# An Alternative Method of Reporting Research: Evaluation by Editors and Reporters

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## Abstract

"Research Review " is a tip sheet carrying short descriptions of previously unreported and ongoing research projects in the College of Agriculture and life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

# Research Briefs

Includes explanations of practical communication, training media methods, and equipment use (1-2 typed pages). Send briefs to Robert Hays or James F. Evans, Office of Agricultural Communications, College of Agriculture, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801.

## An Alternative Method of Reporting Research: Evaluation by Editors and Reporters

"Research Review" is a tip sheet carrying short descriptions of previously unreported and ongoing research projects in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It was designed to inform editors and reporters about research which the college information service could not report in the usual way through the farm and mass media because of a lack of resources.

This study was designed to find if editors and reporters believed the tip sheet did as well as the full-fledged science story on single projects in keeping media informed. It also sought information on patterns of science story use and evaluations of science information sources.

"Research Review," containing five to seven research project descriptions, was mailed once a month for a year to a pilot list of 102 print media editors and reporters and television news directors, both in Wisconsin and out of state. A questionnaire was sent to the 102 at the end of the year; 43 were returned (42.1 percent), yielding 37 usable responses.

Respondents compared "Research Review" and single-subject science reports on the bases of 12 science reporting objectives, evaluated it alone using 12 opposite pair adjective scales, judged the usefulness of

science information sources, and reported their experiences in receiving and using science information.

Findings included the following:

1. "Research Review" resulted in an estimated 58 stories on Wisconsin research that might not have been done without it. Many editors and reporters used the project descriptions "as is," without followup contact with scientists.

2. "Research Review" worked as well as single-subject science reports in achieving science reporting objectives.

3. Editors and reporters judged that "Research Review" and science reports perform best in keeping media updated and providing trustworthy, accurate information and least well in describing research methods and indicating dollar value of research findings.

4. Tip sheets and science reports from research institutions are more highly regarded by these workers than are reports from government agencies and private industry.

5. Media workers said they receive an adequate number of science reports and are able to read most of them.

6. Media workers generally find scientists approachable and not difficult to work with.

7. Farm media workers found "Research Review" (and other science press releases) more successful than non-farm media workers did.

8. In-state media workers gave "Research Review" higher ratings than out-of-state workers did.

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