# PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPER EDITORS REGARDING THE DASNR AT OSU

By

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PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPER EDITORS REGARDING THE DASNR AT OSU

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

> If you are communicating effectively, you will get positive recognition from the audiences you are trying to influence, which means people will think what you are doing is right and that you are doing it in the right way. When you get positive recognition your influence grows. You are perceived as competent, effective, worthy of respect – powerful. (Dilenschneider, 1990, p.8)

Communication is defined as the "process through which messages, both intentional and unintentional, create meaning" (Baldwin, Perry, & Moffitt, 2004, p. 5). The impact of communications, from sharing information to influencing actions and perceptions, has been seen throughout history (Wilk, 2009). Journalists are most often educated to report the information they are given, and are not taught to realize the impact they will make on consumer's choices (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). These journalists are not as scientifically-trained as the scientist they interview or receive information from, making accurate reporting and citing of information difficult (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000).

Through the centuries, agriculture has developed to become more scientific and technological (Dimitri, Effland, &Conklin, 2005). With greater coverage in the news given to environmental and food issues, agriculture is getting critical consideration from

general public (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). This public, however, is more removed from production agriculture than ever before in history (Dimitri, et. al., 2005). A report from the USDA (2011) stated that over a century ago, 30% of Americans worked in production agriculture and 50 % of Americans lived in a rural area. The numbers have dramatically decreased today, with less than 2% of Americans farming for a living and only 17% living in a rural area (USDA, 2011). Because of this disconnect between farmers and non-farmers, the general public has a less realistic view of production agriculture (Higgins, 1991). The general public rarely uses farmers as a source of information and do not engage in communication with them (Higgins, 1991).

Information given to the general public is channeled through the media, specifically the journalists that report those stories (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). Any information and opinion provided is given through that of the reporter and editor (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). The sources that are used for stories largely depend on the reporter or editor's judgment and opinions (Powers & Fico, 1994).

One of the missions of the agricultural component of the land grant university is to educate and inform the public of agricultural industries and advances in agriculture (Fribourg, 2005). Since their inception, the research and extension sectors of land grant universities have proven to be capable sources of information (Fribourg, 2005). These sources could helpful to less scientifically-based journalists who are in search of accurate information (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). Hence, a study is needed to determine the perceptions of newspaper editors of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR) at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

## Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the perception and awareness of Oklahoma newspaper editors' by determining the personal characteristics, familiarity of DASNR, and amount of interaction with DASNR affiliated sources. Also, Oklahoma newspaper editors' preference of receiving information was studied.

## Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perception and awareness of newspaper editors in Oklahoma regarding Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. In addition, this study was intended to determine Oklahoma newspaper editors' preferred methods of receiving information from DASNR.

## Research Objectives

The following research objectives were formulated to accomplish the purposes of this study:

1. Identify selected personal and professional characteristics (age, sex, years in the profession, college education, size of coverage area, media outlets used, and frequency of publication) of newspaper editors in Oklahoma.
2. Determine newspaper editors' perception of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
3. Determine newspaper editors' awareness of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

4. Determine newspaper editors' preferred sources for information related to agriculture.
5. Determine newspaper editors' perceptions of DASNR at OSU as an information source.

## Operational Definitions

The following definition is used frequently within the text of this thesis. Although it is used commonly throughout daily activities, a set, firm definition should be given in order to offer clarity.

News- "anything that is interesting and significant to readers in respect to their personal affairs or their relation to society, and the best news in that which possesses the greatest interest and significance for the greatest numbers" (Stringer, 1999)

Newspaper Editors- "person to whom a writer reports for assignments and decisions concerning stories' selection, content, and publication" (Stringer, 1999)

Public Relations- the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Rhee, 2004).

## Limitations of the Study

The following issues were limitations of the study:

1. Data collection was limited to the participation of those contacted.
2. Data were not collected from all media news sources.
3. The data collected may not show the statistical realm of all media outlets.

## Basic Assumptions of the Study

The following were basic assumptions of the study:

1. Media professionals surveyed write or report on agricultural news.
2. If media professionals use a land grant university in Oklahoma for an information source, it is assumed they use Oklahoma State University.
3. All answers were answered to the best knowledge of the media professionals.

## Significance of the Study

The material presented in this study will contribute to the limited research conducted on newspaper editors' perception and awareness of the outreach sector of OSU's DASNR. Along with that, the results of this study could aide outreach sectors of land grant universities across the nation to better inform newspaper editors of current information. The study could also give outreach sectors a better idea of the demographics of newspaper editors to ensure a better understanding of the public to which they are trying to relay information.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to communicate the theoretical base and summarize the literature related to purpose of this study. The first section of Chapter II describes the theoretical framework of this study by examining the excellence in public relation theory. The second section addresses the conceptual framework associated with media sources for news and information including sources for general news and the third section will define and evaluate sources for agricultural news.

## Theoretical Framework

The excellence of public relations theory is based primarily on the public relations theory according to Grunig and Hunt (1984). For a complete idea of the excellence of public relations theory, a thorough background of the public relations theory must be established (Grunig, 1992). The main objective of a public relations department of a company, agency or other group is to ensure the success of the organization through established relations and networks between consumers and the clients (Rhee, 2004). Public relations departments help strengthen the connections made by marketing departments by not only building relationships between the two, but also by resolving any conflict that should arise (Grunig, et. al.). Organizers of the public relation function

stress the importance of the public relations in any organization are a pertinent part of any planning and executing (Rhee, 2004).

There are ten principles identified with the excellence of public relations theory (Grunig, 1992). These principles exhibit the outline of the theory and further explain all the key points the theory exemplifies (Grunig, 1992):

- Involvement of public relations in strategic management- strategic management involves public relations in the way of developing programs with strategic publics to enhance opportunities and manage threats.
- Empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management- public relations seniors should be a major part of the organization's managers or seniors of power.
- Integrated public relations function- the public relations department should stay together for the most effective organization and be opposed to spreading out among other departments. This obtains the most efficient way of creating new communication strategies within an organization.
- Public relations is a management function separate from other functions- as mentioned above, when a public relations department is in its own function, the organization sees an instant improvement in communications and the resources shown to strategic publics.
- Public relations unit headed by a manager rather than a technician- a technician is capable of handling daily activities. It is imperative to have a manager heading the public relations department to direct all the programs and deal with daily organization of the department.

- Two-way symmetrical model of public relations- this research-based communication strategy improves conflict between strategic publics.
- A symmetrical system of internal communication- the excellence organizations allow employees to make decisions dealing with their job and allow for communication between superiors and employees. This results in job satisfaction and internal communication.
- Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations- communication jobs within the public relations department are staffed by professionals only
- Diversity embodied in all roles- diversity within the public relations department increase the creative drive of the department.
- Organizational context for excellence- public relations departments thrive on activist stances on issues and are more of a "hands-on" department whose success depends on their quenching of active communication.

