

Research Briefs

Tabloid or Magazine?

The question keeps popping up about university research publications aimed at popular audiences: Tabloid or magazine format?

Cost considerations aside, the readers of *Oregon's Agricultural Progress*, an Oregon State University Agricultural Experiment Station quarterly publication, like to get their research information in magazine form, a readership study suggests.

When asked if they preferred that *Oregon Agricultural Progress* (a magazine) be published in a newspaper tabloid format or a magazine format, 59 percent of respondents picked the magazine format, 29 percent said format made no difference to them, and 13 percent said they preferred a tabloid format.

Support for a magazine format was higher among the 80 percent of all survey respondents who rated *Oregon's Agricultural Progress* a "very important" or "somewhat important" service of state government in Oregon.

The magazine's editor was interested in reader attitudes on format because of the cost savings offered by a tabloid published on newsprint.

Oregon's Agricultural Progress, an 8½- by 11-inch, saddle-stitched publication on coated paper, is produced by OSU's agricultural communications office. The magazine is mailed, without charge, to about 8,000 persons, businesses

and organizations in Oregon and in other states and countries.

The mailing list includes a cross-section of farmers from Oregon's many agricultural commodity areas and a significant number of Oregon residents who live in rural and urban areas and do not work in agriculture-related jobs.

The telephone interview survey was conducted in March 1982, under the supervision of OSU's Survey Research Center, using the winter 1982 issue of *Oregon's Agricultural Progress*. Interviewers talked with 171 individuals taken from a 5 percent random sample of persons and groups in Oregon on the mailing list.

Examples of other information obtained from survey respondents that promises to help the magazine's editor, and experiment station administrators:

—Fifty-four percent felt the magazine should devote all its space to reporting research rather than publishing some information about teaching in agriculture or activities of the Extension Service. The percentage preferring research-only content was 67 percent among respondents employed in agriculture.

—Eighty-six percent said they read more than half the material in an issue.

—Seventy-six percent said they either file copies after reading them or pass them along to someone else. The others said they throw their copies away.

—Surprisingly, 75 percent of respondents from Oregon's population center, the metropolitan Portland area, said the magazine is "very useful" or "somewhat useful" to them in their work. That percentage was higher only among respondents from sparsely populated, farm-oriented Eastern Oregon, where 82 percent rated the magazine useful to them in their work.

Eight-five percent of the respondents were male, most were employed (54 percent in agriculture), and the largest percentage (59 percent) were in the 34-65 age bracket.

Constructive suggestions offered by readers in response to an open-ended comment question in the interview already have resulted in increased attention in the magazine to sheep research conducted by the experiment station. Closer attention to follow-up coverage of research reported earlier also is planned.

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