

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.

Home and Family News In City Newspapers

What kind of stories appear on home and family living pages of Iowa newspapers? Is the weekly home and family news service from Iowa State University Extension being used? These questions prompted the ISU home economics information staff to take a closer look at stories relating to the home and family appearing in nine of the state's larger papers.

Each of the nine papers was scrutinized over a selected period in April and May, with every article on the home or individual or family living classified by topic, length, and source. Regular columns, special advertising sections, and the like, were not included.

Looking at raw counts, food stories featuring recipes and "how to" information were greatest in number, with 46 observations. Housing followed with 44 observations. Family relations and lifestyles were the subject of 43 articles, while 41 related to individual development.

Horticulture articles made up 14 percent of the total, with half of these devoted to vegetable gardening—no doubt a reflection of the season. ISU Extension contributed a greater percentage (26 percent) of these articles than for any other topic.

Of the total of 473 articles observed, slightly more than 10 percent were written by the ISU communications staff. Wire services supplied about a third of the stories, 27 percent were staff written, and the source was not identified on 21 percent.

The study showed that two-thirds of the articles were 16 column inches or shorter, the median length falling between 5 and 8 inches. Although 17 percent of the articles were 25 inches or longer, most of the longer stories were staff written.

The accompanying tables provide a breakdown of the topics and the placement of ISU stories.

Table 1: Articles and ISU Contributions

Newspaper	Number of articles observed	Written by ISU staff, %
Des Moines Sunday Register	100	16
Davenport Quad-City Times	18	0
Cedar Rapids Gazette	94	7
Sioux City Journal	19	21
Waterloo Courier	24	0
Dubuque Telegraph & Herald	137	1
Fort Dodge Messenger	36	25
Mason City Globe Gazette	22	36
Ottumwa Courier	23	17

Table 2: Topics and ISU Contributions

Topic category	Percent of total	Percent from ISU
Human development	21	8
Family environment	21	13
Food & nutrition	17	13
Horticulture	14	26
Health	10	0
Applied art	8	8
Textiles & clothing	7	6
News	2	11

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