



Newspaper Readership 2001

March 2001

Purpose

The Newspaper Readership Program was made available at all twenty Penn State campuses Fall 2000. This survey examined learning outcomes and student satisfaction with the overall program. In addition, students at the University Park (UP) campus were asked the impact of the program on their readership of the student newspaper. All the survey responses of UP students who took the survey over the phone vs. via the web were compared.

Implications/Highlights

Most students were satisfied with the Newspaper Readership Program; a majority reported that it contributed to the quality of their education. University Park students stated that the availability of these newspapers actually led to an increase in their readership of the student campus paper.

Participation Rate

Respondents were selected randomly from 20 campuses.

N = 2036 overall

N = 688 University Park (UP) [^]

N = 1348 non-UP locations

[^] Of the UP responses, 353 were via the phone and 335 were via the web

Findings

A majority of students were satisfied (85%) with the Newspaper Readership Program and felt that it contributed to the overall quality of their education (59%).

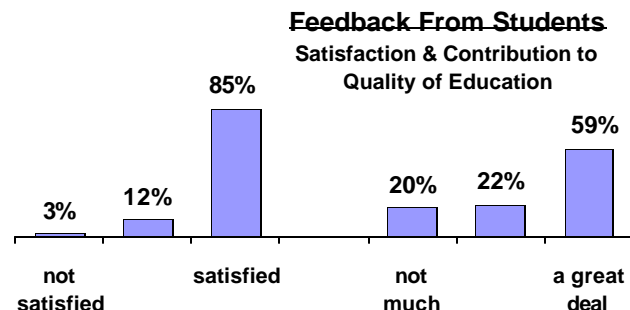


Figure 1. A majority of students were satisfied with the Newspaper Readership Program and felt it contributed to the quality of their overall education

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

The University Park students were asked how the availability of the New York Times, USA Today and Centre Daily Times impacted on their readership of The Daily Collegian. There was a net gain of readership for the campus student newspaper.

Impact on Readership of Student Newspaper

University Park Respondents	n	%
new to campus/no basis of comparison	n = 77	11%
still read student newspaper as often as I did before	n = 419	61%
now read student newspaper more often	n = 129	19%
now read student newspaper less often	n = 60	9%
don't know	n = 3	

A quarter (25%) of UP students read the online version of Daily Collegian.

Sixteen percent of students had faculty who required they read the newspapers on a regular basis; 63% of respondents had faculty who did not require a newspaper but who referred to news articles regularly in class discussions.

Faculty Role Modeling of Newspaper Readership

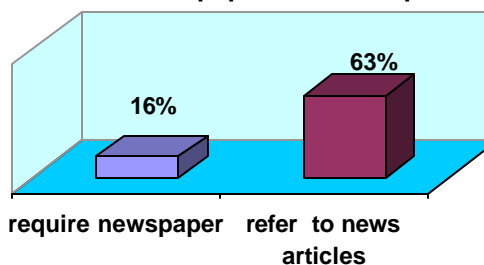


Figure 2. Two-thirds of the students had faculty who referred to news articles in class; an additional 16% of students had faculty who required their students to read newspapers regularly

Of the instructors who required newspaper readership for their classes, 28% specified that it be The New York Times, 18% specified the local community newspaper, 17% USA Today, 13% The Wall Street Journal, 8% the campus student newspaper and 15% allowed students their choice of any newspaper.

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Student Affairs

Students use several media to learn about the news. When asked to specify which was the one preferred source, most chose television (39%) or printed newspapers (34%).