The studies conducted to establish the excellence in public relations theory have proven to be useful for effective organizational communication (Grunig, 1992). Most of the excellence organizations use the two-way model and some variation of the asymmetrical model (Grunig, 1992). The two-way model uses negotiation and compromise between organizations and its publics through communication (Grunig, 1992). The main goals through the two-way model are to facilitate understanding of the publics as well as manage conflict through communication between the organization and the strategic public (Grunig, 1992). The two way asymmetrical model that is often used along with the symmetrical model is based on the understanding of public relations rather

than the persuasive side of public relations (Grunig, 1992). This model was based on social science theory and research on behaviors and attitudes that persuade the public on their decision to accept an organization's viewpoint (Grunig, 1992).

Organizational effectiveness is a main point of public relations and the theoretical framework that surrounds public relations. There are four major parts of organizational effectiveness that should be evaluated by any business or organization: goal-attainment, systems perspective, strategic constituencies, and competing values (Grunig, 1992). The goal-attainment approach exhibits that each organizations has its own goals and objectives in which it can then measure and see if the organization is growing in a positive direction (Grunig, 1992). The systems approach is often seen as a useful theoretical framework for organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992). This approach reiterates the importance of the relationship between an organization and its subsystems (Grunig, 1992). In this way, the public relations department can mostly benefit from and contribute to organizational effectiveness (Rhee, 2004). The strategic constituency part of organizational effectiveness is in part an outreach of the systems approach (Grunig, 1992). This part shows that an organization should satisfy its environment's demands in order to be effective (Grunig, 1992). Competing values approach can be very subjective (Rhee, 2004). It depends on market share, job security, and other economic factors (Rhee, 2004). These can all be taken differently depending on whom the evaluators of these objects are (Grunig, 1992).

All factors mentioned above go together to form excellence in public relations (Rhee, 2004). Studies have shown the difference between excellence and average

communications and public relations are the investment and value CEOs of companies place in their public relations departments (Grunig, 1991).

## Sources For General News

American newspapers started as a replica of European newspapers. Many papers that attempted to establish themselves failed and were never re-published (Emery, Emery, & Roberts, 1996). The first newspaper on record started on April 24, 1704 by John Campbell and Bartholomew Green (Emery, et. al., 1996). The publication was called the the *Boston News-Letter* and was based in Boston, Massachusetts (Emery, et. al., 1996). Although the newspaper was new, the content was months old. The reason for this was because of the time publication of the paper took and also the gathering of information from Europe (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). The delay in news proved to be less helpful to those who subscribed to the newspaper, which were primarily the more wealthy citizens (Emery, et. al., 1996). The news tended to be savorless, and thus resulted in a lack of subscribers (Emery, et. al., 1996). The first newspaper never had more than 300 subscribers at a time (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). One reason for this was that the government and churches showed their power over the people by heavily regulating and monitoring the news through these two organizations (Emery, et. al., 1996). No opinions were stated within the newspapers because of the strict regulations (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). The lack of controversial news led in a delay of revolutionary thinking (Emery, et. al., 1996).

After the start of the *Boston News-Letter*, many other newspapers developed in major cities throughout the Northern colonies (Emery, et. al., 1996). These newsletters ranged from New York to Massachusetts (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). These newsletters

were like the first American newsletter, full of information, but it failed to push the controversial envelope (Emery, et. al., 1996).

A large development to hit American journalism started with a man from a famous family. James Franklin, brother of Benjamin Franklin, was appointed postmaster of the New England Courant (Emery, et. al., 1996). He published news and ideas he thought people wanted, not just needed (Emery, et. al., 1996). Along with that, by entertaining readers, he failed to follow government and church rules and regulations (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). Franklin was the first to use crusade journalism (Emery, et. al., 1996). This type of journalism presents news in a more dramatic form that entices readers to continue reading and uses more of an entertainment factor (Emery, et. al., 1996). More medals of honor bestowed upon Franklin were the introduction of editorial independence and the most noted is Franklin made journalism respectable (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). These inventions of American reporting helped define present-day news gathering as well as set the bar for reporting around the world (Emery, et. al., 1996).

The Revolutionary War period was very instrumental in the success of setting American reporting as a concrete path of communications. Although only 20 of 35 pre-existing newspapers survived through the war, 35 new papers were established those six years (Emery, et. al., 1996). Newspapers were categorized by party rather than through the government or church affairs (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). This type of categorization sparked the influence of "watchdog" reporting and access for reporters to the House of Representatives and the Senate (Emery, et. al., 1996). The penny press also aided in the newest influences of reporting (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). With newspapers becoming more economical to produce, daily printings of the news was possible, making

newspapers more appealing to the general public (Emery, et. al., 1996). The growth of newspapers was attributed to the cost of sales as well (Emery, et. al., 1996). With copies costing only a cent per copy and losing the requirement of a subscription with payment in advance, those middle and lower class individuals could finally afford to receive newspapers (Emery, et. al., 1996). The distribution of these papers also changed, as storeowners could now sale newspapers within their businesses as single copies for those who were passing by and traveling (Emery, et. al., 1996).

With these advances in news and the process in which news was printed, the higher demand of newspapers led to the increase of technology for receiving news (Emery, et. al., 1996). From pony express to now telegraph, news traveled at a faster rate, making the stories the public read more up to date and interesting (Emery, et. al., 1996).

The Civil War era brought advancements of news itself. With the freeing of African-Americans in the North, many African-American journalists became prominent reporters and contributors to major newspapers around the colonies (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). The African American journalists brought with them a new influence of American journalism and style of writing (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). These reporters mainly wrote columns that were for a specific right or purpose other than recent news (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). The columns these journalists wrote were more like editorials rather than hard-fact stories.

With all the events happening in the new United States of America, newspaper sales and growth were the most evident. From the years 1870 to 1967, the number of English-language dailies rose from a mere 487 to an astonishing 1900 (Emery, et. al.,

1996). In the thirty years from 1870 to 1900, weekly publications were on a steady increase from 4,000 to 12,000 (Emery, et. al., 1996). This increase can be directly related to the population booms that were seen through the U.S. Census (Emery, et. al., 1996). Cities and towns were growing and becoming more concentrated in smaller areas, while more immigrants were also coming into the country to reside (Emery, et. al., 1996). Journalism was now at a new plateau of knowledge and public appeal. The technology, along with better educational institutions and country resolve, increased sales and newspaper content which only supported the growing industry of journalism (Emery, et. al., 1996).

