

INSIDE CLASSIFIED

Downloaded from www.gomacdonald.com. No other uses without permission. Copyright © 2009 MacDonald. All rights reserved.

January 2009

Students Show Strong Interest in Campus Papers

Study shows robust readership of college newspapers

By Jennifer Streisand

Despite the emergence of the computer, the BlackBerry, the cell phone and all the other gadgets embraced by today's college students, some aspects of campus life remain very much the same as they were for their parents and grandparents. Among those is the tradition of reading the college newspaper on newsprint.

The College Newspaper Audience Study conducted by Alloy Media + Marketing and MORI Research found that 76% of students surveyed have read the campus newspaper in the past 30 days, and that figure goes significantly up for students who attend schools where the paper is published daily — 92% have read the newspaper at least once in the past 30 days.

What is so captivating about turning the pages when so many other activities for the younger generation involve clicks and scans? It turns out the print edition of the newspaper can always be used for points of discussion among two or more students because it's found in the dining hall, lecture halls and almost everywhere else on campus.

"Students still have a lot of moments that are spent communally in which they want to have something to talk about just to relieve a little social tension and also to connect with other students, and that's where the campus newspaper fits really well," said Samantha Skey, executive vice president of strategic marketing at Alloy Media + Marketing of New York City, N.Y.

The content of the college newspaper adds to its attraction, said Harry Montevideo, treasurer and publisher of Red & Black at the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga.

"It's generally a quick read, and when students see their friends reading copies, there's also the 'peer pressure' factor," he noted.

Students who participated in the study answered survey questions online, and qualitative research was conducted on campuses by gathering information in focus groups, noted Skey. The findings of the study were announced in June 2008.

Some of the other appeals of the college newspaper include that it is usually free and the publication is a consistent source of news and advertising.

"The uniqueness of the college newspaper is that it is student produced and a student voice," said Howard

FIX

[satisfying your data addiction]

Issue 1: College Newspapers

Key Findings

College students read their campus newspaper.
76% of all students have read their school's student newspaper in the past 30 days. This figure tops 92% at schools that publish their paper daily M-F.

Students who read their college newspaper are frequent readers.
80% of readers have read at least one of the past five issues. Overall, students have read 2.2 of the last five issues.

Student pass-along readership is significant.
Over one-third (37%) of the paper is read 3.2 times.

Students seek out the newspaper for exclusive campus news.
Nearly all (93%) respondents rank campus news as the number one reason they look for their newspaper, followed by entertainment (69%) and sports (60% overall, 59% for male students).

Advertising content propels students into action.
70% of students say they've been motivated to take some sort of action after seeing advertisements in their college newspaper. Half have attended an event, 43% have mentioned an article to a friend and 28% have visited the production line.

Students are bargain hunters and take advantage of coupons and special offers.
More than three-quarters (74%) of students have used a coupon or special offer (28%, 34% among women, 16% among men).

College Newspapers are the Best Read Medium on Campus

Despite doom and gloom forecasts for general media newspapers, the news for college publications is good. Alloy Media + Marketing's College Newspaper Audience Study, conducted in partnership with MORI Research, indicates that on-line newspapers continue to reign as a top media choice among today's students and a sought-after source for campus news, entertainment and shopping information.

College students are avid readers of their campus newspaper.

Seventy-six percent of all college students have read their campus publication in the past 30 days, a figure that rises to 92% for readership in the last 90 days [1]. Students who read their student newspaper are reading about 3 out of every 5 issues, on average.

Not surprisingly, one of the best indicators of recent readership is the frequency at which the newspaper is issued. At campuses where the newspaper is published on a daily (Monday – Friday) basis, 92% of students have read the paper at least once in the past 30 days. That figure remains a solid 85% for the past 14 days and 79% in the last seven days for these daily publications.

The larger the student body, the more likely the newspaper serving it is to publish on a daily schedule. Within Alloy's extensive college newspaper database, 57% of all 4-year schools with enrollment of 50,000 or more publish on a daily basis. This is great news for college newspaper advertisers — the largest campuses in the country where advertisers can cast the widest net, boast the highest rates of newspaper readership.



When taking a closer look at some of the reader demographics, some interesting trends come to light. First, males are more likely to have read their campus newspaper in the past week than females (59% vs. 52%). One possible explanation for this trend would be the propensity of male students to check campus sports scores on a regular basis. Another trend in the data shows that seniors have a higher rate of readership in the last month than freshmen (81% vs. 72%) [5]. Senior's deeper familiarity with the campus publication and their tendency to look to the paper for career and recruitment information are likely factors fueling this disparity.