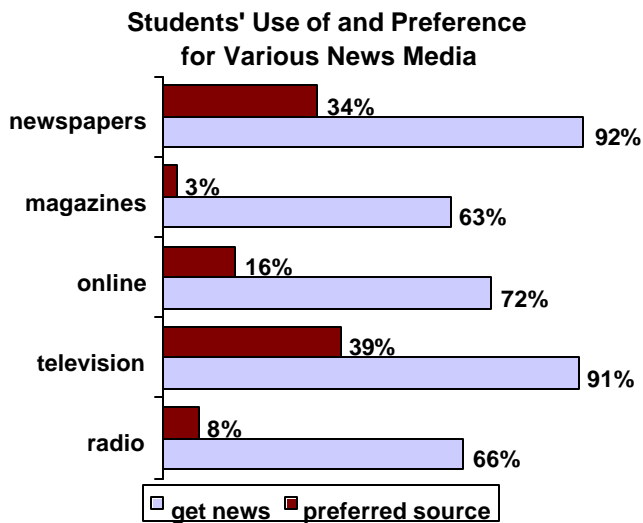


Figure 3. Students' use and preference among multiple media to access news

Two-fifths of the students indicated that they never (11%) or very infrequently (31%) read newspapers prior to coming to Penn State. Currently, 84% pick up one of the newspapers from the readership distribution units at least once a week.

Many students (60%) report that they get newspapers passed along by a friend or found lying around at least once a week and that they themselves (54%) pass along a paper to a roommate, friend or another student at least once a week.

Students were asked about the effectiveness of attempts to publicize the Newspaper Readership Program.

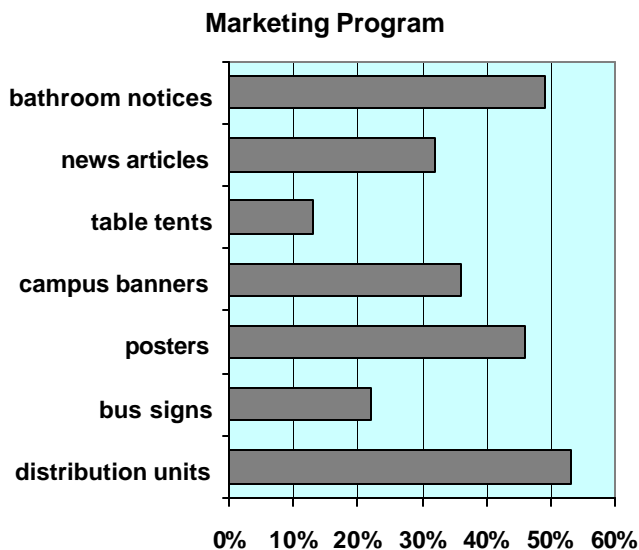


Figure 4. PR signs on the newspaper distribution units, posters, and notices on bathroom stalls were effective in publicizing the readership program

Several survey questions focused on learning outcomes associated with reading a newspaper on a regular basis.

Learning Outcomes of Regular Readership

learning outcome	
ability to discuss current events or issues	86%
having opinions about national or international concerns	84%
feeling informed about local community issues	68%
understanding public policy, law and political positions	67%
understanding ethical dilemmas of contemporary issues	63%
feeling informed about University issues	57%
participating in class discussions	56%
evaluating use of language, statistics, arguments, illustrations	53%
connecting class concepts and real life experiences	52%
gaining insight into historical context of current issues	52%
developing strategies to pursue own goals	42%

Students were asked how many hours a week they typically spent online doing class-related work, surfing the net, using instant messaging, and participating in chat rooms.

Average Number of Hours/Week Spent Online

7.28 hours/week	instant messaging
6.35 hours/week	surfing the net
5.30 hours/week	class-related work
.37 hours/week	chat rooms

Web vs. Phone Survey Modes

The students from the University Park campus were divided randomly into two groups with half asked to respond to the phone version of the survey and half sent email notices and asked to link to the web version.

The response rate was higher for the phone survey (68%) than for the web group (56%). More of those who responded via the web version felt positively about each of the learning outcomes related to newspaper readership* and that the program added to the overall quality of their Penn State education.*

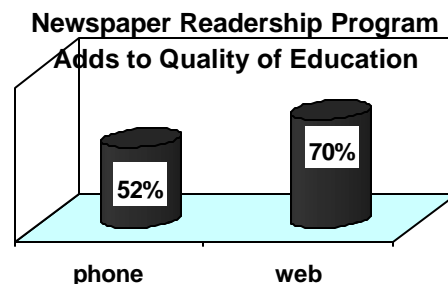


Figure 4. More of those who responded via the web vs. the phone survey felt the Newspaper Readership Program contributed to the quality of their overall Penn State education

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.