Newspapers, although the oldest form of written news in America, have faced many challenges since the 1990s and the new increase of technology (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). The three most prominent challenges faced by newspapers are: the decline of readership among large city dailies, decrease in retail advertising, and increase competition from new technology such as internet and television (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). To help alleviate these problems, newspapers changed the look and feel of their product by including sections specific to the most interesting to consumers (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). Newspaper stories were made shorter and more compact, giving consumers more news in less time (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998).

The concise and shortening of news in papers leave little room for multiple sources to be used and quoted. General news sources often depend on the personal viewpoint of the reporter that is reporting the news to the public (Powers & Fico, 1994). Reporters are not given specific sources they must interview, therefore leaving the judgment of reporters to guide their writing of a story (Powers & Fico, 1994). Among

those reporters, the stories written by them showed a bias in which their words left readers capable of drawing the same conclusions they themselves made (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). Reporters also are less likely to seek out those sources who disagree with their personal beliefs (Powers & Fico, 1994). Simply put, the sources and presentation of news not only affects what information is presented to the public, but also the image society will develop by the news (Soloski, 1989).

The size and scale of newspaper also influences the sources used by reporters. Larger newspapers use regular sources such as press releases and conferences (Soloski, 1989). Smaller newspapers use local sources and personal interviews, much more than the larger scaled papers (Soloski, 1989).

Gatekeepers often have the job of determining which news makes the paper or media outlet and which gets eliminated (Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor, 1997). In many different sizes of newspapers, editors are the gatekeepers of the news (Donohue et. al., 1997). The editor's decision of which news will run can ultimately be clouded by the monetary control advertisers have of the newspaper in which they are heading (Donohue, et. al., 1997).

## SOURCES FOR AGRICULTURAL NEWS

Paskoff (1990) stated agricultural communications began through the interactions between famers up until the mid-19$^{th}$ century. Word of mouth was the standard way information and news was passed throughout the farming community (Boone, et. al., 2000). Europe was the major source for all agricultural information, and it was often out-of-date by the time it landed on America's shore (Boone, et. al., 2000).

The time after the American Revolution proved to be the most progressive in the Agricultural Communications realm since the colonization of America (Boone, et. al., 2000). The first American printed books on agriculture were printed in the early 1800s (Boone, et. al., 2000). They were the 1814 *Farmer's Assistant* by John Nicholson and the 1826-1827 *Farmer's Library* by Leonard E. Lathrop (Paskoff, 1990). The *Agricultural Museum,* 1811, was the first American periodical published (Boone, et. al., 2000).

In Europe, agricultural societies were a huge part of the daily culture of farmers (Boone, et. al., 2000). These societies' memberships proved valuable through their libraries, which housed books, magazines, and periodicals all valuable to farmers (Paskoff, 1990). American soon implemented the same types of societies (Boone, et. al., 2000). These societies featured some of the most well known faces in history such as Benjamin Franklin and George Washington (Paskoff, 1990). In 1790, American societies began publishing their own works in order to better serve their members by providing information on a more diverse scale than had been seen in other forms of news media (Paskoff, 1990). This publishing through the American societies did not hit the target the founding members had envisioned (Boone, et. al., 2000). This then lead to alternative ways for members to reach other farmers and ranchers through farm shows (Paskoff, 1990). These fairs reached different publics than normal American societies. Fairs came in contact with "dirt farmers" instead of "book farmers" and allowed everyone access to the information that was found through the societies only (Boone, et. al., 2000).

During this time, agricultural journals were still subscribed to and boomed within the 1850's with an increase in monthly subscriptions (Boone, et. al., 2000). These

journals not only included information from the societies, but also included practical knowledge not necessarily found in the societies' libraries (Boone, et. al., 2000).

Technology began to boom during the beginning and middle of the 19th century (Boone, et. al., 2000). With the improvements to the printing press and the decreasing cost of producing papers, agricultural journals were now being produced at a faster and more efficient rate. Along with cheaper production of journals and newspapers, radio became a staple in communications around 1920-1940 (Boone, et. al., 2000). The USDA showed interest in relaying information to farmers, who continued to be spreading out across the continent (Boone, et. al., 2000). Radio helped the USDA spread news and information quickly and with less cost to the government (Boone, et. al., 2000). Although radio became a prevalent way of transferring news from one location to another, farm journals and magazines were still highly used by farmers across the country and income spectrum (Boone, et. al., 2000).

These sources used by modern agricultural communicators have been seen as biased through past studies (Reisner & Walter, 1994). A particular difference in reporting styles and sources can be seen in the multiple types of media used in agricultural communications (Reinser & Walter, 1994). The information given by these sources can stem from inaccuracy on the reporter's behalf, or the distrust of the scientist toward the reporter (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). Journalists write and report news and often lack the scientific knowledge to gain the trust of scientists (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000).

Another problem with sources within the agricultural community and media developed from the types of media agricultural communications professionals use.

Studies have shown that a certain level of bias is seen between the types of publications, whether it be magazines, farm beats, or newspapers (Reisner & Walter, 2000). Magazines and other publications that require advertiser's support to stay in production are often seen to shift stories to show favor of those advertisers and their products (Reisner & Walter, 2000). Farm beat stories are seen as too happy for many media professionals and lack the real world view of agriculture (Reisner & Walter, 2000).

The lack of where to find credible sources is also seen throughout the agricultural news. Studies have shown that celebrities and well-known activist groups have as much reliability with the public as agricultural professionals and scientists (Dyer & Whitaker, 2000). Agricultural news and sources are also out of the general database for general news reporters (Reisner & Walter, 2000). One reason for this is the decrease in family farms and agricultural ties to families in the United States (Higgins, 1991). Agricultural news, therefore, is seen in the larger news segments because of controversial or event-based topics (Reisner & Walter, 2000).

Agricultural extension is a part of DASNR whose mission is to "serve the public built on a foundation of science to help solve problems, promote leadership, and manage resources wisely (DASNR, 2011). This mission is supported by having county agents who offer information to their communities on agricultural and natural resources topics (DSANR, 2011). A study conducted in 1996 proved the public most often relate extension to 4-H activities (Warner, Christenson, Dillman, & Salant, 1996). Boone et. al. (2000) noted the early extension duties were to write and edit research articles to inform the public of agricultural news and advances. It was not unusual for extension agents to

handle the correspondence between agricultural researchers and the public (Boone, et. al., 2000).

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

## Chapter Overview

Chapter III provides a description of the methods and procedures used to conduct this research. It includes a discussion of the subjects, design, data collection and data analysis of the study.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perception and awareness of newspaper editors in Oklahoma regarding Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. In addition, this study determined the preferred methods of receiving information by editors and Oklahoma newspaper editors' demographics.

