the people in the town. In 1993, Morton found that 32% of all hometowners get published and papers with circulation less than 20,000 are the most likely to use them.

Summary of Review of Literature

Researchers have concluded news releases can be an effective communications tool in reaching an institutions’ audience when they are written with a target audience in mind. Studies show news releases are most valuable and likely to be published when they are designed to be useful to the public. According to the literature base there are definite trends in publications regarding subject matter and geographic regions.

These studies are relevant to current communications departments in their efforts to produce news releases, which achieve success in publications. The research shows that locality is important to the publication of any release. It also illustrates the different regional needs of papers.

The research shows that public relations activities are often more successful than advertising efforts. These findings should be a consideration in the allocation of communications resources. According to Morton (1993), only 3% to 8% of all news

releases sent to newspaper offices are ever published, but it has been reported that some practitioners have publication rates of 30% or higher. These statistics support the notion that by improving news release writing activities it may be possible for a communications department to improve its release publishing success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to achieve the purpose of the study, including the design of the research, procedures for measuring the results, and the objectives of the study. In addition, this chapter looks at the purpose of the research, establishment of validity and reliability, collection of data, and analysis of the data obtained.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how Oklahoma newspapers use the FAPC news releases. The following objectives were developed to accomplish this purpose:

1. Describe and categorize news releases distributed by the FAPC.
2. Describe the news publications that publish news releases in terms of circulation.
3. Describe the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases.
4. Determine the number of copies of FAPC news stories that were made available to the public based upon the newspapers' circulation and articles printed.

Research Design

The research design used in this study was descriptive. Seitel (1998) noted that by analyzing the news coverage an organization could get a clearer idea of the effectiveness of its communications. A descriptive analysis is an unobtrusive method of data collection (Creswell, 2002). It can be used to measure the frequency of publication and the regional differences. The researcher starts by gathering data, evaluating past media efforts, classifying communication materials, and finally developing conclusions based upon this data.

Context of the Research

The goal was to determine the impact of the communications department in terms of the writing and distributing news releases. The researcher looked for measurable aspects of publication to determine the most highly sought after types of stories, the geographic region of publication, and the circulation of the papers that print FAPC stories. These results provided a way to report the activities of the communications department in regard to news release writing and distributing.

Measurement Procedures

The procedure for measuring the results was designed by using a modified version of the methodologies of Miller and Skillman (2003), as well as Alexander, Melgares, and

Rutherford (2003), as guidelines for developing a similar research study of FAPC news releases. The FAPC communications department distributed news releases to 197 daily and weekly newspapers in Oklahoma. A clipping service, which reviewed newspapers, was hired to collect the resulting news articles. The clippings were organized chronologically by the researcher and placed in a scrapbook. A Microsoft Excel™ spreadsheet was used to quantify the results.

Articles were divided into five categories: workshops, new products, staff and committee news, industry news, center awards and grants. The workshop category included all news releases relating to workshops hosted by the FAPC. The new products category included stories about customer and center projects. The staff and committee news category included staff activities and committee changes. The industry news category included new developments in food and agricultural areas. The center awards and grants category included releases about recognized FAPC projects. The number of stories printed in each category was tallied to determine the success rate of each type of news release.

A list of newspapers that printed FAPC stories was compiled, and a map of Oklahoma was used to describe the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases. The newspapers' circulation was also researched and used to measure the possible size of the audience receiving the information.

The size of the possible audience reached was measured by finding the circulation of each paper using *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* (Mallegg, 2004). The audience size for each type of news release was calculated by adding the circulation of each newspaper that printed stories regarding the specific topics.

To ensure that clippings were not missed, the researcher personally reviewed copies of the *Tulsa World*, *Daily Oklahoman*, and *Stillwater NewsPress* to check the efficiency of the clipping service. The researcher reviewed the Monday and Friday editions of each paper to make sure the clipping service was not missing FAPC articles. During the time period of September 10, 2004, through December 10, 2004, the researcher found no cases in which the clipping service missed articles.

An additional step was taken to ensure face validity of the instrumentation by forming an expert panel of three FAPC communications personnel. The expert panel reviewed the methodology used for the testing procedure on each objective. According to (Fink, 1995) face validity is concerned with how the procedure appears. It is measured by observing if the researcher's method will reasonably achieve the desired result. Face validity does not depend on established theories for support (Fink, 1995).

