

Knowledge, Creation, Diffusion and Utilization; Newspaper Research Journal; Who Reads and Why?; Daily Newspaper Non-Readers: Why They Don't Read

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Recommended Citation

Meiller, Larry and Tedrick, William E. (1980) "Knowledge, Creation, Diffusion and Utilization; Newspaper Research Journal; Who Reads and Why?; Daily Newspaper Non-Readers: Why They Don't Read," *Journal of Applied Communications*: Vol. 63: Iss. 3. <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.1823>

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Knowledge, Creation, Diffusion and Utilization; Newspaper Research Journal; Who Reads and Why?; Daily Newspaper Non-Readers: Why They Don't Read

Abstract

Reviews of *Knowledge, Creation, Diffusion and Utilization ; Newspaper Research Journal*; "Who Reads and Why?" by George F. McEvoy and Cynthia S. Vincent; and "Daily Newspaper Non-Readers: Why They Don't Read," by Paula Poindexter

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Reviews

Reviews are prepared by Larry Meiller, John Fett and others in the Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Occasionally, we will be using some of this space to discuss new journals that members might consider examining. In this issue we will discuss two new ones: *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion and Utilization* and *Newspaper Research Journal*. While not similar, both potentially offer useful information for the professional journalist.

Knowledge, Creation, Diffusion and Utilization is the more formal of the two. It is designed for researchers, policy makers and practitioners engaged in knowledge development. The editorial board defines knowledge development as "the process of creation, diffusion and utilization." Since these three subfields in knowledge study have evolved independently, *Knowledge* editors attempt to provide a forum for communicating among individuals in these areas. Each issue will examine the field as a whole and attempt to highlight linkages between creation, diffusion and utilization of knowledge.

In its first issue, published by Sage in September 1979, articles by Fritz Machlup of New York University and Gerald Zaltman of the University of Pittsburgh explore interrelationships between the processes of creation, diffusion and utilization. Machlup concentrates on the use and value of information and posits that use cannot and should not be equated with value. Zaltman examines diffusion and utilization in planned social change.

Dorothy Nelken of Cornell University uses several case examples to illustrate how scientific knowledge relates to progress, accountability and social responsibility. Other authors examine the history of the field, current research and practical problems.

The mission of the *Newspaper Research Journal* is to further communication between academic researchers and news practitioners. The editorial board is composed of journalists and university researchers.

Among the research articles are reports on newspaper reader interest in national vs. local news; the amount of "bad" vs. "good" news in papers and readers' preferences; how reporters evaluate source credibility; leaks to the press; and reader perceptions of newspaper advertisements.

Both the *Newspaper Research Journal* and *Knowledge* look promising and I would recommend ACE members look them over.

Knowledge is published four times annually. The single subscriber rate is \$16.50 and the institutional rate is \$33. Write to: *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*, c/o 275 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212.

The *Newspaper Research Journal* is published at an individual subscription rate of \$12 and an institutional rate of \$16. For more information, write to Fred Griffith, *Newspaper Research Journal*, Journalism Department, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152.

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"Who Reads and Why?" George F. McEvoy and Cynthia S. Vincent. *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 30, No. 1, 1980.

Considering the publicity we have seen about television stealing most of our reading time, this study is full of surprises. In fact it concludes that... "most American are readers, more than half of them of books; reading does not substitute for, but rather goes along with, involvement in other leisure activities."

The rigor and generalization of the data seem to be assured as the study involved personal in-depth interviews with 1,450 strictly randomized respondents to represent the U.S. public aged 16 and over. The data were cross-tabulated with 25 demographic, attitudinal and behavioral variables.

For those of us who toil with the printed page, take heart, the study shows that only 6 percent of our citizens can be rightfully considered as non-readers! In a six-month period, 55 percent read books, as well as periodicals, while 39 percent reported reading only newspapers and/or magazines. Of the 55 percent who read books, 25 percent reported reading at least 25 books in six months.

Heavy book readers were profiled as being young, female, white, well educated and in the high income group. Those who read newspapers and/or magazines and not books were like the "average" American on certain demographic variables; however, men and individuals 50 and over dominated this profile.

The non-reader group was predominately non-white, and 60 percent had not graduated from high school. Citizens over 65 do not read much, as they represented about 25 percent of the non-readers' class, but only 13 percent of the total general population.

Broadcast buffs may not agree, but radio listening and TV viewing habits seem to have very little effect on the reading time reported by the respondents. For example, the total sample averaged 10 hours attending to broadcast media, while book and periodical readers reported 15 hours weekly, newspaper and magazine readers 16 hours weekly and non-readers reported 24 hours. Although the non-readers spent more time with broadcast media, the differences could be explained in terms of age and education as well as motivation and skills, according to the authors.

The primary motivation for reading seems to spring from (a) reading to gain general knowledge and (b) pleasure—reading as a legitimate recreational activity.

It is interesting that book and periodical readers showed a consistent history of reading over time, while newspaper and magazine readers were apparently recent converts as illustrated by the 40 percent vs. 8 percent reporting consistent over-the-year reading behavior.

The study concludes that three factors appear to have regulatory influence over the amount and nature of book reading: (1) the presence of reading skills, (2)

finding reading pleasurable, and (3) integrating reading with other life activities.

They further conclude that the price of books and ready access to reading materials have only comparative importance to reading patterns.

Today's reader is profiled as an active individual for whom reading is an important source of information, and for some, a highly pleasurable pastime. Certainly a long way from the stereotypical image of the book worm uninvolved in life's activities.

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"Daily Newspaper Non-Readers: Why They Don't Read." Paula Poindexter. Journalism Quarterly, winter, 1979, pp. 764-770.

Earlier studies of daily newspaper readers and non-readers found that non-readers typically had low education and low incomes, less community identification, and were either very young (20s) or very old (70s). In addition, they were characterized by less frequent contact with neighbors and friends and less involvement in local organizations.

However, most of those studies did not directly address the question of why people do not read newspapers. Poindexter surveyed 510 non-newspaper reading adults in nine cities about why they did not read.

In the first of two surveys, respondents who indicated they "never" or "seldom" read the paper were asked to explain why. The most common reasons were lack of time, use of another news media, cost, and lack of interest in the content.

These results were used to develop a close-end checklist that incorporated the non-readers' own terminology into the question responses prepared for a second survey.

In this second survey, about 60 percent of the non-readers reported use of television as the primary reason they do not read newspapers. About half of the non-readers also said they got their news from radio. Over one third said they did not have time and about 20 percent said they had no desire to read newspapers.

An examination of the demographic data revealed that in addition to the typical non-reader profile cited earlier, an atypical set of non-readers existed. These people had higher incomes and education and fell in an age group of from 25-65.

These people cited lack of time and dissatisfaction with newspaper content more frequently than typical non-readers. Over three fifths of atypical non-readers said content was important, while only two fifths of the typical non-readers cited content. Surprisingly, education was not related to the content factor. Atypical highly educated non-readers were not more cognizent of newspaper content.

Poindexter's findings show there is not a homogeneous non-reading segment of the population. For those typical non-readers who say they do not have time to read, newspapers are responding with news briefs and comprehensive indices to aid the reader. The content issue is a more difficult problem, since it is hard to adjust content for non-readers (who are in the minority) at the expense of those who do read. Other researchers might attempt to examine and more completely describe the "time" and "content" characteristics associated with newspaper avoidance.

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