

THESIS

GATEKEEPING IN AGRICULTURE PUBLICATIONS: AGRICULTURE EDITORS' USES
OF INFORMATION SOURCES AND CHANNELS

Submitted by

Rebecca Suzanne Talley

Department of Journalism and Technical Communication

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Science

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2010

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

April 26, 2010

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER YOUR
SUPERVISION BY REBECCA SUZANNE TALLEY ENTITLED "EFFECTS OF
AGRICULTURE PESTICIDES AND CULTURE PRACTICES ON THE
BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY OF ACCEPTED AND REJECTED PESTS IN
WINTER IN COLORADO"

Copyright by Rebecca Suzanne Talley 2010

All Rights Reserved

Signature of Student









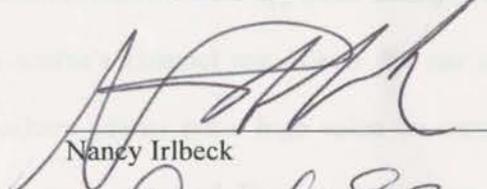
S494.5
.A39
T35
2010

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

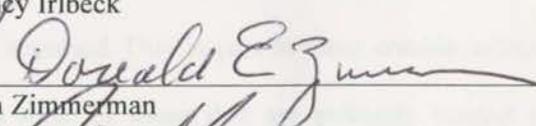
April 26, 2010

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY REBECCA SUZANNE TALLEY ENTITLED GATEKEEPING IN AGRICULTURE PUBLICATIONS: AGRICULTURE EDITORS' USES OF INFORMATION SOURCES AND CHANNELS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE.

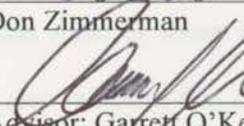
Committee on Graduate Work



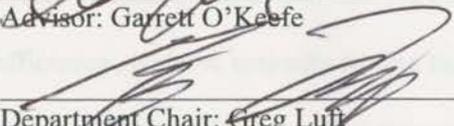
Nancy Irlbeck



Don Zimmerman



Advisor: Garrett O'Keefe



Department Chair: Greg Luft

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

GATEKEEPING IN AGRICULTURE PUBLICATIONS: AGRICULTURE EDITORS' USES
OF INFORMATION SOURCES AND CHANNELS

Agriculture producers have had a long-standing relationship with trade publications, turning to these sources for information that is used to make decisions in their production management, in turn affecting the entire multi-billion dollar industry in the United States. Editors of these trade publications act as gatekeepers of the information that is published, allowing information into the publication or excluding it. Ultimately, this has an impact on the information that reaches agriculture producers and has an overall affect on the agriculture industry.

This study examined the criteria agriculture editors value in sources, those sources that are most used and most preferred and why, those channels that are most used and most preferred and why, and if a source's channel use affects the use of that source's information. Results indicated that agriculture editors put a high value on sources that provided accurate, unbiased information and were easily accessed. Due in part to these criteria, editors rated sources that are publicly funded higher than most of those that are privately funded as most used and most preferred sources. Editors also indicated that e-mail was the most used and preferred information channel due to ease and efficiency, with the majority feeling that the information channel a source delivered information through influenced the use of that source's information.

Findings from this study indicate that sources may be able to push information to agriculture editors, and ultimately to publication, by conforming to those criteria that editors value and by delivering information through their preferred information channels.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, professor Dr. Donald Zimmerman for their assistance, guidance, and support as well during my graduate school experience. My readers/committee members, Dr. Nancy Hirsch, for her qualifications

Rebecca Suzanne Talley
Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Summer 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	12
LIST OF TABLES	18
INTRODUCTION	1
IMPORTANCE OF PRESENT STUDY	2
INDIVIDUALS	3
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisors Dr. Garrett O'Keefe and Dr. Donald Zimmerman for their immense amount of patience, guidance, and support throughout this project as well during my graduate school experience. My sincere thanks also go out to my thesis committee member, Dr. Nancy Irlbeck, for her contributions.	3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
METHODS	5
STRUCTURE OF SURVEY INSTRUMENT	6
DATA ANALYSIS	7
RESULTS	8
RESEARCH QUESTION 1	11
RESEARCH QUESTION 2A	14
RESEARCH QUESTION 2B	15
RESEARCH QUESTION 3	16
RESEARCH QUESTION 4	18
RESEARCH QUESTION 5	17
RESEARCH QUESTION 6A	26
RESEARCH QUESTION 6B	28
DISCUSSION	32
SOURCE CREDIBILITY	31
SOURCE USE AND PREFERENCE	32
CHANNEL USE, PREFERENCE AND INFLUENCE	33
LIMITATIONS	47
FUTURE RESEARCH	38
REFERENCES	44
APPENDICES	48

