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**JOURNALISTS' USE OF E-MAIL AND  
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**JOURNALISTS' USE OF E-MAIL AND THE INTERNET FOR  
PRESS RELEASE RETRIEVAL**

**By**

**Amy Lynn Hagerstrom**

**A THESIS**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**Department of Advertising**

**1999**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **JOURNALISTS' USE OF E-MAIL AND THE INTERNET FOR PRESS RELEASE RETRIEVAL**

By

Amy Lynn Hagerstrom

Press releases are an important aspect of a successful public relations campaign. Knowing the protocols of the news room is a helpful part of the PR practitioners job, and one of those issues may be learning what an individual journalist's preference is for receiving press releases and other information. This study examines the use of e-mail and web pages among journalists in the business section of the newspaper to determine whether the young medium is an acceptable method of communicating with the press.

It was found that although a significant number of journalists are using e-mail and web pages for press release retrieval, neither medium is in the top three of a list of media including fax, mail, hand delivery, and courier. Demographic characteristics were examined in the study pertaining to their relationship (or lack of relationship) to use of web pages and e-mail by journalists.

**To McKenzie Elyse and Scott with love**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

Public relations can be defined as the “profitable integration of an organization’s new and continuing relationships with stakeholders including customers by managing all communications contacts with the organization that create and protect the brand and reputation of the organization.” (Caywood, 1997) In addition to consumers, “publics” typically include the stockholders, employees, policy makers, and the media.

The practice of public relations includes the writing and distribution of information, including press releases, to various publics, including journalists. A 1987 study by Wakefield and Cottone revealed that employers rank the writing of press releases 5<sup>th</sup> of 38 knowledge and skill levels required by employers, while practitioners in the same study rated media relations their number one responsibility. A public relations practitioner can view the purpose for writing and disseminating press releases as two-fold. On the one hand, a well-written press release serves as a way for an organization to communicate with journalists and thus to communicate with their other publics. The other function of press releases is to assist the media in accurately reporting facts and information (Caywood, 1997). According to Caywood, “the media’s influence with the general public is particularly strong, since most people rely heavily on the media for their information.” He goes on to say that public relations, due to the media’s need to print information that will sell, has thus become

the practice of managing relationships between organizations and the media (Caywood, 1997).

Traditionally, journalists have preferred one medium over another to receive press releases and materials. In the past this medium has overwhelmingly been the fax machine and traditional mail (Elfenbein, 1993). New and improved technologies, including the Internet, high speed fax machines, and cable television to name a few are rapidly changing the face of public relations and journalism alike.

According to Caywood, the advent of new media has changed the scope of communications practice (Caywood, 1997). The Internet alone represents a deluge of potential new tools for reaching a variety of publics. Public relations practitioners can select from a palate of mechanisms for making information electronically available, including specialty web sites such as the PR Newswire, EurekAlert!, and Profnet, as well as corporate web sites and electronic publications (Editor and Publisher, February 13, 1999).

Although the menu of options for information dissemination seems destined to continue growing at an unprecedented rate, it is necessary for public relation as an industry to begin to understand the potential, as well as the limitations of such media as the Internet.

Industry experts are beginning, however, to recognize alternative vehicles of delivery of press releases, including e-mail and web pages (Editor & Publisher, February 13, 1999). The purpose of this study is to begin to examine other vehicles for information delivery to the press, particularly email and World Wide Web pages. It is important for practitioners to understand the media with whom they work, including basic

preferences such as how they receive their press releases. For journalists, understanding how typical newsrooms are effectively utilizing (or not utilizing) new technologies such as the Internet may be useful in improving their own practices. Educators in the field of public relations may find answers to questions regarding information delivery and new technology useful in discussions about the writing of press releases, possible formatting issues, and teaching their students a basic knowledge of not only the World Wide Web and e-mail, but possible existing and future protocols involved in utilizing these forms of media.

## **Chapter 1**

### **REVIEW OF RECENT STUDIES AND LITERATURE**

The advent of the Internet as a communications medium has chiseled away at the information delivery cycle (Bowman, 1998). A cycle which used to be at least 24 hours has significantly decreased because of the rapid transmission of information via computers not only to the media, but also from the media to consumers via web pages and online publications. Important information travels from computer to computer at the speed of seconds, and the stories are published every minute on Internet wire services (Bowman, 1998).

A 1993 study conducted for *Editor and Publisher* by Dick Elfenbein examined the preferences of editors of the business section of the newspaper for the receipt of press releases. Elfenbein's study indicates that not only does the time that the release reaches the editor play an important role in whether or not it is published, the medium by which it is sent is also important. The media listed in the survey included facsimile, press wire service, PR wire service, U.S. mail, telephone, and hand delivery (Elfenbein, 1993). The results of the 1993 study varied by section, but fax was the number one choice for every section.

Just under half of the respondents to Elfenbein's study, which focused on dailies with a circulation of over 25,000, listed one preference for receiving press releases. 43 percent of the respondents in his survey preferred fax over any of the other listed media, which also included press wire services, PR wire services, US mail, telephone, and hand delivery (Elfenbein, 1993).

More than half of the respondents to the survey listed several media as “preferences” for receiving surveys. Fax was in the preferred methods for these respondents 98 percent of the time, with press wire services and PR newswire ranking second and third at 79 percent and 67 percent, respectively.

Use of Web pages and e-mail for the delivery of information to the press was not examined in Elfenbein’s study. Although later studies on the effectiveness of press releases have alluded to the Internet as a communications tool for PR practitioners (Elfenbein, 1993) the effectiveness of its use has not been studied in-depth. Corporate web sites with a strong public relations emphasis are springing up across the World Wide Web, and journalists are increasingly using the Internet as a tool for research and communications with hard to reach sources (Dern, 1997). Public relations professionals are also utilizing the convenience of e-mail to send press releases, often referring journalists to client web sites for additional product and company information (*Forbes*, October 6, 1997).

Steven R. Thomsen, who is an assistant professor of public relations at Washington State University, conducted research on public relations practitioners’ use of one aspect of the Internet, PRForum. PRForum is a newsgroup on the Internet established for and used primarily by persons involved in public relations (Thomsen, 1996). Although his study is from several years ago (1996) and focusing on a very specific use of the Internet, one particular finding in his study is interesting pertaining to practitioners’ use of the service primarily for research questions. 46.6% of the posts during the course of the study were questions relevant to the Internet. This could imply two things: a learning process that PR practitioners and other



professionals are encountering because of the newness of the medium, and applying the innovation adoption curve discussed in the last section of this research, a growing interest in the web as a research tool with the proliferation of the technology into the mainstream consumer population.