Methodology for Research Objective One

To describe and categorize news releases produced by the FAPC, it was necessary to determine the type of prepared news releases. The researcher gathered news releases and organized them by types of prepared news release. The method of analysis was modified from Miller and Skillman (2003) to meet the needs of the FAPC news release study. To ensure the face validity of the methodology a panel of experts consisting of FAPC communications personnel was formed to determine the need for specific classifications of news releases.

Methodology for Research Objective Two

To describe the news publications that publish news releases in terms of geographic area and circulation, the researcher gathered published news releases and

organized them by geographic area and circulation. The method of analysis is a modified version of a study completed by Alexander, Melgares, and Rutherford (2003)

Methodology for Research Objective Three

To describe the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases, the location of the newspapers was found using *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* (Mallegg, 2004). After finding the location of each newspaper, the results were mapped and the geographic distribution was measured according to the four geographic regions in Oklahoma consisting of the panhandle, western, central, and eastern regions of the state.

Methodology for Research Objective Four

To determine the number of copies of FAPC news stories that were made available to the public based upon the newspapers' circulation and articles printed, the circulation of the newspapers that printed FAPC news releases was found using *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* (Mallegg, 2004). After the circulation was found, the researcher compiled a list a newspapers that printed each kind of news release and then used that information to find the total number of FAPC news stories which were made available for readers.

Data Collection

On September 10, 2004, the FAPC hired the Oklahoma Press Association's clipping service to act as a media saturation measurement tool. The service received news releases from the FAPC's communications department in September, October,

November, and December. The cost of the clipping service was approximately 50 dollars a month depending upon the number of articles published.

The FAPC communications specialist received the clippings on Fridays and delivered them to the researcher who made copies of the clippings and put together two publication archives, which were then used to quantify the results of the study.

The researcher described the impact of the communications department in terms of the writing and distributing news releases. The researcher looked for measurable aspects of publication to determine the most highly sought after types of stories, the geographic region of publication, and the circulation of the papers that print FAPC stories. These results provided a way to report the activities of the communications department in regard to news release writing and distributing.

Data Analysis

To describe and categorize news releases produced by the FAPC, the researcher used a modified version of a classification system used by Miller and Skillman (2003). To describe the news publications that published news releases in terms of geographic area and circulation, the researcher used a modified version of a classification system used by Alexander, Melgares, and Rutherford (2003).

The researcher found the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases and mapped it based upon the four geographic regions in Oklahoma, consisting of the panhandle, western, central, and eastern regions of the state. The number of FAPC news stories that were made available to the public based upon the newspapers'

circulation and articles printed was found by using the categories of news release types and adding the circulation of each newspaper that printed stories relating to that topic. The researcher categorized the stories based upon topic and then added the circulation value for each article based upon which newspaper had printed it. This process made it possible to determine the number of copies of the news releases that were distributed to Oklahoma newspaper subscribers during the fall of 2004.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings from the data collected in this study. To facilitate analysis and interpretation of the information, the data was arranged in progression based on the objectives of the study.

The data collected in this study was gathered from the communications department of the FAPC. On September 10, 2004, the FAPC hired the Oklahoma Press Association's clipping service to act as a media saturation measurement tool. The clipping service reviewed newspapers in Oklahoma. The service received news releases from the FAPC's communications department during the months of September, October, November, and December 2004. The researcher looked for measurable aspects of publication to determine the most highly sought after types of stories, the geographic region of publications, and the circulation of the newspapers that print FAPC stories. As a result of the study it was found that all news stories were modified in some way from the original format. These results provided a way to report the activities of the communications department in regard to news release writing and distributing.

Findings Related to Objective One

Objective one was to describe and categorize news releases produced by the FAPC. It was necessary to determine the type of prepared news releases. The most frequently prepared article type was new products. The least frequently prepared was industry news. Data relating to the type of article prepared is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Type of FAPC News Releases Written

Type of Article	Written (N=15)	% of Total Written
Workshops Reports	2	13
Workshop Announcements	2	13
Workshop Follow Ups	2	13
New Products	4	27
Staff and Committee News	3	20
Industry News	1	7
Center Awards and Grants	1	7
Total	15	100

Table 2 categorizes the news releases published by Oklahoma newspapers. The most frequently published article type was new products with 11. The least frequently published was industry news with one.