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
IMPORTANCE OF PRESENT STUDY	2
INFORMATION SOURCE	3
INFORMATION CHANNELS	10
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	17
GATEKEEPING AND INFORMATION SOURCES	18
GATEKEEPING AND INFORMATION CHANNELS	19
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	21
METHODS	24
STRUCTURE OF SURVEY INSTRUMENT	27
DATA ANALYSIS	32
RESULTS	33
RESEARCH QUESTION 1	33
RESEARCH QUESTION 2A	38
RESEARCH QUESTION 2B	49
RESEARCH QUESTION 3	62
RESEARCH QUESTION 4	68
RESEARCH QUESTION 5	77
RESEARCH QUESTION 6A	86
RESEARCH QUESTION 6B	88
DISCUSSION	91
SOURCE CRITERIA	91
SOURCE USE AND PREFERENCE	92
CHANNEL USE, PREFERENCE, AND INFLUENCE	94
LIMITATIONS	97
FUTURE RESEARCH	98
REFERENCES	101
APPENDICES	105

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.	Research Questions and Corresponding Survey Questions	28
TABLE 2.1	First, Second, and Third Most Used Information Sources by Editor	35
TABLE 2.2	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Used Source Choices	42
TABLE 2.3	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Used Source Choices	43
TABLE 2.4	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Most Used Source Choices	45
TABLE 2.5	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Total Most Used Source Choices	48
TABLE 3.1	Editors' Frequency Evaluations of Agricultural News Sources on Accuracy, Fair Neutrality, Ability to Provide Unbiased, Accurate Information, Ability to Explain Information without Making Judgments, and Overall Value	52
TABLE 3.2	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Accuracy	53
TABLE 3.3	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Fair Neutrality	54
TABLE 3.4	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Ability to Provide Unbiased, Accurate Information	57
TABLE 3.5	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Ability to Explain Information without Judgment	59
TABLE 3.6	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Overall Value	61
TABLE 4.1	First, Second, and Third Preferred Information Sources by Editor	63
TABLE 4.2	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Preferred Source Choices	65
TABLE 4.3	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Preferred Source Choices	67
TABLE 4.4	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Preferred Source Choices	69
TABLE 4.5	First, Second, and Third Most Preferred Channels by Editor	71
TABLE 4.6	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Information Channel Choices	72
TABLE 4.7	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Preferred Channel Choices	74
TABLE 4.8	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Most Preferred Channel Choices	76
TABLE 4.9	First, Second, and Third Most Preferred Channel Choices	78
TABLE 4.10	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Preferred Channel Choices	81
TABLE 4.11	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Preferred Channel Choices	83

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.	Editors' Rankings of Attributes of Sources Considered Most Important	35
TABLE 2.	First, Second, and Third Most Used Information Source by Editor	39
TABLE 3.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Used Sources Choices	42
TABLE 4.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Used Sources Choices	45
TABLE 5.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Most Used Sources Choices	48
TABLE 6.	Editors' Frequency Evaluations of Agricultural News Sources on Accessibility, Past Suitability, Ability to Provide Unbiased, Accurate Information, Ability to Explain Information without Making Judgments, and Overall Value	51
TABLE 7.	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Accessibility	53
TABLE 8.	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Past Suitability	55
TABLE 9.	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Ability to Provide Unbiased, Accurate Information	57
TABLE 10.	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Ability to Explain Information without Judgment	59
TABLE 11.	Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Overall Value	61
TABLE 12.	First, Second Most Preferred Information Sources by Editor	63
TABLE 13.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Preferred Source Uses	65
TABLE 14.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Preferred Source Uses	67
TABLE 15.	First, Second, and Third Most Used Information Channel by Editor	69
TABLE 16.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Information Channel Uses	72
TABLE 17.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Used Channel Choices	74
TABLE 18.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Most Used Channel Choices	76
TABLE 19.	First, Second, and Third Most Preferred Channel by Editor	78
TABLE 20.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Preferred Channel Choices	81
TABLE 21.	Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Preferred Channel Choices	83

TABLE 22. Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Third Most Preferred

Channel Choices 85

and the social structure of the region, and responded vigorously with a variety of products that are pertinent to every day life. The industry provides food, fiber, non-edible products such as ethanol, biofuel, and various other industrial products, and continues to incorporate technology to make a wide agriculture products and processors value benefits from agricultural advances, which is why it is so important that agriculturalists about the industry is done with strategies and features.