Thomsen's research also pointed out the growth of the Internet among individuals, and particularly among persons running home-based personal businesses (Thomsen, 1996). He stated that in 1996 the Internet was used by 20 million to 40 million, and that number was expected to increase by 200 million by 1999. He also noted that commercial domains are the fastest growing segment of the Internet, with new business domains being registered at a rate of 8,000 per month (Thomsen, 1996). This has practical application in the study of use of the Internet and e-mail by journalists due to the fact that many business sites are utilizing at least a portion of their resources, both economic and in terms of web space, to put up information intended specifically for use by the media.

Current research suggests various ways that businesses are utilizing the WWW for public relations purposes, including client recruitment, client services and training, issues research, and others (Bobbitt, 1998). Some studies conclude that press releases are not effective on the WWW (Bobbitt, 1998), while others find that if they are properly placed, they will be well-utilized by the targeted media (Marken, 1997). According to a recent article in *Campaigns and Elections*, one criticism journalists have of public relations practitioners is the tendency to send press releases more than once utilizing a variety of media (for example: once by fax, once by e-mail, and once by "snail" mail). Journalists interviewed for the same article cited the importance of

developing knowledge of journalists with whom practitioners have regular contact, including knowing their preference for receiving press releases and other information.

A study conducted by Columbia University Associate Professor of Professional Practice Steven Ross and public relations practitioner Don Middleberg from 1995 to 1997 asserted that journalists were beginning to favor electronic (such as e-mail and internet) transmissions of data versus other more traditional methods. According to their findings, 12 percent of journalists found it useful if web sites contain press releases. The information journalists most frequently listed as useful on web pages were photos (19% of respondents) and contact information (17%).

The study by Middleberg and Ross actually focused primarily on data transmission, and their findings showed that with improvements in recent years in technology reporters were more comfortable receiving copy and artwork from inside and outside of their publication on media such as CD-Rom. They also encapsulated how their survey sample used the Internet, and those uses included research, e-mail, and press release retrieval, among others (Middleberg and Ross, 1997). Their results indicated that in 1997 36 percent of journalists reported using web pages for news releases, and 64 percent indicated that they were using e-mail.

An important finding in the Middleberg and Ross study was an increase in the number of journalists from 1995 to 1996 using both the Internet and e-mail, and specifically using the WWW for press release retrieval. Other industry analysts agree that the popularity of the web among PR practitioners and reporters alike is growing exponentially, even asserting that journalists “swear by the web as the newest information transmission platform (Stone, 1999).”

Theories regarding the diffusion of innovations may explain possible increases in use of the World Wide Web and e-mail by journalists in recent years. As both technologies become increasingly mainstream across various demographics, businesses and newspapers may be more willing to invest resources into increases utilization of the resource. According to Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard, products diffuse more rapidly when a standardization of technology exists (1994). As the Internet has grown and become more user-oriented, there have been changes standardizing certain information and applications, including changes in software and format of information.

There is a variety of theoretical models that may be applied to the adoption of innovations, including the Internet. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical diffusion of innovation curve according to Everett M. Rogers, originator of Diffusion of Innovation theory in the early 1960s.

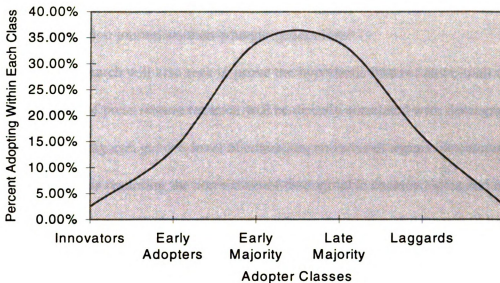


Figure 1. Diffusion of Innovation Curve

It is possible from existing research about and references regarding the e-mail and Internet use among journalists, as well as existing theories about the diffusion of innovations to form several hypotheses to examine. One question remaining to be answered is whether or not mainstream journalists are using the Internet regularly enough to consider it an effective medium for communicating important information, or if the Internet and e-mail should be used only in limited circumstances.

A hypothesis for the purposes of framing the following research is that although a significant number of journalists will list e-mail among their preferred media for press release retrieval, it will not rank as high as the more traditional methods of faxing, mail, and hand delivery. The reasons for this hypothesis are two-fold; one being the aforementioned diffusion of innovation theory and the perceived “newness” of the medium relative to more traditional forms of information transfer,

and the second being due to the second hypothesis for this research, that younger journalists are more likely to use both media and there are currently more “baby-boomer” generation journalists than younger generations.

This research will also seek to prove the hypothesis Internet and e-mail use for the purpose of press release retrieval will be directly correlated with demographic variables including age, gender, level of education, and overall regard for computer use. A hypothesis regarding the correlation of demographic characteristics and use of World Wide Web pages and e-mail for press release retrieval is that there will be significant relationships existing among these variables, and that specifically younger journalists will tend to use the technologies in question with greater frequency than older journalists, that journalists possessing higher levels of education will be more likely to use them, and that larger newspapers will be more likely to encourage the use of web pages and e-mail by reporters due to the fact that they have an assumed higher availability of resources to invest in new technology.

## **Chapter 2**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of understanding the survey sample, it is necessary to include a brief description of the research methodology used to collect data for statistical analysis.

A survey was administered to randomly selected U.S. newspapers. Using "Marketer's Guide to Media 1997-98," every 15<sup>th</sup> newspaper in the newspaper questionnaire was selected to receive a survey, and letters were addressed to the editor of the business section for distribution to an appropriate member of their staff for completion. (See Appendices A and B)

The survey was mailed to participants with a stamped envelope for return. The survey design was a bi-fold questionnaire consisting of eleven multiple choice questions. An introductory letter was included as part of the survey. The surveys were sent to the editor of the business desk for distribution to journalists in their section.

200 surveys were mailed with a goal of at least 60 completed surveys (30%). The actual response rate for the survey was 76, or 38%. A request for a response within three weeks of receipt was included in the survey, and a follow-up postcard was mailed 10 days after the initial mailing in an attempt to increase the number of responses.