Alloy Media + Marketing • 877.360.9688 • www.alloymarketing.com 1

CONTINUED, Students Show Strong Interest in Campus Papers

Hewitt, the advisor for *The Bachelor*—the newspaper at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Ind., which is celebrating its 100th year of publication.

The fact that college newspapers are generally free to readers makes them even more accessible, which is part of why they are so successful, similar to youth dailies that are now available in many major cities. Youth dailies also have high readership.

“Being accessible is the key to any media right now because there are so many options,” noted Skey. Faculty and staff are also reading the campus paper: 82% reported reading it in the past 90 days, and 63% read the advertising content.

The findings of the study did not come as a surprise to staff and students involved with their college newspapers because many do their own research concerning readership of their campus publication, and they find similar results.

“So we are delighted,” said Kathy Lawrence, director of Texas Student Media at the University of Texas at Austin. “We’re really sad to see some of the things happening in the commercial newspaper industry, but we’re thrilled that we have been able to keep our own industry relatively strong.”

The findings of the study reflect Lawrence’s assessment of the economic status of college newspapers because students are looking at the newspaper for ads: 44% reported seeking out ads and 80% use coupons and special offers.

Ad revenue — in addition to readership — is healthy, although college newspapers are not immune from the reverberations of the economic crisis in the last months of 2008, said Eric Jacobs, general manager of *The Daily Pennsylvanian* at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

“We ended the last school year (2007-2008) with advertising revenue up more than 3% over the previous year. We’re pretty happy with even a small gain in a down economy.”

Similar trends are happening at *The Daily Texan*.

“We had a strong summer and a strong start to fall, but as some of the economic news started to filter down in September, we saw some of our own

national revenue being impacted by that,” explained Lawrence. She is optimistic that ad revenue will remain adequate, particularly highlighting campus events and local establishments.

Business is also good at *The Exponent*, Purdue University’s daily newspaper in West Lafayette, Ind., said Jim Priest, advertising director. Priest is a professional staff member who manages and mentors the students in the advertising department. Ad revenue at *The Exponent* was up by about 8% in 2007-2008.

“We are not struggling the way commercial newspapers are,” he said.

The Exponent sells a large quantity of ads in specialty sections, such as in tailgate guides, housing guides, and a salary guide, which is a listing of all Purdue employee salaries. The salary guide generates a lot of excitement and interest on campus, so advertisers want to be in the guide, Priest noted.

“If 70,000 people are downloading it plus 18,000 people reading the print edition and the guide will lie around for a while, then it’s a natural venue for me to suggest to advertisers.”

Classifieds — and particularly display classifieds — remain steady at college newspapers, primarily because categories in classifieds such as jobs, cars and apartments are highly relevant to students.

At *The Daily Texan*, students and faculty can place some private-party classified ads for no additional charge on the Web site.

At *The Exponent*, private-party classified line ads have dwindled, said Priest. Student sales reps go out on calls to sell classified display ads, he noted.

At the *Red & Black* newspaper, revenue from classifieds has stayed stable at about 10% of the revenue base, explained Montevideo.

While readership of online commercial newspapers has increased over the years, only 18% of students reported reading the newspaper online either alone or in combination with the print version, according to the study.

However, some campus newspapers are devoting more resources to their online editions in order to capture more readers, including those who live

in the community but are not on campus every day. For example, *The Daily Texan* recently redesigned its newspaper Web site so that readers can find more content on articles they read in the print edition as well as multimedia, said Lawrence.

“It’s been a little quirky as we get it going, so the students have had some nights of frustration, but by and large, they are pretty happy with what has been developed.”

Howard Hewitt
The Bachelor, Crawfordsville, Ind.
765-361-6087
hewith@wabash.edu
<http://Bachelor.Wabash.edu>
Eric Jacobs
The Daily Pennsylvanian, Philadelphia, Pa.
215-898-6581
jacobs@daily-pennsylvanian.com
www.daily-pennsylvanian.com

Kathy Lawrence
The Daily Texan, Austin, Texas
512-471-5084
KathyL@mail.utexas.edu
www.dailytexanonline.com

Harry Montevideo
Red & Black, Athens, Ga.
706-433-3000
harrym@randb.com
www.redandblack.com

Jim Priest
The Purdue Exponent, West Lafayette, Ind.
765-743-1111, ext. 109
addirector@purdueexponent.org
www.purdueexponent.org

Jodi Smith
Alloy Media + Marketing, New York, N.Y.
212-329-8359
jsmith@alloymarketing.com
www.alloymarketing.com