Table 2

Type of FAPC News Releases Published by Newspapers

Type of Article	Frequency (N=38)	Percent
Workshops Reports	3	7.7
Workshop Announcements	12	30.8
Workshop Follow Ups	4	10.3
New Products	11	28.2
Staff and Committee News	7	17.9
Industry News	1	2.6
Center Awards and Grants	3	7.7
Total	39	100

As shown in Table 3, the percent published was found by taking the number of each type of article written multiplying it by the 197 newspapers that received articles to get the total number distributed. Then the number of articles published was divided by the total number distributed. The resulting number is the percent published.

Table 3

Percentage of FAPC News Releases Published

Type of Article	Published (N=38)	Written (N=15)	% Published
Workshops Report	3	2	1.02
Workshop Announcements	12	2	1.02
Workshop Follow Ups	4	2	1.02
New Products	11	4	1.40
Staff and Committee News	7	3	1.18
Industry News	1	1	0.51
Center Awards and Grants	3	1	0.51
Total	39	15	

Findings Related to Objective Two

Objective two was to describe the newspapers that publish news releases in terms of circulation. The *Daily Oklahoman* had the largest circulation with 199,581 and the *Okarche Chieftain* had the smallest with 700. According to the study the top three papers, which include *The Daily Oklahoman*, *Tulsa World*, and *The Capital Hill Beacon*, represent 87% of the total circulation of the papers that printed FAPC news releases. Details can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Circulation by Newspaper

Newspaper	Circulation	% of the total
The Daily Oklahoman	199,581	44.0
Tulsa World	143,582	31.6
The Capital Hill Beacon	51,766	11.4
Ponca City News	10,201	2.2
Stillwater News Press	9,105	2.0
The Grove Sun Daily	6,271	1.4
The Seminole Producer	5,626	1.2
Poteau Daily News	5,550	1.2
Holdenville Daily News	3,680	.08
The Journal Record (OKC)	3,214	.07
Walters Herald	3,150	.07
Okemah News Leader	3,000	.07
Perkins Journal	2,600	.06
The Comanche County Chronicle	2,500	.06
Hollis News	1,750	.04
Buffalo Harper County Journal	1,600	.04
Okarche Chieftain	700	.02
Total	453,876	100.00

Findings Related to Objective Three

Objective three was to describe the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases. The state was divided into four geographic regions as shown in Figure 1.

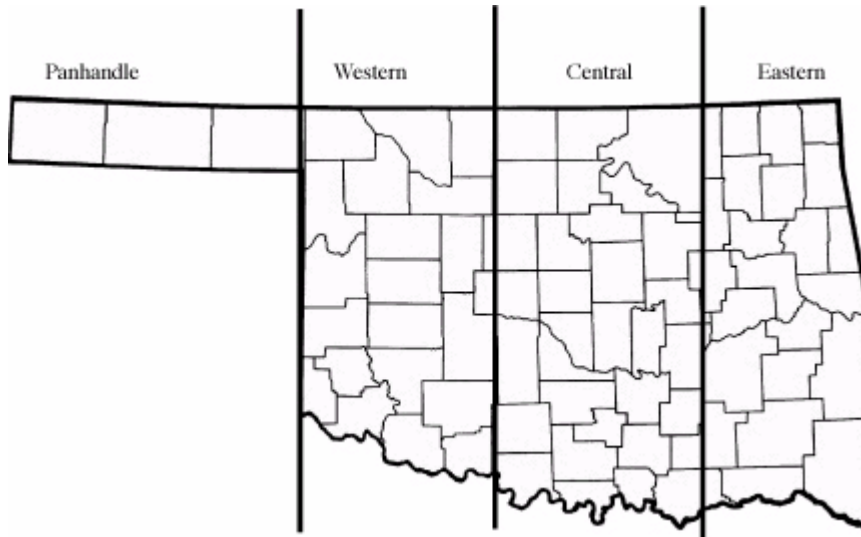


Figure 1. Geographic regions of Oklahoma.