The survey included questions regarding the reporters use of various forms of communication media to receive media relations materials. Preferences were based on an ordinal measurement system, such as:

*Based on the list of communications media below, please place a 1 next to the means you most prefer for receiving press releases, a 2 next to the one you prefer second, and so on.*

<i>Fax</i>	_____
<i>US mail</i>	_____
<i>Hand delivery</i>	_____
<i>E-mail</i>	_____
<i>Web sites</i>	_____

The questions focused on the use of e-mail and the internet, as well as specific demographic information in an attempt to draw correlations between factors such as age, education, gender, and the size of the newspaper organization to use of and comfort with computers and technologies such as the WWW.

The returned surveys were numbered and entered into SPSS for analysis.

### **Fortune 100 Accessibility Analysis**

A small component of this study was to determine whether or not companies are actually making information available to the press via their web page. An analysis of the accessibility of press materials such as press releases, speeches, and major announcements was conducted by counting the number of “clicks” necessary to reach press portions of the web sites of the top 100 of the Fortune 500. Material included on the companies’ web sites was also considered. A spreadsheet of the number of

clicks was established for the purpose of finding a mean, as well as a high and a low (see Appendix C).

### **Data Analysis**

The surveys were compiled in an SPSS file and variables were analyzed both as independent and dependent. Statistical analyses included frequencies and descriptives for general summary and illustrative measures, as well as regression analysis, bivariate correlation, and cross-tabulations for determining significant relationships among variables.

A general summary of the demographics of the population surveyed showed that a vast majority (73%) had at least a bachelor's degree. Over three quarters of the survey respondents were between the ages of 26 and 55, and 55% of the surveys were completed by males. Length of time as a reporter generally ranged anywhere from five to 25 years. 90% of the journalists worked for newspapers having a circulation of less than 100,000, and 100% worked for newspapers with a local versus national scope.



### Chapter 3

#### USE OF E-MAIL FOR PRESS RELEASE RETRIEVAL

Is it true that journalists are beginning to prefer e-mail to more traditional methods of receiving press releases? According to this research e-mail is still not among preferred methods of press release retrieval. The chart below illustrates that among the journalists surveyed, e-mail was not in the top three preferred methods of press release retrieval for one-third of the respondents, and was actually in the bottom third for over one-third. According to the survey results, only 30 percent of respondents ranked e-mail in their top three choices for receiving press releases. Table 1 is a break down of the means of the responses to the question requesting a ranking of each of eight methods of press release retrieval.

---

**Table 1. Means of Rank Order Preferences By Survey Respondents**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>FAX</b>	72	1	5	1.78
<b>MAIL</b>	72	1	8	2.94
<b>HAND</b>	71	1	8	3.68
<b>EMAIL</b>	72	1	7	4.17
<b>FEDEX</b>	69	2	7	4.61
<b>PHONE</b>	69	1	8	5.41
<b>WEBPAGE</b>	69	1	8	5.42
<b>OTHER</b>	9	1	8	6.44

---

According to Table 1, the most preferred method of press release retrieval was fax, and mail was second with a mean of 2.94. On average e-mail was ranked fourth while web pages ranked second-to-last.

75 percent of journalists surveyed reported having e-mail addresses at work, but a few of the respondents indicated that the address is a general address for the newspaper, compared to individual user-boxes for each reporter. The absence of a question on this survey dedicated to addressing that specific issue is a weakness, because the absence of individual user boxes would seemingly greatly reduce the usefulness of the medium.

According to this research, a high percentage of newspapers do not publish their e-mail addresses, although at least one e-mail address is available. Almost half of those journalists reporting working for a newspaper with at least one e-mail address also reported that the newspaper did not publish the address. Interestingly, a very small percentage of journalists did not know if they had an e-mail address. Although almost one-third of newspapers do publish their e-mail addresses, Figure 2 illustrates that an extremely small percentage of journalists actually receive any releases via that medium.

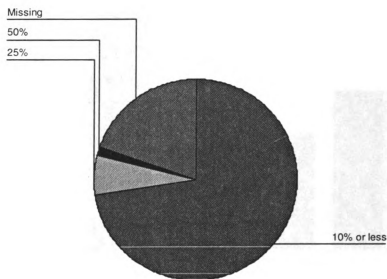


Figure 2. Percent of Press Releases Received Via E-Mail

The results of the survey also illustrated that currently a very small percentage of press releases are arriving in news rooms via e-mail. 72.9% of journalists responding to the survey receive fewer than 10% of their press releases via e-mail.

For practitioners, another important discovery is the frequency with which journalists check their e-mail throughout the course of the day. As illustrated by Figure 3, a majority of the respondents to this survey checked their e-mail one time or less daily.

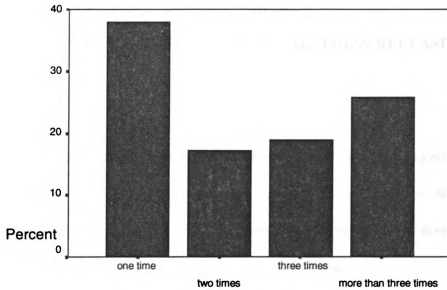


Figure 3. Frequency of Checking E-mail Throughout Day

Analyses were run on the data to determine whether or not there were significant relationships between the circulation of the newspaper or the type of newspaper (daily, weekly, etc...) and the availability of access to e-mail for its reporters. No significant relationships were determined using Pearson's and Spearman's significance measures.

## **Chapter 4**

### **JOURNALISTS' USE OF WEB PAGES FOR PRESS RELEASE RETRIEVAL**

The second hypothesis for this research was that although journalists may be using the WWW, it is not generally for press release retrieval. Over 80% of the survey sample have at least some familiarity with using the World Wide Web, and over 90% of newspapers provide access for their reporters to the web.

As with e-mail, web pages did not fall in the top three preferences of journalists' for press retrieval media. In fact, barely 15 percent of survey respondents ranked web pages in the top three, while close to 80 percent ranked it at numbers five, six, and seven out of a possible eight options.

However, just over half of the survey respondents use the Internet for press release retrieval, while over one-third of journalists with access to and familiarity with the web are still not using it as a source of press release retrieval.

For the purpose of this section of the research I would like to specifically look at the respondents' answers to the question regarding their typical daily use of computers, as well as their overall familiarity with the WWW. Figure 4 illustrates the fact that over 70% of the surveys returned indicated that computers were only used to complete their jobs, while under 20% had a strong liking of computers. It is also important to note that 100% of the respondents fell within the first two categories, which were 1) love computers and is very skilled, and 2) uses computers when

necessary, is proficient. None of the respondents were actually uncomfortable with or unfamiliar with computers.

