



Newspaper Readership 2004

February 2004

Purpose

The 2004 Newspaper Readership Survey, which was conducted as a Web survey, included respondents from 20 Penn State campus locations. Conducted annually since 1998, this survey monitors the impact of the Newspaper Readership Program including satisfaction with the program, self-reported learning outcomes associated with regular newspaper readership, and identification of students' preferred news sources. The Newspaper Readership Program strives to increase regular readership in order to enhance the learning environment and to contribute to the educational goal of creating educated citizens.

Implications/Highlights

Most students were satisfied with the Newspaper Readership Program. Approximately three quarters of Penn State students pick up newspapers from the distribution units and others utilize papers that they get from other students. The majority of students recognize learning outcomes associated with regular newspaper readership.

Participation Rate

Total: n = 2,545¹

University Park: n = 984 (19.8%)

All other PSU locations: n = 1,556 (20.6%)

Margin of Error: +/-2.4%

Findings

Newspaper Readership

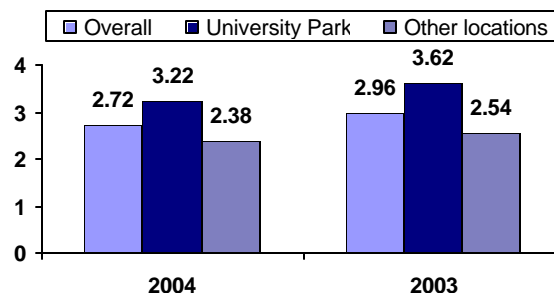
Three quarters (77.4%) of Penn State students picked up a paper from the Readership Program distribution units at least once a week. University Park students (86.7%) were more likely to do so than students at other Penn State locations (71.2%). The data suggest a slight decline in usage since last year when 83.7% utilized the distribution units at least once a week to pick up a paper. (See Figure 1 for averages.)

In addition, on average, students got a newspaper from another student 1.53 times per week and passed along a newspaper to another student 1.05 times per week.

¹ Five students did not indicate which campus they attended

In total², 87.4% of students reported weekly use of the Readership Program, and on average, students picked up a paper from the distribution units or from another student 4.20 times per week.

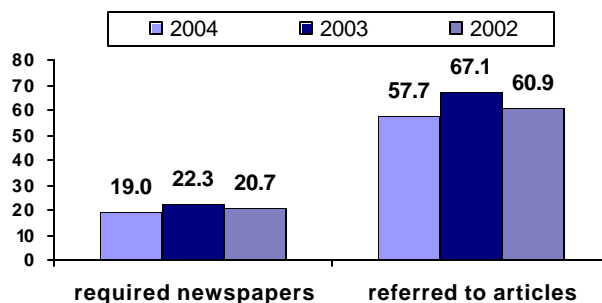
Figure 1. Average number of times per week students picked up a paper from a distribution unit



Classroom Use

Students were asked if they had instructors this semester who required that they read a newspaper or who referred to news articles in class. (See Figure 2.) The data suggest a slight decrease in the percentages of instructors utilizing newspapers in the classroom.

Figure 2. Percentage of Students who had Instructors who Used Newspapers



Of faculty who required that their students read newspapers, 31.8% required *The New York Times*, 17.8% required *USA Today*; 14.8% required *The Wall Street Journal*; 13.8% required the local paper; 5.7% required the campus student newspaper, and 15.9% either did not specify the paper or required some other paper.

² These data reflect both direct and indirect use of the Newspaper Readership Program (either obtaining a paper through the distribution units or from another student).

Penn State Pulse is a project of Student Affairs Research and Assessment.

For further information, please contact Dr. Andrea Dowhower.

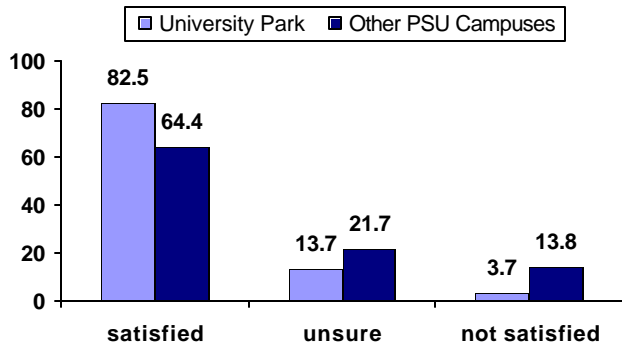
222 Boucke, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 863-1809, ald101@psu.edu U.Ed. STA 04-257



Satisfaction

Students (72.7%) were generally pleased with the Newspaper Readership Program. A higher percentage of University Park students were satisfied with the Program than students at the other PSU campuses.