Table 5 lists the newspapers and their geographic location based upon the above map. The newspapers are classified by panhandle, western, central, and eastern Oklahoma.

Table 5

Geographic Regions by Newspaper

Newspaper	Circulation	Geographic Region
The Daily Oklahoman	199,581	Central
The Capital Hill Beacon	51,766	Central
Ponca City News	10,201	Central
Stillwater News Press	9,105	Central
The Seminole Producer	5,626	Central
Holdenville Daily News	3,680	Central
The Journal Record (OKC)	3,214	Central
Okemah News Leader	3,000	Central
Perkins Journal	2,600	Central
Okarche Chieftain	700	Central
Tulsa World	143,582	Eastern
The Grove Sun Daily	6,271	Eastern
Poteau Daily News	5,550	Eastern
Walters Herald	3,150	Western
The Comanche County Chronicle	2,500	Western
Hollis News	1,750	Western
Buffalo Harper County Journal	1,600	Western

As shown in Figure 2, no newspapers in the panhandle of Oklahoma printed stories based on news releases sent out by the FAPC. Central Oklahoma had the most newspapers represented with 10 printing FAPC stories. Respectively, the eastern and western regions had three and four newspapers represented.

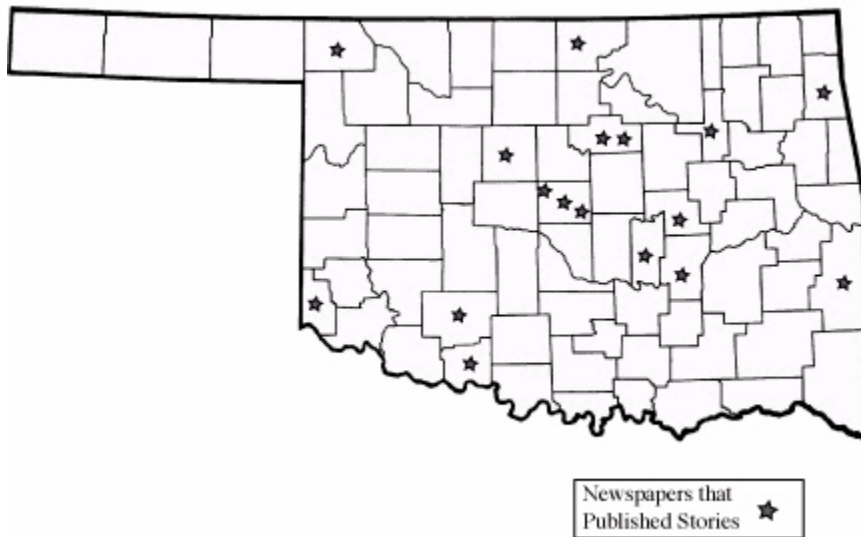


Figure 2. Newspapers that published news releases represented by geographic region.

Table 6 gives the number of newspapers that print releases by geographic region. Central Oklahoma had the largest frequency of newspapers that printed FAPC articles.

Table 6

Total Number of Newspapers Represented per Geographic Region

Geographic Region	Number of Newspapers
Panhandle	0
Western	4
Central	10
Eastern	3
Total	17

Figure 3 shows the central region of Oklahoma has the highest number of daily and weekly papers. Oklahoma County has nine weekly publications and two daily publications, and Tulsa County has seven weekly publications and two daily publications. Two counties, Coal and Major, did not have newspapers that received FAPC news releases