## Research Objectives

This study addressed the following research objectives:

1. Identify selected personal and professional characteristics (age, sex, years in the profession, college education, size of coverage area, media outlets used, and

frequency of publication) of newspaper editors in Oklahoma.

2. Determine newspaper editors' perception of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
3. Determine newspaper editors' awareness of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
4. Determine newspaper editors' preferred sources for information related to agriculture.
5. Determine newspaper editors' perceptions of DASNR at OSU as an information source.

## Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University requires all studies conducted with human subjects be reviewed under the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB ensure the welfare and rights of the human subjects are upheld and are not damaged in any way or form. This study received the proper review and was approved by the IRB board. The IRB application number for this study is AG1130 and is located in Appendix A.

## Research Design

This study employed a basic descriptive research design. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) stated that the purpose of this type of research is to describe phenomena occurring in nature or social groups. They pointed out that descriptive research is, "heavily dependent upon instrumentation for measurement and observation" (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 4).

## Population and Sample

The population for this study was newspaper editors Oklahoma, excluding specialty and collegiate newspapers. Specialty and collegiate newspapers were seen to have use of DASNR resources as compared to daily and weekly newspapers (N = 199). The population frame was identified from a directory of newspaper editors purchased from the Oklahoma Press Association. The list included emails, phone numbers, names, and locations for newspapers throughout the state.

After compiling the lists of newspaper editors throughout the state of Oklahoma, only the daily and weekly newspaper editors were included in this study. In addition, collegiate newspapers and specialty newspapers were eliminated from the target population as they were determined to be less likely to use DASNR as an information source.

## Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey. Qualtrics.com was used to develop and administer the online instrument. Qualtrics was selected because it allowed the researcher to customize the appearance of the questionnaire and it allowed for the use of a variety of item types and response choices.

Initial contact with the respondents was an email describing the purpose of the study and soliciting their participation (Appendix F). The message, which was sent out on May 13, 2011, provided a general overview of the study and described procedures to be

followed in order to participate. This initial contact also pointed out that participation in the study was voluntary and assurances of amenity and confidentiality were provided.

A follow up email (Appendix G) was sent to the directory on May 25, 2011. In that message the population was urged to respond to the email. The link to the survey was also included. The final follow up email (Appendix H) sent out on May 30, 2011. The data collection phase of the study concluded on June 14, 2011.

There are several factors that can increase participation using web-based surveys. Some of those factors are personalized emails, follow-up reminders, and simple formats (Solomon, n.d.). Web-based surveys have many advantages outside of increased participation. The cost of postage, paper, and other supplies are completely eliminated (Dillman, 2000). Also, the cost of designing, implementing, and collecting data is dramatically decreased (Dillman, 2000). Web-based questionnaires are also easier to formulate, with automatic drop-down boxes for multiple-choice answers and text boxes for personal entries (Archer, 2003).

There are some concerns when conducting web-based surveys. One of the greatest concerns is that not all of the servers operate in the same way and could possibly distort the image of the survey (Gunn, 2002). Data security is also another concern of web-based surveys, along with the level of computer expertise that respondents possess (Gunn, 2002). These concerns may factor how into how accurately the respondent answers items on the questionnaire (Gunn, 2002).

## Instrumentation

A panel of experts reviewed this study (Appendix B). The panel consisted of three faculty members from the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership and a staff member of the Agricultural Communications Shop at Oklahoma State University. The panel assisted the researcher with establishing face and content validity of the instrument. These experts were chosen for their extensive knowledge in agriculture, communications, and research. Revisions were made based from the panel feedback.

Reliability of the instrument was determined post-hoc by comparing means of selected items on the study. After making a visual comparison of means, the researcher determined there was consistency with responses and proceeded with data analysis.

The instrument was composed of 31 items (Appendix D). A variety of response choices, including multiple choice and fill in the blank, were used. The instrument was created using questions from two existing questionnaires (Cartmell, 2001 & Baker, et. al., n.d.).

Nine items were designed to collect data about the personal and professional characteristics of the respondents. Questions inquired about age, sex, and education. Items also addressed coverage area and types of media used by the newspaper editors to relay information to the public.

Nine questions with multiple-choice responses were used to gather data about how familiar newspaper editors were with DASNR. Also, the questionnaire asked how many times newspaper editors have used DASNR staff or faculty for an interview source and how frequently they use DASNR as an information source.

Cartmell (2001) conducted a study on the gate keeping of editors, which had similar questions to those posed by objective two. Objective two, which states the preferred sources for agriculturally related issues and information, was determined in three questions (Cartmell, 2001 & Baker, et. al., n.d.). These questions were asked in both multiple choice and select the top three choices format. All types of media sources were given in the answer choices.

Baker, et. al. (n.d.) prepared a similar study that measured the reputation of a division according to media professionals. The final objective asking the perception of OSU's DASNR as a credible information source were targeted in seven questions of the instrument. These questions were adapted from the work of Cartmell (2001) and Baker, et. al. (n.d.). Again, multiple choice was used as the answer type in the survey, and the questions required one answer each. Two questions gave respondents the option to fill in the blank with their opinion of DASNR's credibility.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including modes, means, and standard deviations. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 16.

Non-response error was evaluated using the researcher randomizer software. The software randomly selected 30 newspaper editors from the population (N = 199) to be contacted by the researcher. These 30 editors were contacted by phone and asked to take the survey. The editors all indicated email would be best to receive the questionnaire. An email (Appendix I) was then sent to the editors with a link to the survey.

The responses were set to a different database to ensure the first round of respondents and the non respondents were not collaborated. The overall responses from the two databases were compared for consistency, so a generalization could be made of all Oklahoma newspaper editors.

# CHAPTER IV

# FINDINGS

This chapter is a report of the results of the study. It provides narrative discussions and tabular presentations of data associated with each of the research objectives.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the perception and awareness of newspaper editors in Oklahoma regarding Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. In addition, this study determined the preferred methods of receiving information by editors and Oklahoma newspaper editors' demographics.

## Research Objectives

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3. Determine newspaper editors' awareness of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
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5. Determine newspaper editors' perceptions of DASNR at OSU as an information source.