Since the 1990s when agriculture was the focus to produce practical agriculture information (i.e., see, Mowbray, and Tucker, 2003), agriculture has developed a high level of connectivity through for agricultural producers to access information about the industry (Kramer and Walter, 1994). These publications have provided the access of radio, television, and the Internet and are still considered a major source of information for the agriculture industry in the United States, especially for the younger generations of farmers and ranchers (Dunn, Mowbray, and Tucker, 2003; Harris Interactive Media, 2005; Mowbray, Mowbray, and Tucker, 2003).

Since the early days of modern agriculture, farm magazines (and more recently farm newspapers) have been important channels for sharing farmers to new technological developments. In recent years, farm magazines have become more technologically oriented and have incorporated in features about such things as e-mail, digital cameras and Web 2.0, p. 1258.

Introduction

Agriculture is an important industry in the United States. It is vital to the economy and the social structure of the nation, and it provides consumers with a variety of products that are pertinent to everyday life. The industry provides food, fiber, non-edible products such as ethanol, biodiesel, and various other industrial products, and advances in biotechnology, to name a few. Agriculture producers and consumers alike benefit from agricultural advances, which is why it is so important that communication about the industry is done with accuracy and fairness.

Since the 1790s, when agriculture societies began to publish practical agriculture information (Boone, Meisenbach, and Tucker, 2000), agriculture-based trade media has been an important channel for agriculture producers to receive information about the industry. (Reisner and Walter, 1994). These publications have survived the advent of radio, television, and the Internet and are still considered a main source of information for the agriculture industry in the United States, particularly in the younger generations of farmers and ranchers (Boone, Meisenbach, and Tucker, 2000; Harris Interactive Media, 2005; Maddox, Mustian, and Jenkins, 2003).

Since the early days of modern agriculture, farm magazines (and more recently farm newspapers) have been important channels for alerting farmers to new technological developments. In recent years, farm magazines have become increasingly important means to communicate to farmers about such issues as animal rights (Reisner and Walter, 1994, p. 325).

Agriculture producers use agriculture publications to find out about new technology, practices, and market reports. Often, these publications are their first source for new implements, pest management, marketing, etc., (Maddox, Mustian, and Jenkins, 2003; Harris Interactive Media, 2005) and have an impact on producers' decisions. When surveyed, agriculture producers rated trade publications as being very knowledgeable and objective (Harris Interactive Media, 2005), meaning that they most likely trust the information that they receive from publications and use it as part of their decision-making processes.

Importance of the Present Study

The farm sector production in the United States has a value of billions of dollars. The industry has a significant impact and is vital to the economy of the United States. The information that the agriculture trade media publishes can have a significant impact on the agriculture economy. Because many U.S. farmers and ranchers use information from agriculture trade publications when making decisions about their operations, research is needed to determine where the publications obtain their information from and how.

More specifically, this study investigated the sources that editors of agriculture publications prefer, including the use of public and private sources of information. Also, this study examined the channels that agriculture publications receive information through. For example, are traditional channels such as telephone, fax, and mail more prominent, or are electronic channels, such as e-mail and Web sites, becoming more popular? Information that is delivered to agriculture publications through a preferred

channel may have more of a chance of getting published, and therefore, influencing agriculture producers.

To understand the importance of this study, it is important to understand the main concepts that were be examined:

Agriculture: For this study, I am defining agriculture as strictly conventional agriculture. This includes traditional crops and livestock but excludes landscaping, greenhouse production, aquaculture, alternative livestock production (bison, elk, emus, etc.), and tree and sod production.

Agriculture Publications: For the proposed study, I focused on agriculture trade publications (print magazine/newspapers) that publish content that deals specifically with the production and sale of crops and livestock whose target audience is farmers and ranchers.