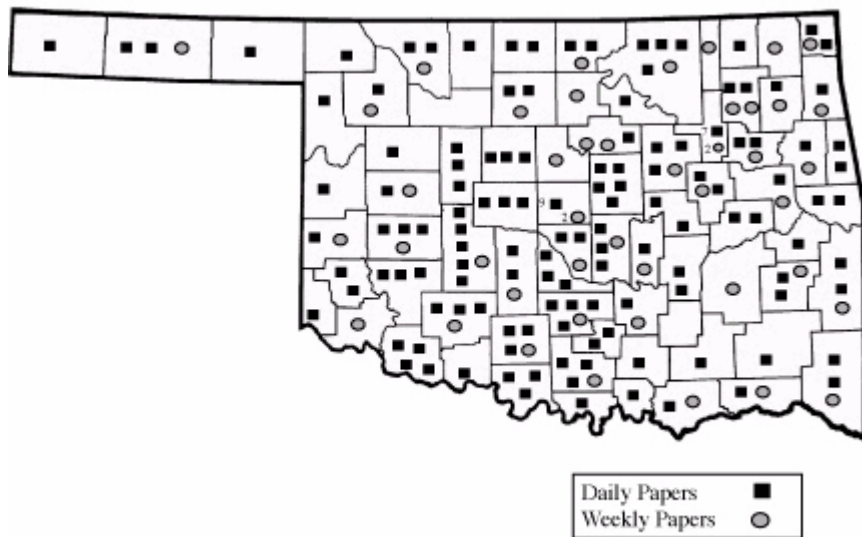


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of newspapers in Oklahoma.

Findings Related to Objective Four

Objective four was to determine the number of copies of FAPC news stories that were made available to the public based upon the newspapers' circulation and articles printed. To find the total number of stories made available to the public, the circulation of each newspaper was added each time the newspaper printed a FAPC-related story.

Between September 10 and December 8 news releases sent out by the FAPC resulted in 1,797,369 copies of FAPC stories being made available to Oklahomans across the state (see Table 7).

Table 7

Number of Copies of FAPC Stories Made Available to the Public

Types of Stories	Copies of Stories Made Available to Public
All Workshops	1,494,126
New Products	188,033
Staff and Committee News	41,442
Industry News	10,201
Center Awards and Grants	63,567
Total	1,797,369

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a summary of the research problem and its environment, the design and conduct of the study, and the major findings. Also presented in this chapter were the conclusions and recommendations that were based upon analysis and brief summation of data collected and upon observations of the researcher as a result of the conducted study.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how Oklahoma newspapers use the FAPC news releases. The following objectives were developed to accomplish the stated purpose:

1. Describe and categorize news releases distributed by the FAPC.
2. Describe the newspapers that publish news releases in terms of circulation.
3. Describe the geographic distribution of published FAPC news releases.
4. Determine the number of copies of FAPC news stories that were made available to the public based upon the newspapers' circulation and articles printed.

Major Findings of the Study

Types of news releases written

The releases written included six about workshops, four about new products, three about staff and committee news, one about industry news, and one about center awards and grants for a total of 15 articles during the study.

Types of news releases published

The releases published included 17 about workshops, 11 about new products, seven about staff and committee news, one about industry news, and three about center awards and grants for a total of 32 articles during the study.

Percentage of papers that printed news releases

The percentage of papers that printed news releases included 1.44% about workshops, 1.40% about new products, 1.18% about staff and committee news, .51% about industry news, and .51% about center awards.

Geographic distribution of newspapers

Newspapers in the panhandle of Oklahoma did not print stories based on news releases sent out by the FAPC. Newspapers in the eastern region printed three, in the central region 10, and in the western region four.

Copies Made Available to the Public

Between September 10 and December 2, 2004 news releases sent out by the FAPC resulted in 1,797,369 copies of FAPC stories being made available to Oklahomans across the state.

Conclusions

Conclusions were determined based on major findings from the data collected and analyzed during the research of this study.

1. The communications department of the FAPC most frequently writes news releases about workshops and least frequently about industry news.

2. The newspaper with the largest circulation was *The Daily Oklahoman* with 199,581 and the smallest circulation was the *Okarche Chieftain* with 700.

3. Differences exist in news release publication based upon the geographic area of the state. Newspapers in the panhandle region did not print FAPC stories and newspapers in the central region printed the most FAPC stories. The differences based upon geographic region supports the findings of the Kansas State University and University of Kentucky studies.

4. The FAPC communications department is meeting its goal of attempting to bring academia and the private sector together as about 1.8 million copies of FAPC stories are made available to readers.

Discussion

The following discussion is based on the results, inferences, and insights of the researcher after conducting a descriptive analysis of news releases produced by the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center. Based upon the volume of information being made available to the public, it is apparent that the

communications department of the FAPC has been successful in its public relations efforts.