## Response Rate

The entire population of newspaper editors in Oklahoma, excluding collegiate and specialty newspapers, ($n$ = 199) was included in this study. A total of 32 usable responses were collected resulting in a 16.08 % response rate. That group formed the accepting sample ($n$ = 32). Linder, Murphy and Briers (2001) recommended that the most acceptable method of addressing non-response bias is to sample 20 non-respondents and compare their responses to those of the previous responders. The researcher worked diligently to obtain responses from 20 individuals within the non-respondent group. After multiple contacts, 18 responses were obtained so, in accordance with the recommendation of Linder, Murphy and Briers (2001), the last two respondents from the accepting sample were added to the non-respondent group resulting in a non-respondent group of 20.. Data from the non-respondent group were then compared to that of the accepting sample. No differences were detected, so findings of the accepting sample were generalized to the population (Linder, Murphy & Briers, 2001).

## Findings Related to Research Objective 1

Nearly half (48.4%; *n* = 15) of the editors were male, while 78.1% (*n* = 25) were at least 46 years of age. More than 82% (*n* = 19) of Oklahoma editors reported they had been a professional journalist for more than 20 or years (see Table 1). As displayed in Table 2, all but 5 (84.4%; *n* = 24) of editors responding to this item reported that they had at least a bachelors degree. More than one-third of editors had either a graduate degree or a professional degree (34.4%; *n* = 11).

Table 1

*Oklahoma Newspaper Editors' Number of Years of Experience as a Professional Journalist* (*n* = 32)

| Years | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| 0-5 | 3 | 9.40 |
| 6-10 | 4 | 12.50 |
| 11-15 | 5 | 15.60 |
| 16-20 | 4 | 12.50 |
| 21-25 | 4 | 12.50 |
| More than 25 | 12 | 37.50 |

Table 2

*Level of Education Held by Newspaper Editors in Oklahoma* (*n* = 32)

| Level of Education | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Associates | 5 | 15.60 |
| Bachelors | 13 | 40.60 |
| Graduate/Professional | 11 | 34.40 |
| Missing | 3 | 9.40 |

Of Oklahoma editors, 62.5% (*n* = 20) worked for a publication that served fewer than 5,000 subscribers and 12.5% (*n* = 4) worked for a publication that served 5,001-10,000 subscribers (see Table 3). Nearly 70% (68.8%; *n* = 22) of the editors reported that their publications were most often produced weekly. Five editors (15.6%) indicated that their paper was distributed 2 to 3 times a week and an equal number reported daily distribution (see Table 4).

Table 3

*Circulation of Publications with Which Oklahoma Newspaper Editors Work* (*n* = 32)

| Coverage Area | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Under 5,000 | 20 | 62.50 |
| 5,001 – 10,000 | 4 | 12.50 |
| 10,001 – 15,000 | 3 | 9.40 |
| 20,001 – 25,000 | 2 | 6.30 |
| 25,001 – 50,000 | 2 | 6.30 |
| More than 50,000 | 1 | 3.10 |

Table 4

*Number of Times Publication with Which Oklahoma Newspaper Editors Work is Distributed* (*n* = 32)

| Time | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Once a Week | 22 | 68.80 |
| Daily | 5 | 15.60 |
| 2-3 Times a Week | 5 | 15.60 |

Table 5 shows media outlets used to distribute the publications with which the editors worked. Each of the editors responding to this item indicated that their publication

used traditional, print newspaper (100.0, *n* = 31). The second most common form of distribution was online publication (31.3%, *n* = 10).

Table 5

*Types of Media Used to Distribute Publications from Editors* (*n* = 31)

| Type of Media Outlet | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Newspaper | 31 | 100.00 |
| Online Publication | 10 | 31.30 |
| Other | 5 | 15.60 |
| Radio | 1 | 3.10 |
| Magazine | 2 | 6.30 |
| Broadcasting | 0 | 0.00 |

An item related to this objective inquired about how editors define agriculture. Data analysis revealed that 56.3% (*n* = 18) of respondents associated agriculture with farming and ranching only, while 28.1 % (*n* = 9) associated agriculture with agribusiness, and 15.6% (*n* = 5) associated the term with the growing, processing and distribution of food (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Newspaper Editor's Perceptions of Agriculture*

| Perceptions of Agriculture | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture is Farming and Ranching | 18 | 56.30 |
| Agriculture is Agribusiness | 9 | 28.10 |
| Agriculture is Processing and distribution of food | 5 | 15.60 |

## Findings Related to Research Objective 2

The second research objective sought to determine newspaper editors' perceptions of DASNR at OSU. Editors were asked a series of questions pertaining to the value of information provided by DASNR. A majority of the respondents, 84.4 % (*n* = 27), indicated that they believed their readers place most importance on information provided by DASNR pertaining to news and updates regarding extension programs (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Editors' Perceptions Regarding Information Provided by DASNR that is of Most Importance to Their Readers*

| Information | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| News, updates regarding extension programs | 27 | 84.40 |
| News, updates regarding teaching activities | 3 | 9.40 |
| News, updates regarding research projects | 2 | 6.30 |

Editors perceived that their readers place least value on information provided by DASNR pertaining to news and updates regarding teaching activities (46.9%; n = 15). Almost one-third of the editors (31.3%; 10) indicated that news and updates about research projects was the least important to their readers. These data are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

*Editors' Perceptions Regarding Information Provided by DASNR that is of Least Importance to Their Readers* (*n* = 27)

| Information | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| News and updates regarding teaching activities | 15 | 46.90 |
| News and updates regarding research projects | 10 | 31.30 |
| News and updates regarding extension programs | 2 | 6.30 |

**Findings Related to Research Objective 3**

The third research objective sought to determine the editors' awareness of DASNR. When asked about their awareness of DASNR, 78.20% (*n* = 25) were at least familiar the Division (see Table 9). Despite the fact that more than 20% (*n* = 7) of the editors indicated they were not familiar with DASNR, 100% (*n* = 32) reported that they had used DASNR as a source for a story in the past six months. Almost one-third (31.1%; *n* = 10) indicated they had used DASNR fewer than five times within that time frame (see Table 10).

Table 9

*Familiarity of Respondents to DASNR*

| Scale | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Familiar | 4 | 12.50 |
| Somewhat Familiar | 14 | 43.80 |
| Familiar | 7 | 21.90 |
| Not Familiar | 7 | 21.90 |

Table 10

*Editors' Use of DASNR in the Past Six Months*

| Scale | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| 0-5 | 10 | 31.3 |
| 6-10 | 7 | 21.9 |
| 11-15 | 7 | 21.9 |
| 16-20 | 4 | 12.5 |
| 21-25 | 4 | 12.5 |

Of the three sectors of DASNR, more editors said they most often used Extension/4-H and Outreach Programs (81.3 %; *n* = 26). Teaching/College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) was most used by 12.5% (4) of

the editors and Research/Experiment Station was most used by 1 (3.1%) editor (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Sector of DASNR most often used by Oklahoma Newspaper Reporters* (*n* = 31)

| Sectors of DASNR | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Extension/4-H and outreach programs | 26 | 81.30 |
| Teaching/CASNR | 4 | 12.50 |
| Research/Experiment Station | 1 | 3.10 |

Agricultural Communications Services of DASNR produces a weekly agricultural television program called SUNUP. Almost two-thirds (65.6 %; *n* = 21) of the editors reported they were not familiar with the program (see Table 12). As shown in Table 13, 71.9% (*n* = 23) had never viewed SUNUP.