Information: Information is defined by Boehlje (1998) as being context specific and decision focused. Information must be timely, technically accurate, scientifically sound, unbiased, complete, understandable, and convenient. In other words, information must have a perceived value to farmers and ranchers. All of these attributes determine the value of information; the more valuable information is, the more it can potentially help in the decision-making process and improved financial performance of a farm or ranch (Boehlje, 1998).

Information Source

To understand where agriculture publications get their information, it is first important to look at the history of information sources that have been used in this field.

Agriculture publications began to emerge in the 1790s, when agriculture societies began publishing practical information about farming (Boone, Meisenbach, and Tucker, 2000). These societies continued to be the main information sources for agriculture journals, which emerged around the early 1800s (Boone, Meisenbach, and Tucker, 2000).

The mid-1800s saw some agriculture publications grow large enough to become independent of agriculture societies. Because of this, these publications reduced the amount of material used from agriculture societies and developed stronger associations with U.S. colleges, using scientists from these institutions for information sources (Boone, Meisenbach, and Tucker, 2000).

With the formation of the Land Grant System by the Morrill Act (which created Land Grant Colleges) and the 1887 passing of the Hatch Act (which established state agriculture experiment stations), public-funded sources began to be the main source of information for publications (Goe and Kenney, 1988), a trend that continues today.

Reber (1960) examined the different types of sources used in agriculture publications and found that information in the farm publications fell under two general categories: general and how-to-do-it information. These two categories of information took up the majority of the editorial space in magazines and “therefore were the main vehicles by which the editors influenced their readers (Reber, 1960, p. 109).” He clarified the main sources of these two categories of information as either tax-supported and non-tax supported. Tax-supported sources are those that come from the “USDA, agriculture experiment stations, land grant colleges, extension services, vo-ag departments, state government agencies, other government agencies, and cooperative government projects”

(p. 110). Non tax-supported sources included individual farmers, trade associations, agribusiness purveyors/workers, and farm organizations.

Reber (1960) found that most general agriculture information came from the tax-supported sources, while the how-to-do-it information mostly came from non-tax supported sources.

Further narrowing down the types of sources used in the agriculture media in the past, Vacin (1979) analyzed the importance of land grant universities as sources of information used by agriculture publications. Land grant universities are a highly used information source in the sample of farm magazines used in the study. Vacin defined university sources as extension agents, agriculture experiment stations, and a category labeled as other land grant university sources.

Results of the study found that "more than one-fifth of all column inches of news copy appearing in the sample of farm magazines was attributed to land grant university sources. Information attributed to land grant university sources appeared in almost one-third of all new items analyzed" (Vacin, 1979, p. 14). Vacin (1979) also found that the magazines sampled averaged about six pages of full copy of information from land grant universities. Of that copy, extension agents provided about two-thirds of the information, the rest of the information was provided by agriculture experiment stations followed by other sources.

Vacin also found that information on production accounted for over 50% of the information given by land grant university sources. This was followed by information on farm management, marketing, policy, and other topics, in that order.

“The emphasis on production technology likely results from most land grant universities having more extension specialists and agricultural experiment station scientists in production technology (Vacin, 1979, p. 23).”

The results of Vacin (1979) were supported by a study later conducted by Whitaker and Dyer (2000). The study analyzed the content of environmental and food safety-related articles from three general interest news magazines (*Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News*) and three agriculture publications (*Farm Journal*, *Progressive Farmer*, and *Successful Farming*). Whitaker and Dyer (2000), found that for both types of publications (agricultural and general), sources from educational institutions were cited most frequently (62.2%) and government agency sources were next (60.8%). Business sources were cited in 40.5% of the articles, agriculture sources were cited in 36.5% of the articles, and activist sources were cited in 29.7% of the articles. The study found that most of the activist sources were cited in the general news magazines and that most of the agricultural sources were cited in the agricultural magazines.

Though Whitaker and Dyer (2000) include both general interest and agriculture-oriented publications, their study documents the emergence of business (private industry) sources as an information source.

As the Reber (1960) study related, private industry and agribusiness sources are included in what he termed as non-tax supported information providers.

Private industry may now play a much larger role in the dissemination of agriculture information than it has in the past, giving rise to the concept of the privatization of agriculture information (Wolf, 1998).