More resources however might be directed toward the targeting of news releases to meet the needs of newspaper editors who make the final decision as to what news is distributed to newspaper subscribers. Improving the marketability of news releases could be a goal of future research conducted about editors' preferences for agricultural institutional news.

The FAPC should consider sponsoring a conference inviting editors to visit the center. The conference would help encourage positive public relations between the center and the media and would be an opportunity to conduct questionnaire research. Editors should be questioned as to ways the FAPC could improve the focus of news releases to increase the number of stories printed across the state. A workshop for editors might allow the FAPC communication specialist to learn more about the aspects of the news releases that could be improved to make them more newsworthy according to the viewpoints of Oklahoma news editors.

Another important inference resulting from this study is the measurable shortage of industry news made available to the public. Distributing news releases with information about innovative industry developments is an important aspect of the FAPC's mission to bring the private sector and academia together; however, during the fall of 2004, only one industry-related news release was distributed. A greater push for industry-related news releases could improve the balance of articles distributed by the FAPC. In comparison, the workshop news releases were commonly distributed by the FAPC. Workshop-related news releases were well received by Oklahoma newspapers.

An additional feature the FAPC could consider is sending a brief synopsis of the workshop news releases, as both the *Tulsa World* and *Daily Oklahoman* put summaries in their calendar of events. This would help ensure the accuracy of the information given in the events section, as often the newspaper staff in an effort to summarize makes mistakes and lists the FAPC by the wrong name.

Additionally, more resources should be put into ensuring that the news releases are geared toward fitting the interests of Oklahomans based upon regional differences. There should be a greater push toward news releases for the panhandle, western, and eastern Oklahoma. No articles were printed in the panhandle of Oklahoma. This phenomenon should be researched to see if it is a result of the small geographic area and sparse population of this region. It would be valuable to discover if citizens of this region are in fact receiving FAPC news via large statewide publications such as *The Daily Oklahoman* or the *Tulsa World*.

An unintended result of this study was the discovery that the FAPC's e-mail list of Oklahoma newspapers was incomplete. Steps should be taken to locate the e-mail addresses of the missing newspapers to ensure that all newspapers receive future releases. Finally, a continuation of this study would show if there are any differences in publication rates during other times of the year. It is possible that a yearlong study would show the printing of the FAPC news releases to be seasonal. Given the low cost involved in this type of study, the FAPC should consider continuing to evaluate the publication of news releases. The study has been successful in setting a baseline for future research. Additional studies should continue to enable the FAPC communications department to better serve the people of Oklahoma by improving its communications practices.

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APPENDIX

NEWSPAPERS THAT RECEIVE FAPC NEWS RELEASES

Newspapers that receive FAPC news releases

Daily

Newspaper	County
<i>Ada Evening News</i>	Pontotoc
<i>Altus Times</i>	Jackson
<i>Alva Review-Courier</i>	Woods
<i>Anadarko Daily News</i>	Caddo
<i>Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise</i>	Washington
<i>Blackwell Journal-Tribune</i>	Kay
<i>Broken Arrow Daily Ledger</i>	Wagoner
<i>Claremore Daily Progress</i>	Rogers
<i>Clinton Daily News</i>	Washita
<i>Cushing Daily Citizen</i>	Payne
<i>Daily Ardmoreite</i>	Carter
<i>Duncan Banner</i>	Stephens
<i>Durant Daily Democrat</i>	Bryan
<i>Edmond Sun</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Elk City Daily News</i>	Beckham
<i>Enid News and Eagle</i>	Garfield
<i>Express Star</i>	Grady
<i>Grove Sun Daily</i>	Delaware
<i>Guthrie News Leader</i>	Logan
<i>Guymon Daily Herald</i>	Texas
<i>Hugo Daily News</i>	Choctaw
<i>Journal Record</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Lawton Constitution</i>	Comanche
<i>McAlester News-Capital & Democrat</i>	Pittsburg
<i>McCurtain Daily Gazette</i>	Mc Curtain
<i>Miami News-Record</i>	Ottawa
<i>Muskogee Daily Phoenix & Times-Democrat</i>	Muskogee
<i>Norman Transcript</i>	Cleveland
<i>Okmulgee Daily Times</i>	Okmulgee
<i>Pauls Valley Daily Democrat</i>	Garvin
<i>Perry Daily Journal</i>	Noble
<i>Ponca City News</i>	Osage
<i>Poteau Daily News</i>	Le Flore
<i>Pryor Daily Times</i>	Mayes
<i>Sapulpa Daily Herald</i>	Creek
<i>Seminole Producer</i>	Seminole
<i>Shawnee News-Star</i>	Pottawatomie
<i>Stillwater NewsPress</i>	Payne
<i>Tahlequah Daily Press</i>	Cherokee
<i>Tulsa Daily Commerce & Legal News</i>	Tulsa