Table 12

*Oklahoma Newspaper Editors' Familiarity with SUNUP* (*n* = 31)

| Scale | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Not Familiar | 21 | 65.60 |
| Familiar | 10 | 31.30 |
| Very Familiar | 1 | 3.10 |

Table 13

*Respondent's Viewing of SUNUP* (*n* = 29).

| Scale | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Never | 23 | 71.90 |
| Once a Month | 4 | 12.50 |
| 2-3 Times a Month | 2 | 6.30 |

**Findings Related to Research Objective 4**

The fourth research objective sought to determine the editors' preferred sources for agriculturally related issues and information. Respondents were asked to choose their top three preferred methods of receiving news related to agriculture (see Table 14). All respondents (100 %, *n* = 32) included e-mail, 50% (*n* = 16) included fax, and 43.8% (*n* = 14) included traditional mail. The least often marked format for receiving news were blog (0.0%; *n* = 0) and RSS (0.0%; *n* = 0). The choice of other also offered respondents an opportunity to write in their own responses. While 3 (9.4%) individuals marked "other," no specific examples were provided.

Editors were asked what sources they used to obtain information for their agricultural news stories (see Table 15). Of the four choices provided, DASNR was most frequently selected (59.4%; *n* = 19). The next most frequently indicated item was Local Sources (28.1%; 9), followed by farmer and ranchers (9.4%; 3).

Table 14

*Respondent's Preferred Methods of Receiving Agricultural News*

| Methods | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| E-mail | 32 | 100.00 |
| Phone | 3 | 9.40 |
| Fax | 16 | 50.00 |
| Mail | 14 | 43.80 |
| Web | 4 | 12.50 |
| Blog | 0 | 0.00 |
| RSS | 0 | 0.00 |
| Other (Specify) | 3 | 9.40 |

Table 15

*Oklahoma Newspaper Editors' Most Used Source for Agricultural News* (*n* = 32)

| Sources | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| DASNR | 19 | 59.40 |
| Local Sources | 9 | 28.10 |
| Farmers/Ranchers | 3 | 9.40 |
| Wire Services (i.e. AP, etc.) | 1 | 3.10 |

Editors were asked what sources they would recommend their reporters use to gather agricultural information. Sources related to Oklahoma State University were most

commonly selected (80.1%, *n* = 24). The next most commonly recommended agricultural source was local farmers (9.4%; 3) followed by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture (6.3%; 2). These data are displayed in Table 16.

Table 16

*Agricultural Sources Recommended by Oklahoma Newspaper Editors to Their Reporters* (*n* = 32)

| Sources | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Cooperative Extension | 14 | 48.80 |
| Oklahoma State University | 10 | 31.30 |
| Local Farmers | 3 | 9.40 |
| Oklahoma Department of Agriculture | 2 | 6.30 |
| High School Agriculture Teachers | 1 | 3.10 |
| United States Department of Agriculture | 1 | 3.10 |
| Others | 1 | 3.10 |

## Findings Related to Research Objective 5

The fifth research objective sought to determine the newspaper editors' perception of DASNR at OSU as an information source. DASNR was perceived as credible, useable, and newsworthy by the majority of editors. All but three of the editors (90.7%; *n* = 29) agreed or strongly agreed that DASNR was a credible source of agricultural information. The other 3 (9.4%) indicated they were neutral or undecided regarding the credibility of

DASNR. There was even more agreement regarding the usability of information from DASNR as 94.7% (30) of the respondents indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that DASNR provides information that is useful to their readers.

More than 80% (84.4%, $n$ = 27) of the editors agreed that information provided by DASNR is newsworthy, and a similar number (87.5%, $n$ = 28) agreed that information provided by DASNR was easy for their readers to understand. These data are displayed in Table 17.

Table 17

*Oklahoma Newspaper Editors' Perceptions of DASNR* (*n* = 32)

| Item | Strongly Disagree<br>*f, %* | Disagree<br>*f, %* | Neutral<br>*f, %* | Agree<br>*f, %* | Strongly Agree<br>*f, %* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Credibility of DASNR | 0, 0.00 | 0, 0.00 | 3, 9.40 | 18, 56.30 | 11, 34.40 |
| Usefulness of Information from DASNR | 0, 0.00 | 0, 0.00 | 2, 6.30 | 21, 65.60 | 9, 28.10 |
| Newsworthiness of Information from DASNR | 0, 0.00 | 0, 0.00 | 5, 15.60 | 18, 56.30 | 9, 28.10 |
| Audience Understanding of Information from DASNR | 0, 0.00 | 0, 0.00 | 4, 12.50 | 21, 65.60 | 7, 21.90 |

# CHAPTER V

# DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a summary of this study including the purpose, objectives, and methods for conducting the research. Also included are the conclusions, recommendations and implications resulting from data collected and analyzed in this study.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perception and awareness of newspaper editors in Oklahoma regarding Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. In addition, this study determined the preferred methods of receiving information by editors and Oklahoma newspaper editors' demographics.

## Research Objectives

This study addressed the following research objectives:

1. Identify selected personal and professional characteristics (age, sex, years in the profession, college education, size of coverage area, media outlets used, and frequency of publication) of newspaper editors in Oklahoma.
2. Determine newspaper editors' perception of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
3. Determine newspaper editors' awareness of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
4. Determine newspaper editors' preferred sources for information related to agriculture.
5. Determine newspaper editors' perceptions of DASNR at OSU as an information source.

## Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications

### Conclusions, Recommendation and Implications Related to Research Objective 1

The typical newspaper editor in Oklahoma is a middle-aged male with at least a bachelors degree. He has more than 20 years of experience as a professional journalist and works with a publication serving 5,000 subscribers that is distributed on a weekly basis. These editors have a limited view of agriculture, defining it as pertaining to farming and ranching only.

Terry, Herring and Larke, (1992) stated that defining agriculture as farming and ranching only indicates a lack of agricultural literacy. DASNR should work with editors and all media members to help expand their knowledge and perceptions of agriculture.

Associating agriculture with farming and ranching only is a failure to recognize the food and fiber system as a whole that not only includes production, but also product development, processing, marketing, distribution, and other vital components.