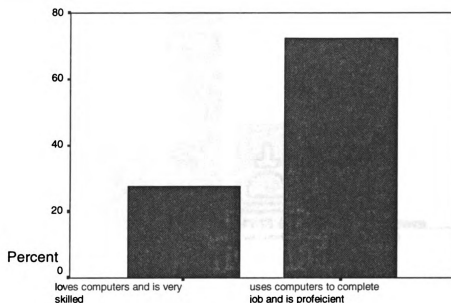


Figure 4. Typical Level of Computer Proficiency

Over 70% of the survey respondents were over the age of 36, or in the “baby boom” generation.

Based on the survey results, it is possible to hypothesize that although journalists are using the WWW to retrieve press releases, it is likely that a relationship exists between the average journalists’ level of enthusiasm over computer technology and their likelihood to use a computer-based medium such as the WWW for press release retrieval when other, more familiar media still exist.

Demographically, users of the WWW still tend to be overwhelmingly young (American Demography, 1998).

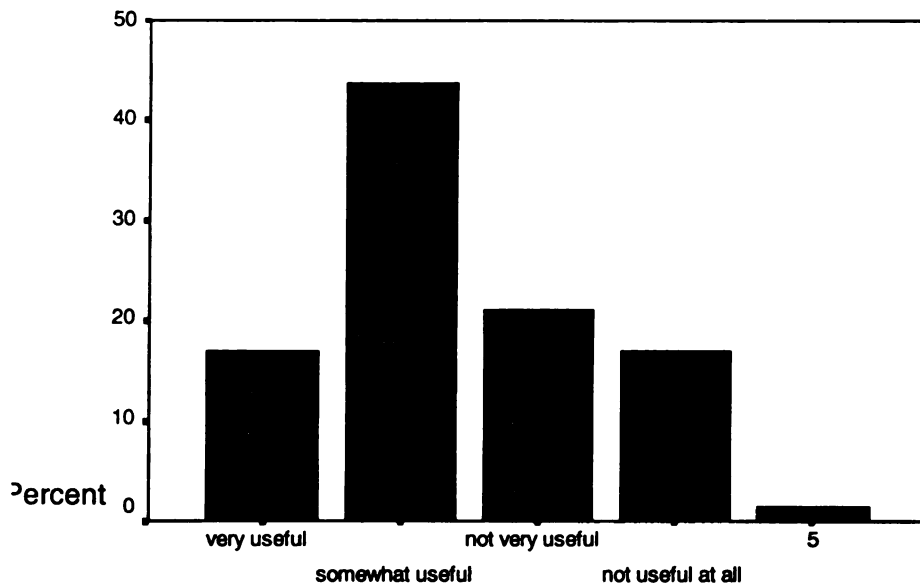


Figure 5. Usefulness of Web Pages For Press Release Retrieval

According to the responses to the survey, a majority of journalists did find web pages very useful to somewhat useful for the purpose of retrieving press releases (Figure 5). However, almost 60% of the respondents use web pages once in a while for that purpose. It is also important to note that over 90% of the journalists surveyed indicated that the newspaper for which they work is providing them with access to the World Wide Web.

The accessibility analysis on the Fortune 100 companies was simply to determine the number of “clicks”<sup>1</sup> the media would need to reach relevant

<sup>1</sup> Click refers to the number of links to other areas of the page are necessary to access before reaching the desired press information

information from a corporate “splash”<sup>2</sup> page. It only took an average of 1.5 clicks to reach press information on the company sites, although seven of the financial powerhouses either had no press links or the information was impossible to find. Although no concrete conclusions can be drawn, it could safely be assumed that companies are making press information easily available due to a supposed increase in web site traffic by the media. The information contained on the sites was consistently a combination of press releases, corporate spokesperson contact numbers, speeches, new product announcements, and information on shares.

A small number of the respondents to the survey wrote in that although they are not using the Internet for press release retrieval, it is a useful source of information when doing company research and information searches for stories. Further research into this aspect of web page use could provide insights for PR practitioners when considering web page design. Although a majority of journalists are not using web pages for press release retrieval, the chart on the previous page illustrates that a majority of reporters find the media useful for just that purpose.

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<sup>2</sup>A splash page is the first set of information reached when a corporate domain is accessed by a browser



## **Chapter 5**

### **WEB PAGE AND E-MAIL USE RELATIONSHIPS TO DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

Analyses were run to determine possible significant correlation between use of e-mail and the World Wide Web and requested demographic information including age, gender, and current level of education. The premise was that there would be significant relationships such as increased use of the WWW with higher levels of education. Bivariate correlation analyses were run using the independent variable press release retrieval via the WWW with age, gender, and education, respectively, yielded no significance, thus disproving the premise. However, an analysis of the variables “familiarity with the WWW” and “age” did yield a significant correlation.\* It is interesting to note that age did not appear to impact familiarity with use of e-mail.

It is important to note that when cross tabulating certain demographic variables with the research variables involving web, e-mail, and computer use certain patterns emerge. A look at the variables “familiarity with e-mail” and “age” shows that the two age groups who are the most familiar with e-mail (also the two largest age groups responding) are 26 - 35 and 36 - 45. Again, it should be noted that the 18 - 25 age group was the second smallest group responding.

Table 1 is an illustration of the breakdown of the age groups within the context of the “familiarity with e-mail” variable. Two results are interesting to note: In the age group 18 - 25, a majority of respondents considered themselves “very

---

familiar” with e-mail. In the age group 46 - 55, most of the respondents considered themselves somewhat familiar with the medium. As the population continues to age and the baby boom generation retires, persons who are only somewhat familiar with e-mail will likely be replaced by persons with higher levels of understanding of the medium.

---

**Table 2. Cross Tabulation of Age and Familiarity with E-Mail**

	<b>18-44</b>	<b>45+</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Very and somewhat familiar with e-mail</b>	5	39	44
<b>Limited to no familiarity with e-mail</b>	3	7	10
<b>Total</b>	8	46	54

\*Pearson’s Chi-Square calculated at 2.24

---

When cross-tabulating the variables “gender” with “familiarity with e-mail, males outnumber females by over 1/3 in overall familiarity with e-mail. Over twice as many male respondents as female stated that they “love computers and are very skilled users.” Comparing the frequencies of the variables “familiarity with e-mail” and “daily computer use” with the variable “level of education” did not yield any significant relationships or observable patterns.