Tulsa World
Vinita Daily Journal
Weatherford Daily News
Woodward News

Tulsa
 Craig
 Custer
 Woodward

Weekly

Newspaper	County
<i>Antlers American</i>	Pushmataha
<i>Apache News</i>	Caddo
<i>Atoka County Times</i>	Atoka
<i>Barnsdall Times</i>	Osage
<i>Beaver Herald-Democrat</i>	Beaver
<i>Bixby Bulletin</i>	Wagoner
<i>Blanchard News</i>	McClain
<i>Boise City News</i>	Cimarron
<i>Bristow News & Record-Citizen</i>	Creek
<i>Bryan County Star</i>	Bryan
<i>Cache Times Weekly</i>	Comanche County
<i>Canton Times</i>	Blaine
<i>Capitol Hill Beacon</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Carnegie Herald</i>	Caddo
<i>Catoosa Times</i>	Tulsa
<i>Cherokee Messenger & Republican</i>	Alfalfa
<i>Cheslea Reporter</i>	Rogers
<i>Cheyenne Star</i>	Roger Mills
<i>Choctaw County Times</i>	Choctaw
<i>Cleveland American</i>	Cleveland
<i>Collinsville News</i>	Tulsa
<i>Comanche County Chronicle</i>	Comanche
<i>Comanche Times</i>	Stephens
<i>Cordell Beacon</i>	Washita
<i>County Connection News Inc.</i>	Caddo
<i>County Democrat</i>	Pottawatomie
<i>Coweta American</i>	Wagoner
<i>Cyril News</i>	Caddo
<i>Davis News</i>	Murray
<i>Del City Sun</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Delaware County Journal</i>	Delaware
<i>Dewey County Record</i>	Dewey
<i>Drumright Gusher</i>	Creek
<i>Eastern Oklahoma County News</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Eastern Oklahoma County Today</i>	Oklahoma
<i>El Reno Tribune</i>	Canadian

<i>Fairfax Chief</i>	Osage
<i>Fletcher Herald</i>	Comanche
<i>Fort Gibson Times</i>	Muskogee
<i>Frederick Leader</i>	Tillman
<i>Frederick Press</i>	Tillman
<i>Freedom Call</i>	Woods
<i>Garber-Billings News</i>	Garfield
<i>Glenpool Post</i>	Tulsa
<i>Granite Enterprises</i>	Geer
<i>Harper County Journal</i>	Harper
<i>Harrah News</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Haskell News</i>	Muskogee
<i>Healdton Herald</i>	Carter
<i>Heavener Ledger</i>	Le Flore
<i>Hennessey Clipper</i>	Kingfisher
<i>Henryetta Free-Lance</i>	Okmulgee
<i>Hobart Democrat-Chief</i>	Kiowa
<i>Holdenville News</i>	Hughes
<i>Hollis News</i>	Harmon
<i>Hooker Advance</i>	Texas
<i>Hughes County Times</i>	Hughes
<i>Indian Journal</i>	McIntosh
<i>Inola Independent</i>	Rogers
<i>Jenks Journal</i>	Tulsa
<i>Johnston County Capital-Democrat</i>	Johnston
<i>Kingfisher Times & Free Press</i>	Kingfisher
<i>Kiowa County Journal</i>	Kiowa
<i>Latimer County News-Tribune</i>	Latimer
<i>Latimer County Today</i>	Latimer
<i>Lincoln County News</i>	Lincoln
<i>Lindsay News</i>	Garvin
<i>Lone Grove Ledger</i>	Carter
<i>Madill Record</i>	Marshall
<i>Mangum Star-News</i>	Greer
<i>Mannford Eagle</i>	Creek
<i>Marietta Monitor</i>	Love
<i>Marlow Review</i>	Stephens
<i>Maysville News</i>	Garvin
<i>McIntosh County Democrat</i>	McIntosh
<i>McLoud News</i>	Pottawatomie
<i>Medford Patriot-Star & Grant County Journal</i>	Grant
<i>Meeker News</i>	Lincoln
<i>Midwest City Sun</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Mooreland Leader</i>	Woodward
<i>Morris News</i>	Okmulgee
<i>Mtn. View News</i>	Kiowa