Private industry is now becoming a much more utilized source for agriculture information for several reasons:

First is the declining amount of public funding for agriculture research and extension. For a 20-year period before 1980, public funding narrowly exceeded private investment. Around 1980, private investment exceeded public investment, and since then, private investment in agriculture research and extension has vastly surpassed public funding (Wolf, 1998). This has increased private industry research that increases the amount of knowledge, information, and technology that private sector agents can draw from while causing the decline in public sector research (Wolf, 1998). Public extension is less active in the direct delivery of production information to producers (Lambur et al., 1989; NRC, 1996; Wolf, 1995; Wolf, 1998) leaving the door open for private industry information sources.

Second, the advance of communication and information diffusion technology has made it much easier for information to get out to the agriculture industry. Private industry now has many more economically feasible channels to disseminate information in a more timely manner than it has in the past (Boehlje, 1998).

Finally, the nature of the agriculture industry itself has made private industry an increasingly popular information source.

Agriculture has become a highly specialized industry with specific information needs (Wolf, 1998). Markets are becoming increasingly competitive and increasingly international, which means that information on how to continue to stay at the top of the game is highly valuable.

In the current agriculture market, success is often determined by creating and marketing differentiated products, such as organic, family farm grown, or all natural. These differentiated products require customized information instead of the generic, regional information that was historically provided by public information sources. Producers have the most access to specialized information through the private sector than through the public sector. Businesses in the private sector that provide important input, such as seed, fertilizer, and other agriculture chemicals, are also becoming a main provider of information about those inputs (Wolf, 1998). In some areas in the United States, evidence supports that agriculture producers rate public sector information sources lower than many other sources for production, marketing, and financial issues (Wolf, Ortman et al, 1993).

Private industry has also embraced this role as an information source because it provides a competitive advantage for firms that supply the information.

While private industry is emerging as a valuable information source in the agriculture industry, it is important to understand if it has also become a valuable information source for editors of agriculture publications. Possible implications for using private industry information sources include conflict of interest and the promotion of a pro-industry bias.

Criticism has risen about the use of private industry sources because it may allow agribusiness, which is often the only type of advertiser in most farm publications, to exert influence over editorial content.

According to Reisner and Walter (1994), farm implements, technology, and agrichemicals are all advertised in agriculture publications. However, the number of

advertisers in each of these areas is small enough that the individual advertisers are very important to the publication. Often, this causes pressure to print what the advertisers want causing an ethical concern for editors of agriculture publications. Reisner (1991) found that agriculture journalists feel more pressure to run certain editorial content from advertisers than do the editors of their general media counterparts. The pressure from advertisers can come in many forms, such as providing story ideas, providing press releases, providing sources on issues, and even pulling ads.

Commercial agribusinesses often supply press releases to farm publications regarding services and products, thus positioning themselves as a possible information source. These companies are hoping that this information will be included in the editorial content of the publication, which would give them free advertising and an indirect endorsement by the publication (Reisner and Hays, 1990).

“When an editor quotes information in a release from a nitrogen manufacturer on how to apply nitrogen to get the most benefit, the company gains wider acceptance than through direct persuasion methods in its advertising program (Reber, 1960, p. 109).”

Using commercial agribusiness sources is often looked at as causing a pro-industry bias, resulting in many stories actually being advertisements for companies or agribusiness (Reisner and Walter, 1994).

Because a greater reliance on private information sources versus public information sources can lead to a difference in published content, and possibly causing a difference in agriculture producers' decision-making processes, I examined how often private information sources are used in today's agriculture publications, how editors view

the credibility of the information sources used, and then compared the results with past studies.

Information Channels

For this study, an information channel is the vehicle by which information is transmitted from the source to a publication. Those that are providing the information are considered the source, and the method they use to distribute the information is the channel.

Press releases, fax transmissions, telephone, the Internet, and press conferences are all examples of information channels. For example, a Web site would be considered a channel, while the individual or organization that provided the information on the site would be considered the source in this study.

While this study is primarily concerned with “mechanical channels” such as those aforementioned, it is still important to keep in mind the “reporting channels” that are used to gather information.

According to Leon V. Sigal, (1973) channels are defined as “the path by which information reached the reporter (p. 120).” Sources of information work to put together a message and then work to ensure that these messages will enter all possible media channels. In terms of reporting channels that are used, Sigal laid out three categories of channels: routine, informal, and enterprise.