Again, when the variable “age” was examined with the variable “familiarity with the WWW” it can be seen that as the respondents got older, their familiarity with the medium increased. (see Table 2)

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\* P<.05, Bivariate correlation was found significant at .174 using Pearson’s 1-tailed measure

---

**Table 3. Cross Tabulation of Age and Familiarity with the WWW**

	<b>18-44</b>	<b>45+</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Very and somewhat familiar</b>	8	40	48
<b>Limited to no familiarity</b>	1	6	7
<b>Total</b>	9	46	55

\*Pearson's Chi-Square calculated at .025

---

It is also interesting to note that again males claim to have the highest level of familiarity with the WWW. Again, level of education and length of time as a reporter did not seem to produce any patterns in perceived knowledge of the WWW.

It should be stated that no significant relationship or pattern exists among between the variable "newspaper circulation size" and "provides e-mail address at work, future studies could further break down the newspaper size categories. A large majority of journalists responding to this survey worked for papers with a circulation of under 100,000, but the survey failed to further breakdown or ask for specification regarding circulation sizes.

## **Chapter 6**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Again, it is important to note that although many of the newspapers involved in this survey publish e-mail addresses, a majority do not. It is also important to emphasize the extremely low percentage of press releases received via e-mail. One theory to explain both of these outcomes to frame e-mail within the context of still being a relatively new medium, or product, for the purposes of applying the theory of adopter classes (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard, 1994).

Figure 1 in Chapter 1 illustrates the standard adoption curve for new products, or innovations, by the various consumer groups. A possible explanation for the low number of press releases retrieved could be that e-mail is still in the innovator to early adoption portion of the above bell-shaped curve. According to a typical consumer adoption curve, 16% of adopters at the beginning of a product's lifecycle are considered innovators or early adopters. Some typical characteristics of these groups are higher levels of income, education, literacy, etc. (Engel, Blackwell, Miniard, 1994). While the adoption curve is generally applied to consumer-based studies, approaching use of e-mail among businesses and journalists from this perspective could serve as a possible explanation of number of press releases received via e-mail.

Over 80% of the newspapers surveyed had a circulation of less than 100,000, which is typical of a majority of US daily newspapers (Marketers Guide to US Newspapers, 1998). One possible explanation for each of the two variables in question, publication of e-mail addresses and percentage of press releases received via e-mail, could be directly related to the size of the newspaper and resources available. According to the adoption curve, innovators and early adopters tend to have more financial resources than the majority of the population.

Applying the attributes of innovation adoption classes to e-mail use among professionals, both journalists and others, could explain each variable. Indications on returned surveys were that although newspapers have e-mail addresses, they are not individual, easily accessible addresses. This could be a product of the size of the newspaper and its revenue stream. Assuming that many of the companies sending press releases to small newspapers are likewise small to medium sized, lack of resources could have an impact on the company's likelihood to possess e-mail for use by persons conducting press relations activities.

Although press release retrieval through newer media such as e-mail and web pages is still not as mainstream among journalists as more traditional methods such as fax machines and US mail, the data in this survey shows a gap that is small enough to suppose that it may become more popular in the years to come. Experts in public relations are recommending new ways of formatting press releases to take into consideration the availability of more in-depth information via a variety of sources on the web, including not only corporate web sites but also specialized information services such as PRNewswire, EurekaAlert!, URLWire, and others.

The fact that the internet and e-mail use do not appear to be impacted by any demographic considerations such as age, education level, or by newspaper characteristics such as circulation size, etc. perhaps indicates that the medium is not in the top three preferences for reasons other than the youth of the medium and the typical innovator to laggard adoption curve. At this time it appears that more traditional media offer attributes more desirable to journalists than e-mail, such as possibly reliability or ease of use.

As previously mentioned, some respondents to this survey indicated that although they had access to an e-mail account, their newspaper had not set up individual accounts for each journalist, therefore making the medium more difficult to use than fax and traditional mail. A viable conclusion for practitioners is that journalists with access to individual e-mail accounts as opposed to one account for the publication would find press release retrieval via e-mail more convenient.

## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF NEWSPAPERS SELECTED USING RANDOM SAMPLING

Company	Address	City	State	Zip
Martinsville Bulletin	PO Box 3711	Martinsville	VA	24112
The Ithaca Journal	123-127 W. State Rd.	Ithaca	NY	14850
Kent-Raveanna Record-Courier	PO Box 1201	Raveanna	OH	44266
New Castle News	PO Box 60	New Castle	PA	16103
Hendersonville Times-News	PO Box 490	Henersonville	NC	28793
Las Cruces Sun-News	PO Box 1749	Las Cruces	NM	88004
Goldsboro News-Argus	PO Box 10629	Goldsboro	NC	27532
Visalia Times-Delta	PO Box 31	Visalia	CA	93279
Wooster Daily Record	PO Box 918	Wooster	OH	44691
Fort Dodge Messenger	PO Box 659	Fort Dodge	IA	50501
Carroll County Times	PO Box 346	Westminster	MD	21158
The Times & Democrat	PO Drawer 1766	Orangeburg	SC	29116
Palladeum-Item	PO Box 308	Richmond	IN	47375
The Reporter	PO Box 630	Fon Du Lac	WI	54936
The News Tribune	PO Box 11000	Tacoma	WA	98411-0008
Independent Tribune	924 Cloverleaf Plaza	Kannapolis	NC	28083
Sun Chronicle	PO Box 600	Attelboro	MA	02703
Hilton Head Island Packet	PO Box 5727	Hilton Head	SC	29938
Santa Fe New Mexican	PO Box 2048	Santa Fe	NM	87504
The Tribune	PO Box 69	Fort Pierce	FL	34594
Centre Daily Times	PO Box 89	State College	PA	16804
Niagra Gazette	PO Box 549	Niagra Falls	NY	14302-0549
Battle Creek Enquirer	155 W. Van Buren St.	Battle Creek	MI	49017
The Record	501 Broadway	Troy	NY	12180-3381
The Elkhart Truth	PO Box 487	Elkhart	IN	46515
Wenatchee World	PO Box 1511	Wenatchee	WA	98807
Record Journal	11 Crown St.	Meriden	CT	06450-5788
Telegraph Herald	PO Box 688	Dubuque	IA	52004-0688
The Herald	PO Box 11707	Rock Hill	SC	29731
Pottsville Republican & Evening Herald	PO Box 209	Pottsville	PA	17901
Johnson City Press	PO Box 1717	Johnson City	TN	37605-1717
Stuart News	PO Box 9009	Stuart	FL	34995
The Daily Herald	PO Box 717	Provo	UT	84603-0171
Herald-Palladeum	PO Box 128	St. Joseph	MI	49085
Journal Times	212 Fourth St.	Racine	WI	53403
Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice	75 N. Washington St.	Wilkes-Barre	PA	18711
Observer-Reporter, Washinton County	122 S. Main St.	Washington	PA	15301
Bay City Times	311 Fifth St.	Bay City	MI	48708
San Mateo County Times	PO Box 5400	San Mateo	CA	94402
Lafayette Advertiser	PO Box 3268	Lafayette	LA	70502
The Jackson Sun	PO Box 1059	Jackson	TN	38302
Naples Daily News	1075 Central Ave.	Naples	FL	34102
The Star Press	PO Box 2408	Muncie	IN	47307