<i>Mustang News</i>	Canadian
<i>Newcastle Pacer</i>	McClain
<i>Newkirk Herald Journal</i>	Kay
<i>Northwest Oklahoma & Ellis County News</i>	Ellis
<i>Nowata Star</i>	Nowata
<i>Okarche Chieftain</i>	Kingfisher
<i>Okeene Record</i>	Blaine
<i>Okemah News Leader</i>	Okfuskee
<i>Oklahoma City Friday</i>	Oklahoma
<i>Oklahoma Eagle</i>	Tulsa
<i>Oklahoma Legend</i>	Cherokee
<i>Oologah Lake Leader</i>	Rogers
<i>Owasso Reporter</i>	Tulsa
<i>Pawhuska Journal-Capital</i>	Osage
<i>Pawnee Chief</i>	Pawnee
<i>Perkins Journal</i>	Payne
<i>Piedmont-Surrey Gazette</i>	Canadian
<i>Pond Creek Herald & Valley News</i>	Grant
<i>Prague Times-Herald</i>	Lincoln
<i>Purcell Register</i>	McClain
<i>Ringling Eagle</i>	Jefferson
<i>Rush Springs Gazette</i>	Grady
<i>Ryan Leader</i>	Jefferson
<i>Sands Springs Leader</i>	Tulsa
<i>Sayre Record & Beckham County Democrat</i>	Beckham
<i>Sentinel Leader</i>	Washita
<i>Sequoyah County Times</i>	Sequoyah
<i>Skiatook Journal</i>	Osage
<i>Southeast Times</i>	McCurtain
<i>Spiro Graphic</i>	Le Flore
<i>Stigler News-Sentinel</i>	Haskell
<i>Stilwell Democrat Journal</i>	Adair
<i>Stratford Star</i>	Garvin
<i>Stroud American</i>	Lincoln
<i>Sulphur Times-Democrat</i>	Murray
<i>Talihina American</i>	Latimer
<i>Tecumseh Countywide News</i>	Pottawatomie
<i>The Allen Advocate</i>	Pontotoc
<i>The American-Afton</i>	Ottawa
<i>The American-Moore</i>	Cleveland
<i>The Paper</i>	Mayes
<i>The Tribune</i>	Oklahoma
<i>The Weleetkan</i>	Okfuskee
<i>Thomas Tribune</i>	Custer
<i>Tonkawa News</i>	Kay
<i>Tri-County Record</i>	Garfield

Tri-State Tribune
Tuttle Times
Valliant Leader
Vian Tenkiller News
Wagoner Tribune
Walters Herald
Washita County Enterprise
Watonga Republican
Waurika News-Democrat
Wellston News
Westville Reporter
Wewoka Times
Wilson Post-Democrat
Woods County Enterprise
Wynnewood Gazette

Ottawa
Grady
McCurtain
Sequoyah
Wagoner
Cotton
Washita
Blaine
Jefferson
Lincoln
Adair
Seminole
Carter
Woods
Garvin

VITA

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May, 2005

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Date of Degree: May, 2005

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Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to evaluate how Oklahoma newspapers use the Food and Agricultural Products Center news releases. A descriptive analysis approach was used to measure the publication of news releases sent to Oklahoma newspapers from September 10 through December 10, 2004.

Findings and Conclusions: The Food and Agricultural Products Center distributed 15 news releases to Oklahoma newspapers which resulted in the publication of 39 center-related stories during the fall of 2004. The most frequently printed stories were related to center workshops. Newspapers in the central region of Oklahoma printed the most stories about the Food and Agricultural Products Center. It was apparent as a result of the findings that the news media are supportive to the Food and Agricultural Products Center's mission of bringing together academia and the private sector.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: William Weeks