The editors' narrow definition of agriculture also highlights the need for DASNR to help editors and all media members to understand the natural resources sector component of DASNR. Natural resources are valuable to our state and nation. The Division conducts instructional, research and outreach programs related to fishery management, forestry, rangeland ecology, and wildlife management.

**Conclusions, Recommendation and Implications Related to Research Objective 2**

Newspaper editors consider the most important information provided to their readers by DASNR to be news related to extension programs. The least important information is news related to teaching programs. The perceived importance to information related to extension programs is positive for DASNR. Extension programs are intended to address the needs of local citizens in the form our outreach from the land grand institution. On the other hand, the lack of importance or value placed upon news and information provided by the research component of the Division is a concern. A significant amount of resources and effort are placed upon research conducted through DASNR. Important discoveries and innovations have been developed through the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station (OAES) component of the Division and developments are certainly newsworthy. DASNR should work with newspaper editors and other professionals in the media to help them understand the value of research

conducted through the Division. They should be provided overviews of the types of research conducted. In addition, media members should be introduced to researchers provided opportunities to tour the laboratories and field stations where OAES research is conducted.

**Conclusions, Recommendation and Implications Related to Research Objective 3**

The research question sought to determine Oklahoma newspaper editors' awareness of DASNR at OSU. It can be concluded that Oklahoma newspaper editors are familiar with DASNR and they use the Division as a source of information about agriculture. Compared to the other sectors of DASNR, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) is the most used source of information by newspaper editors. OAES should continue to provide useful information to media outlets in the state. In addition, county-based extension personnel should work to develop positive relationships with local media professionals to take full advantage in the value newspaper editors place on information from OAES.

Oklahoma newspaper editors do not regularly view the SUNUP television program. While the target audience of the program is Oklahoma citizens, content of SUNUP could be a valuable source of information for media professionals, particularly local newspapers. Agricultural Communications Services should create programs to develop positive relationships with other members of the state media. Such relationships could be mutually beneficial as professional journalists could use information included in SUNUP programs as a source of information and, through crediting SUNUP as a source, could

help build the viewership of the program. Finally, when SUNUP films stories onsite, the talent and crew should incorporate local media professionals in their production. Doing so will not only provide an opportunity for local media to interview people working with SUNUP about current events in DASNR, but would also help spotlight SUNUP to the local audience.

**Conclusions, Recommendation and Implications Related to Research Objective 4**

The research question sought to determine the population's preferred sources for agriculturally related issues and information. Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that editors most prefer to receive information from DASNR in the form of emails and faxes. Other formats of distributing news releases will not be nearly as effective with this audience. It is recommended, therefore, that email and fax be used by DASNR to distribute news and information to state newspapers. It is further recommended that an email bulletin be sent to local media professionals at a specific time each week to serve as a consistent source of information about agriculture and DASNR activities. Special emphasis should be placed upon providing information about extension programs and activities as the editors believe their readers place greatest importance on that component of DASNR.

**Conclusions, Recommendation and Implications Related to Research Objective 5**

Oklahoma newspaper editors consider DASNR to be a credible source of information about agriculture. Further, it can be concluded that Oklahoma newspaper editors believe information provided by DASNR is newsworthy and useful to their readers. DASNR should strive to continue uphold its high level of credibility as a source of information. The positives findings related to the newsworthiness and usefulness of information provided by DASNR is confirmation that Agricultural Communications Services is developing content that is important and valuable to state newspaper editors. It is recommended that DASNR continue to invest resources in this department in the Division.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

1. A study similar to this research should conducted with other media professionals in the state of Oklahoma.
2. In depth research targeting each form of information output provided by DASNR (news releases, bullitens, broadcasts, etc.) should conducted to assess their effectiveness.
3. Research should be conducted to develop methods to more effectively promote information provided by DASNR pertaining to research and teaching programs.
4. Research should be conducted to explore effective uses of various forms of convergent media to distribute news and information from DASNR.

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# APPPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

## Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | Friday, May 13, 2011 |
| IRB Application No | AG1130 |
| Proposal Title: | Awareness and Perceptions of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources by Media Professionals |
| Reviewed and Processed as: | Exempt |

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 5/12/2012**

Principal Investigator(s):


Joanna Kate Smith
103 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Dwayne Cartmell
448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078


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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

[X] The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia H. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

# APPENDIX B

## PANEL OF EXPERTS

PANEL OF EXPERTS

Dwayne Cartmell, II

Professor of Agricultural Communications

436 Agricultural Hall

Oklahoma State University

Cindy Blackwell

Professor of Agricultural Communications

444 Agricultural Hall

Oklahoma State University

Rob Terry

Head of Department of Agricultural

466 Agricultural Hall

Oklahoma State University

Garvin Quinn

Director of Agricultural Communications Services

Oklahoma State Universities

# APPENDIX C

# SCRIPT

**Default Question Block**

Dear Newspaper Professional:

Your help is needed in determining the perception and image of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR). As a newspaper professional in Oklahoma, your opinion is highly valued.

The primary purpose of this research is to identify and understand the way in which DASNR is viewed by Oklahoma newspaper professionals.

This survey will take 15-30 minutes to complete. Please answer questions truthfully. If you are not able to access this survey, please email me at joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu.

Your response is voluntary and anonymous. Responses will be stored on a password-protected computer and at no time will your responses be connected with you in any way. You may choose to stop filling out the survey at any time.

By clicking the box below, you are giving your consent to participate in the study. The risks associated with this study are not greater than those generally encountered in daily life.

This survey is only available for a short time. Your immediate response is very much appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu or contact my adviser, Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, at dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,

Katie Smith
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University
joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu

◯ I am 18 years of age or older. Take me to the survey.

Which of the following best describes your perception of the word "agriculture"?

◯ Farming and ranching

◯ Agribusiness, businesses related to agriculture

◯ Growing, processing, and distribution of food

How familiar are you with the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR) at Oklahoma State University?

◯ Strongly Familiar

◯ Somewhat Familiar

◯ Familiar

◯ Not Familiar

Okla. State Univ. IRB
Approved 5/13/11
Expires 5/12/12
IRB # AG-11-30

# APPENDIX D

# INSTRUMENT


Dear Newspaper Professional:

Your help is needed in determining the perception and image of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR). As a newspaper professional in Oklahoma, your opinion is highly valued.

The primary purpose of this research is to identify and understand the way in which DASNR is viewed by Oklahoma newspaper professionals.

This survey will take 15-30 minutes to complete. Please answer questions truthfully. If you are not able to access this survey, please email me at joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu.

Your response is voluntary and anonymous. Responses will be stored on a password-protected computer and at no time will your responses be connected with you in any way. You may choose to stop filling out the survey at any time.