The Kentucky Post	PO Box 2678	Covington	KY	41012-2678
The Bristol Herald-Courier	PO Box 609	Bristol	VA	24203
The Sun News	PO Box 406	Myrtle Beach	SC	29578
Kingsport Times-News	PO Box 479	Kingsport	TN	37662
The Tribune Democrat	PO Box 340	Johnstown	PA	15907-0340
Journal News	PO Box 298	Hamilton	OH	45012
The Pantagraph	PO Box 2907	Bloomington	IL	61702
Pueblo Chieftan	PO Box 4040	Pueblo	CO	81003-4040
Burlington Free Press	PO Box 10	Burlington	VT	05402
The Post Crescent	PO Box 59	Appleton	WI	54912
Pensecola News-Journal	PO Box 12710	Pensecola	FL	32574
Herald-Journal	PO Drawer 1657	Spartanburg	SC	29304-1657
The Repository	PO Box 9901	Canton	OH	44711
The Springfield News-Leader	PO Box 798	Springfield	MO	65801
Union Leader	PO Box 9555	Manchester	NH	03108
Cedar Rapids Gazette	PO Box 511	Cedar Rapids	IA	52406
Scranton Times	PO Box 3311	Scranton	PA	18505
Portland Press Herald	390 Congress St.	Portland	ME	04101
The Times	PO Box 30222	Shreveport	LA	71130-0222
The News-Press	PO Box 10	Fort Myers	FL	33902
The Modesto Bee	PO Box 5256	Modesto	CA	95352
York Daily Record	PO Box 15122	York	PA	17405
El Paso Times	PO Box 20	El Paso	TX	79999
Greensburg Daily News	PO Box 106	Greensburg	IN	47240
Wichita Eagle	PO Box 820	Wichita	KS	67201-0820
The Advocate	PO Box 588	Baton Rouge	LA	70821-0588
Patriot-News	PO Box 2265	Harrisburg	PA	17105
Times Union	PO Box 15000	Albany	NY	12212
The Mobile Register	PO Box 2488	Mobile	AL	36602
The Gazette	PO Box 1779	Colorado Springs	CO	80901
The Clarion Ledger	PO Box 40	Jackson	MS	39205
The Capital Times	PO Box 8060	Madison	WI	53708
Knoxville News-Sentinel	PO Box 59038	Knoxville	TN	37950
Washington Evening Journal	PO Box 471	Washington	IA	52353
The Daily Herald	PO Box 233	McDonough	GA	30253
News & Observer	PO Box 191	Raleigh	NC	27602
The Fresno Bee	1626 E. St.	Fresno	CA	93786
Tulsa World	PO Box 1770	Tulsa	OK	74102
Birmingham Post-Herald	PO Box 2553	Birmingham	AL	35202
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	PO Box 2221	Little Rock	AR	72203
The Commercial Appeal	PO Box 364	Memphis	TN	38101
Rochester Democrat & Chronicle	55 Exchange Blvd.	Rochester	NY	14614
Daily Oklahoman	PO Box 25125	Oklahoma City	OK	73125
San Antonio Express News	PO Box 2171	San Antonio	TX	78297
The Oakland Tribune	PO Box 28884	Oakland	CA	94604
Sun-Sentinel	200 E. Las Olas Blvd.	Ft. Lauderdale	FL	33301-2293
The Tampa Tribune	PO Box 191	Tampa	FL	33601-0191
Colmbus Dispatch	34 S. Third St.	Columbus	OH	43215
Boston Herald	PO box 2096	Boston	MA	02106-2096
Milwaukee Joural Sentinel	PO Box 371	Milwaukee	WI	53201
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	900 N. Tucker Blvd.	St. Louis	MO	63101
Miami Herald	One Herald Plz.	Miami	FL	33132-1693



Seattle Post-Intelligencer	PO Box 1909	Seattle	WA	98111-1909
New York Post	1211 Ave. of the Americas	New York	NY	10036-8790
Chicago Sun-Times	401 N. Wabash Ave.	Chicago	IL	60611
The New York Daily News	450 W. 33 <sup>rd</sup> St.	New York	NY	10001
The New York Times	229 W. 43 <sup>rd</sup> St.	New York	NY	10036
The Washington Post	1150 15 <sup>th</sup> St., N.W.	Washington	DC	20071
The Cape Coral Daily Breeze	PO Box 151306	Cape Coral	FL	33915-1305
Lebanon Daily Record	PO Box 192	Lebanon	MO	65536
The Southwest Times	PO Box 391	Pulaski	VA	24301
Punxsutawney Spirit	PO Box 444	Punxsutawney	PA	15767
Ironton Tribune	2903 S. Fifth St.	Ironton	OH	45638
Newton Daily News	PO Box 967	Newton IA	50208	
Brookhaven Daily Leader	PO Box 551	Brookhaven	MS	39601
State Gazette	PO Box 808	Dyersburg	TN	38025
Newton Kansan	PO Box 268	Newton IA	KS	67114
Kerrville Daily Times	PO Box 1428	Kerrville	TX	78029
Mt. Airy News	PO Box 808	Mt. Airy	NC	27030-0808
Piqua Daily Call	PO Box 921	Piqua	OH	45356
Madera Tribune	PO Box 269	Madera	CA	93639
News Virginian	PO Box 1027	Waynesboro	VA	22980
Advertiser-Tribune	PO Box 778	Tiffin	OH	44883
News Messenger	PO Box 730	Marshall	TX	75671
Oneida Daily Dispatch	PO Box 120	Oneida	NY	13421
Thomasville Times-Enterprise	PO Box 650	Thomasville	GA	31799
Cullman Times	300 Fourth Ave., E.	Cullman	AL	35055
Logan Banner	PO Box 720	Logan	WV	25601
West Hawaii Today	PO Box 789	Kailua Kona	HI	96745-0789
Columbus Telegram	PO Box 648	Columbus	NE	68602
Courier-Express	PO Box 407	Du Bois	PA	15801-0407
Daily News	PO Box 777	Palatka	FL	32178
The Oakridger	PO Box 3446	Oak Ridge	TN	37831
Bryan Times	PO Box 471	Bryan	OH	43506
Eagle-Herald	PO Box 77	Marinette	WI	54143
The News Herald	PO Box 1149	Morganton	NC	28680-0280
Henderson Gleaner	PO Box 4	Henderson	KY	42420
Hammond Daily Star	PO Box 1149	Hammond	LA	70404
News-Capital & Democrat	500 S. Second St.	McAlester	OK	74501
Journal Tribune	PO Box 627	Biddeford	ME	4005
McComb Enterprise-Journal	PO Box 910	McComb	MS	39648
The Caledonian-Record	PO Box 8	St. Johnsbury	VT	05819
Middletown Press	2 Main St.	Middletown	CT	06457
Kentucky New Era	PO Box 729	Hopkinsville	KY	42241
News-Item	PO Box 587	Shamokin	PA	17872
The Hanford Sentinel	PO Box 9	Hanford	CA	93232
Sentinel-Tribune	PO Box 88	Bowling Green	OH	43402
Effingham Daily News	PO Box 370	Effingham	IL	62401
Morning Journal	PO Box 249	Lisbon	OH	44432
Roswell Daily Record	PO Box 1897	Roswell	NM	88202-1897
Vicksburg Post	Po Box 821668	Vicksburg	MS	39182-0008
Rocky Mountain Telegram	PO Box 1080	Rocky Mountain	NC	27802-1080
Times News	PO Box 239	Leighton	PA	18235-0239
Iowa City Press-Citizen	PO Box 2480	Iowa City	IA	52244
Murfreesboro Daily New	PO Box 68	Murfreesboro	TN	37133