Figure 3. Satisfaction with Newspaper Readership Program (by percent)



One student commented, "I think one of the greatest things is that Penn State offers its students free newspapers. At first, they were just a way to burn time between classes, but I've come to enjoy them so much I'm going to be a subscriber after I leave Penn State."

Learning Outcomes

Several survey questions focused on learning outcomes associated with reading a newspaper on a regular basis. A majority of students reported that newspaper readership increased their ability to discuss current events, to have opinions about national or international concerns, and to feel informed about local issues. There appears to be a notable decrease in students' self-reported gains related to newspaper readership since last year. The data are more consistent with what was found in 2002. (See Table 1.)

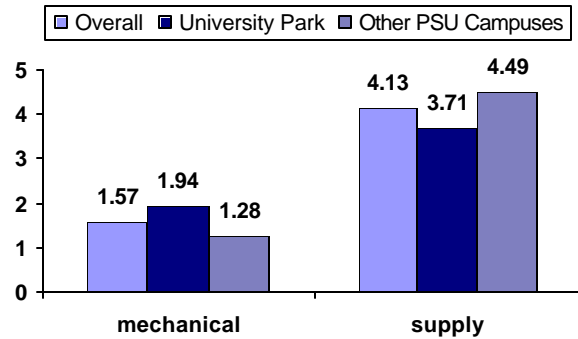
Table 1. Learning Outcomes of Regular Readership

By percent	2004	2003	2002
ability to discuss current events or issues	65.7	90.8	70.5
having opinions about national or international concerns	60.4	90.5	65.7
feeling informed about local community issues	54.6	83.8	46.8
feeling informed about Univ. issues	46.3	71.0	45.5
understanding ethical dilemmas of contemporary issues	41.6	75.3	35.5
connecting class concepts and real life experiences	38.7	67.9	29.7
understanding public policy, law and political positions	38.1	73.7	35.7
participating in class discussions	34.5	71.2	31.7
evaluating use of language, statistics, arguments	33.6	66.0	27.0
gaining insight into historical context of current issues	32.5	68.5	28.1
overall Penn State education	32.4	64.6	39.6
developing strategies to pursue goals	25.9	52.5	22.3

Difficulties with the Program

Of those respondents who reported getting newspapers from the distribution units, 34.2% encountered at least one mechanical problem, and 72% ran into at least one supply problem. In addition, supply problems appear to occur more frequently on the other PSU campuses than they do at University Park. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4. Average Number of Distribution Problems this Year



Findings suggest a slight decrease in distribution problems since last year. In 2003, the averages were 4.70 for supply problems and 1.95 for mechanical problems as compared to 4.13 and 1.57, respectively in 2004.

Recycling Efforts

University Park students were asked a series of questions regarding the recycling efforts. Half (50.1%) of students had seen the advertisements to recycle newspapers that were in *The Daily Collegian* and 72.3% saw the signs in the HUB. Of those who saw the advertisements, 82.2% said that the efforts led them to regularly put their newspapers into recycling bins and 49.9% put newspapers in racks when available.

News Sources

Students indicated they used more than one medium to access news. Approximately half (49.9%) of UP students frequently learned about news online, whereas 51% of the students from the other campuses frequently learned about news through television. (See Table 2.) In comparison to 2003, students were more likely to learn about news and prefer to learn about news online in 2004. For example, 16.3% of students in 2003 reported that they preferred using the Internet for news, whereas in 2004, 24.2% expressed the same preference.

Table 2. Frequent and Preferred Source of News

By percent	Access News ³		Preferred Source	
	University Park	Other Campuses	University Park	Other Campuses
Radio	10.4	23.0	5.3	9.3
TV	31.9	51.0	26.7	39.8
Online	49.9	37.6	28.7	21.4
Magazines	12.9	14.9	1.2	3.2
Newspapers	55.7	42.6	38.2	26.3

³ The percentage of students who responded that they "frequently" get news through each of the mediums.