By clicking the box below, you are giving your consent to participate in the study. The risks associated with this study are not greater than those generally encountered in daily life.

This survey is only available for a short time. Your immediate response is very much appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu or contact my adviser, Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, at dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,

Katie Smith
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University
joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu

○ I am 18 years of age or older. Take me to the survey.


Which of the following best describes your perception of the word “agriculture”?

- Farming and ranching
- Agribusiness, businesses related to agriculture
- Growing, processing, and distribution of food

How familiar are you with the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR) at Oklahoma State University?

- Strongly Familiar
- Somewhat Familiar
- Familiar
- Not Familiar

How many times in the past six months have you used any area of DASNR as a source for a story?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25

Which part(s) of DASNR have you used within the past six months?

- Extension/ 4-H and outreach programs
- Research/ Experiment Station
- Teaching/ College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

What information from DASNR do you find the most important to your audience?

- News and updates regarding research projects
- News and updates regarding Extension programs/community outreach programs
- News and updates regarding teaching activities

What information from DASNR do you find the least important to your audience?

- News and updates regarding research projects
- News and updates regarding Extension programs/community outreach programs
- News and updates regarding teaching activities


What are your top three preferred methods of receiving news related to agriculture?

- E-mail
- Phone
- Fax
- Mail
- Web
- Blog
- RSS
- Other

What sources do you use now to obtain information about agricultural issues?

- Wire Services (i.e. AP, etc.)
- DASNR
- Commodity organizations
- Local Sources
- National Media Groups
- Farmers/Rancers

What source would you recommend for reporters to use to gather agricultural sources?

- Cooperative Extension
- Oklahoma State University
- Oklahoma Department of Agriculture
- Farm Organizations (Farm Bureau, etc.)
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Commodity Groups
- Private Interest Groups
- Local Farmers
- Agribusinesses
- High School Agriculture Teachers
- Other (Specify)

If you have used DASNR as an information source, the information received from the Division was credible?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree


If you have used DASNR as an information source, the information provided by DASNR was useful to your work?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

If you have used DASNR as an information source, the information provided by DASNR was newsworthy for your audience?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Information provided by DASNR is easy for the general public to understand?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

- 18-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 35-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 50+

How many years have you been in journalism?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 25+

What is the highest college degree that you hold?

- Associates
- Bachelors
- Graduate/Professional

Did you graduate from Oklahoma State University?

- Yes
- No

If you did graduate from Oklahoma State University, did you graduate from the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes the size of your coverage area?

- Under 5,000
- 5,001 - 10,000
- 10,001 - 15,000
- 15,001 - 20,000
- 20,001 - 25,000
- 25,001 - 50,000
- More than 50,000

What types of media outlets does your company use?

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Broadcasting
- Online Publication
- Magazine
- Other


How often does your pupblication run?

- Daily
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month
- Never

How familiar are you with the television show SUNUP, which is produced by DASNR?

- Very Familiar
- Familiar
- Not Familiar

How frequently do you watch SUNUP for agricultural news and information?

- Never
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- 4 Times a Month

Have you ever used a faculty or staff memeber in DASNR as an interview source?

- Yes
- No

If yes, do you consider these sources reliable and informational?

- Yes
- No

If no, why?

What other publications or information pieces are you familiar with that are DASNR products?

>>

# APPENDIX E

# INITIAL EMAIL

Dear Newspaper Professionals,

I need your help! Your help is needed in determining the perception and image of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR). As a newspaper professional in Oklahoma, your opinion is highly valued. Please click on the following link to access the survey:

http://tinyurl.com/3dfrwck

This survey will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete.

Your immediate assistance with this research effort is greatly appreciated. Please let me know if you have any questions about this project.

Sincerely,

Katie Smith
Graduate Student, Agricultural Communications
joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu

APPENDIX F

FIRST REMINDER EMAIL

Dear Newspaper Professionals,

I am sending this note as a reminder that I need your help! Last week I sent you a message regarding a research study I am conducting determining the perception and image of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR). As a newspaper professional in Oklahoma, your opinion is highly valued. If you have already completed this survey, thanks!! If you have not, please click on the following link to access the survey:

http://tinyurl.com/3dfrwck

Thanks for your assistance with this research effort; it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Katie Smith
Graduate Student, Agricultural Communications
joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu

APPENDIX G

SECOND REMINDER EMAIL

Dear Newspaper Professionals,

I am sending this note as a final reminder that I need your help! I am conducting a survey to determine the perception and image of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR). As a newspaper professional in Oklahoma, your opinion is highly valued. If you have already completed this survey, thanks!! If you have not, please click on the following link to access the survey:

http://tinyurl.com/3dfrwck

Thanks for your assistance with this research effort; it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Katie Smith
Graduate Student, Agricultural Communications
joanna.k.smith@okstate.edu

# VITA

Joanna Kate Smith

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY'S DIVISION OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND NATURAL RESOURCES BY MEDIA MEMBERS

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Bainbridge, Georgia, May 10, 1986, the daughter of Van and Jo Smith.

Education: Graduated from Bainbridge High School in Bainbridge, Georgia in May 2004.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science/Arts in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, July, 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Animal Science at University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia in 2009.

Experience: Employed by National Cattlemen's Beef Association as a convention intern, winter 2009. Worked for Donna Valley Limousin and Fodder as an intern, 2009. Employed by Oklahoma State University as a graduate teaching assistant and recruiter, 2009-2011.

Professional Memberships: National Cattlemen's Association, Georgia Cattlemen's Association, American Shorthorn Association, American Angus Association, FFA Alumni Association, University of Georgia Alumni Association, Sigma Alpha Professional Sorority Alumni Association.

Name: Joanna Kate Smith Date of Degree: July, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPER EDITORS REGARDING THE DASNR AT OSU

Pages in Study: 70 Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Scope and Method of Study: The scope of this study was Oklahoma newspaper editors. The editors were asked to voluntarily complete a questionnaire online regarding their perceptions and awareness of Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR) at Oklahoma State University (OSU). Data from this census were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Findings and Conclusions: The study used the excellence in public relations theory to determine the value of DASNR and information about agriculture provided by DASNR to newspaper editors in Oklahoma.. The study revealed that Oklahoma newspaper editors are well-educated, middle-aged males with a limited definition of agriculture. They define agriculture as farming and ranching only, seemingly ignorant of aspects of the industry beyond production of food and fiber.

Editors are familiar with DASNR and consider the Division a credible source of information about agriculture. They find information about programs related to extension to be of most importance to their readers. They prefer to receive information from DASNR in the form of emails and they consider information provided by the Division to be newsworthy and useful to their readers.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dwayne Cartmell