Journal				
Batavia Daily News	PO Box 870	Batavia	NY	14020
Beloit Daily News	149 State St.	Beloit	WI	53511
Killeen Daily Herald	PO Box 1300	Killeen	TX	76540
Indiana Gazette	PO Box 10	Indiana	PA	15701
Union -Sun & Journal	PO Box 503	Lockport	NY	14095
The Sentinel-Record	PO Box 580	Hot Springs	AR	71902
The Maui News	PO Box 550	Wailuku	HI	96739
The Times	23 Exchange St.	Pawtucket	RI	02860
The Dominion Post	1251 Earl Core Rd.	Morgantown	WV	26505-6298
Oelwein Daily Register	PO Box 511	Oelwein	IA	50662
Princeton Daily Clarion	100 N. Gibson St.	Princeton	IN	47670
Hopewell News	PO Box 481	Hopewell	VA	23860
Green Bay News-Chronicle	PO Box 2467	Green Bay	WI	54306-2467
News-Courier	410 W. Green St.	Athens	AL	35611
Statesboro Herald	PO Box 888	Statesboro	GA	30458
Alamagordo Daily News	PO Box 870	Alamagordo	NM	88311
Virginian Review	PO Box 271	Covington	VA	24426-0271
Gettysburg Times	PO Box 3669	Gettysburg	PA	17325
The Tribune	PO Box 447	Semour	IN	47274
Lake City Reporter	PO Box 1709	Lake City	FL	32056
Benton Courier	PO Box 207	Benton	AZ	72015
Great Bend Tribune	PO Box 228	Great Bend	KS	67530
Richmond Register	PO Box 9901	Richmond	KY	40476
West Plains Daily Quill	PO Box 110	West Plains	MO	65775-0110
Muskatine Journal	PO Box 809	Muskatine	IA	52761
Grand Haven Tgribune	101 N. Third St.	Grand Haven	MI	49417
Express	PO Box 208	Lock Haven	PA	17745-6791
Xenia Daily Gazette	PO Box 400	Xenia	OH	45385
Log Cabin Democrat	PO Box 969	Conway	AR	72033-0969
State Journal	PO Box 1418	Frankfort	KY	40602
Bedford Gazette	PO Box 671	Bedford	PA	15522
Ponca City News	PO Box 191	Ponca City	OK	74602
Morning Sun	PO Box 447	Mt. Pleasant	MI	48804
Advocate-Messenger	PO Box 149	Danville	KY	40423
Cortland Standard	PO Box 5548	Cortland	NY	13045
Kansas City Kansan	PO Box 175002	Kansas City	KS	66101
Porterville Recorder	PO Box 151	Porterville	CA	93258
The Argus-Press	PO Box 399	Owosso	MI	48867
Times-Record	PO Box 10	Brunswick	ME	04011
Natchez Democrat	PO Box 1447	Natchez	MS	39121
Huntington Herald-Dispatch	PO Box 2017	Huntington	WV	25701
The Enquirer-Journal	PO Box 5040	Monroe	NC	28111
The Sentinel	PO Box 588	Lewistown	PA	17044
The Athens Messenger	Rte. 33 N. & Johnson Rd.	Athens	OH	45701
Messenger Wolfe	73 Buffalo St.	Canadaigua	NY	14424
The Sanford Herald	PO Box 100	Sanford	NC	27331-0100
The Newport Daily News	PO Box 420	Newport	RI	2840
Marion Star	150 Court St.	Marion	OH	43302
Gallup Independent	PO Box 1210	Gallup	NM	87301
The St. Augustine Record	PO Box 1630	St. Augustine	FL	32084
Cleveland Daily Banner	PO Box 3600	Cleveland	TN	37320-3600

**APPENDIX B**  
**MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT (SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE)**

November 2, 1998

Dear Sir or Ma'am:

I am a graduate student at Michigan State University working toward my degree in Advertising with a concentration in Public Relations. I am completing research for a thesis, and would appreciate it if you could take a few moments of your time to fill out the enclosed survey.

As I am sure you are aware, many businesses, particularly large ones, have areas of their Web pages dedicated to press releases and other information intended for the media. The use of e-mail as a means for communicating with the press is also on the rise. My study focuses on whether or not reporters are actually using information posted on Web pages, and whether e-mail is an efficient means by which to reach reporters with press releases.

This survey is part of a larger study examining this issue. All answers are **CONFIDENTIAL** and will not be published. Answering the questions on this survey is optional. If you choose to participate in the survey, it is your choice what questions you do or do not answer. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey.

I sincerely appreciate your time in assisting me with this research. Enclosed with the survey is a post card which you may mail back to me with your name and address, separate from the survey, if you are interested in receiving a copy of the results after they are tabulated and compiled into recommendation form.

Again, thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please return the completed survey in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope no later than November 18, 1998.

Sincerely,

Amy Hagerstrom

- 1 Which of these statements best describes your daily use of computers:
- 1 "I LOVE COMPUTERS AND AM VERY SKILLED AT VARIOUS TYPES OF SOFTWARE AND APPLICATIONS."
  - 2 "I USE THE COMPUTER WHEN I NEED IT TO COMPLETE MY JOB, AND AM PROFICIENT AT THE APPLICATIONS I NEED FOR MY JOB."
  - 3 "I USE THE COMPUTER ONLY WHEN IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, AND DO NOT ENJOY IT."
  - 4 "I DISLIKE COMPUTERS AND AVOID THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE."
- 2 Please describe your familiarity World Wide Web (WWW).
- 1 VERY FAMILIAR
  - 2 SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR
  - 3 LIMITED FAMILIARITY
  - 4 NOT FAMILIAR WITH AT ALL
- 3 Please describe your familiarity with e-mail retrieval using the Internet or the WWW.
- 1 VERY FAMILIAR
  - 2 SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR
  - 3 LIMITED FAMILIARITY
  - 4 NOT FAMILIAR WITH AT ALL
- 4 Do you currently have an e-mail address at work which is accessible via the Internet or WWW?
- 1 YES
  - 2 NO
  - 3 I DON'T KNOW

If you answered YES to #4, please continue with question #5, otherwise please skip to #8.

5 Does your newspaper publish its reporters' e-mail addresses?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 3 I DON'T KNOW

6 On average, how often do you check your e-mail throughout the day?

- 1 ONE TIME
- 2 TWO TIMES
- 3 THREE TIMES
- 4 MORE THAN THREE TIMES

7 Approximately what percent of press releases come to you via e-mail?

- 1 10% OR LESS
- 2 25%
- 3 50%
- 4 75%
- 5 90% OR MORE

8 Does your newspaper currently provide access to the WWW to its reporters?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 3 I DON'T KNOW

If you answered YES to this question, please continue with #9, otherwise please skip to #11.

9 Do you use business Web pages to retrieve press releases when they are available?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

- 10 If YES, approximately how often do you use this method for press release retrieval?

1 VERY FREQUENTLY  
2 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY  
3 ONCE IN A WHILE  
4 HARDLY EVER

- 11 How useful do you find Web pages for the purpose of retrieving press releases?

1 VERY USEFUL  
2 SOMEWHAT USEFUL  
3 NOT VERY USEFUL  
4 NOT USEFUL AT ALL

- 12 Following is a list of means for sending press releases and information relevant to news stories. Please number the items from 1 - 8, with 1 being the method you prefer most and 8 being the method you prefer least.

\_\_\_\_ US MAIL  
\_\_\_\_ FAX MACHINE  
\_\_\_\_ HAND DELIVERY  
\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE  
\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL  
\_\_\_\_ WEB PAGES  
\_\_\_\_ FEDERAL EXPRESS  
\_\_\_\_ OTHER (PLEASE LIST) \_\_\_\_\_

- 13 Please indicate your current level of education.

1 SOME HIGH SCHOOL  
2 HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA  
3 SOME COLLEGE  
4 ASSOCIATES DEGREE  
5 BACHELORS DEGREE  
6 MASTERS/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE  
7 DOCTORATE/PHD

14 What is your age?

- 1 UNDER 18
- 2 18 - 25 YEARS
- 3 26 - 35 YEARS
- 4 36 - 45 YEARS
- 5 46 - 55 YEARS
- 6 56+

15 Please indicate the length of time you have been a reporter.

- 1 LESS THAN 5 YEARS
- 2 5 - 10 YEARS
- 3 11 - 15 YEARS
- 4 16 - 20 YEARS
- 5 21 - 25 YEARS
- 6 26 - 30 YEARS
- 7 30+ YEARS

16 Please indicate your gender.

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

17 What is the approximate daily circulation of your newspaper?

- 1 LESS THAN 100,000
- 2 100,000 - 500,000
- 3 500,000 - 1,000,000

18 Do you write for a local or national newspaper?

- 1 LOCAL
- 2 NATIONAL

## APPENDIX C

### LIST OF FORTUNE 100 COMPANIES AND WEB SITE CLICK THROUGH COUNT

Company	Clicks
GM	2
Ford	2
Exxon	2
Wal-Mart	1
GE	1
IBM	1
Daimler Chrysler	1
Mobil	1
Philip Morris	NA
AT&T	2
Boeing	1
Texaco	1
State Farm Insurance Co.	1
Hewlett-Packard	2
du Pont	1
Sears	2
Travelers Group	NA
Prudential Insurance Co.	2
Chevron	1
P&G	1
Citicorp	3
Amoco	1
Kmart	2
Merrill Lynch	4
JC Penney	2
American International Group	1
Chase Manhattan	1
Bell Atlantic	2
Motorola	2
TIAA-CREF	NA
PepsiCo	NA
Lockheed Martin	1
Fannie Mae	1
Dayton Hudson	2
Dean Witter	1
Kroger	2
Lucent	2
Intel	



Allstate	1
SBC Communications	1
United Technologies	1
Compaq	1
MetLife	2
Home Depot	1
ConAgra	1
Merck	NA
Bank America	2
GTE	2
J&J	2
Safeway	2
Disney	NA
UPS	1
Costco	2
NationsBank Corp	NA
USX	2
Bellsouth	2
Enron	1
International Paper	2
Cigna	1
Dow Chemical	2
Sara Lee	1
MCI	2
Loews	1
Atlantic Richfield	1
American Stores	1
Caterpillar	1
New York Life Insurance	2
Coca Cola	3
Columbia/HCA Healthcare	1
AMR	2
Aetna	2
Xerox	1
American Express	2
JP Morgan& Co.	1
UAL	2
RJR Nabisco	3
Lehman Bros. Holdings	2
Bristol Myers Squibb	1
Ingram Micro	2
Supervalu	2
Duke Energy	1
Ameritech	2
FDS	4
Phillips Petroleum	1
PG&E Corp	1
Fleming	2
US West	1
EDS	1
3M	2
Sprint	1
Eastman Kodak	1
Albertson's	3
Allied Signal	2

<b>Sysco</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Federal Home Loan Mortgage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>First Union Corp</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Fluor</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>American Home Products</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Archer Daniels Midland</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Raytheon</b>	<b>1</b>

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