“Routine channels include (1) official proceedings such as trials, legislative hearings, and election tabulations; (2) press releases as well as reports monitored over official radio ...; (3) press conferences, including daily briefings by “official spokesmen” and broadcast interviews; and (4)

nonspontaneous event, such as speeches, ceremonies, and staged demonstrations. Informal channels include (1) background briefings; (2) leaks; (3) nongovernmental proceedings like association meetings or trade union conventions; and (4) news reports from other news organizations, interviews with reporters, and newspaper editorials. Enterprise channels include (1) interviews conducted at the reporters initiative; (2) spontaneous events which a reporter witnessed firsthand, like fires, riots and natural disasters; (3) independent research involving quotations from books and statistical data; and (4) the reporter's own conclusions or analysis (pg. 120)."

In a study of the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, Sigal (1973) examined the extent of which the three channels were used in the years 1949, 1954, 1959, 1964, and 1969, for each publication. The channels of information for news in the *Times* and *Post* combined (n = 2,850) showed that routine channels were used the most at 58.2%. Informal channels were used 15.7% of the time, and enterprise channels are used 25.8% of the time (p. 121). When each individual paper was examined, the results still showed that routine channels outnumber enterprise channels (*Times*: 53.7% routine vs. 27.6% enterprise. *Post*: 58.9% routine vs. 28.1% enterprise) (p. 122).

According to Sigal, information for one story can be sent through several different information source channels. However, Sigal states that one channel is usually considered the primary channel, though his study found that the stories in the sample averaged around two to three channels per story (p. 122).

“The primary channel is defined as the channel for the information which (1) comprises the lead and/or the major portion of the story as a whole; (2) accounts for the timing of its appearance in the news.”

Stories based on information from a single channel accounted for around one-third of the sample, and the channels for these types of stories were predominantly routine. For the multichannel stories, the primary channels were also classified as routine. “The implication of these findings is that stories usually emerge through routine channels (Sigal, 1973, p. 123).”

Most research on information source channels has revolved around the general news media and how it prefers to get information. Because the general media is a main way that agriculture information reaches the general public, it is important to understand how it gets its information to begin with, with the assumption that agriculture information is received in the same manner as any information.

While the channels laid out by Sigal (1973) are still prominent today, it does not call into account the advancement of electronic technology, namely e-mail, the Internet, and other forms of electronic transmission of press releases and other types of information.

Fritz (1993) studied the electronic transmission (computer-to-computer or electronic bulletin boards) of agriculture information to the media. It examined the sending of electronic transmission of extension news releases to publications and documented how many of the releases made it into publication. The study found that 25.9% of extension communicators said using “computer-to-computer” transmission

greatly increased the use of the organization's press releases by the media. Fifty-six percent said it increased use slightly, and only 3.7% reported no impact (Fritz, 1993).

When the use of electronic bulletin boards was examined, only one of the 17 users said it increased news release use greatly, so it was not as successful a transmission route as was computer to computer. This study also showed that the media was open to using electronic transmission. At this point, it was theorized that electronic distribution depended more upon staff changes and training rather than the copy; even if the technology is available, people have to be open to trying new technology and understand how to use it in order for it to be effective.

Abbott (1986) studied Iowa's major daily newspapers in 1985-86 and examined the use of electronically transmitted information from the Iowa State University Extension Service. Editors documented that the electronic copy was misdirected or even deleted by those who received the electronic information and were responsible to direct it to the correct individual or apartment. Also, these electronic transmissions were killed by an internal clock in the computers after they were in the system for a certain amount of time (Abbott, 1986).

However, the climate of electronic transmission has changed significantly since the 1980s and 1990s. Today, e-mail and the Web have become important information channels for the media (Middleberg and Ross, 2000).

A 2000 Middleberg/Ross Media Survey showed how the emergence of the electronic transmission and the Internet affected how information is transmitted to the media.

“E-mail has pulled ahead of the telephone for both known and unknown sources for the first time (pg. 22).” The study found that 61% of newspaper, magazine and broadcast reporters in the United States and Canada answered that they preferred e-mail over telephone, in-person interviews, or fax for information.

In the case of receiving information via telephone, 51% of respondents gave this a number one rating (it was the preferred channel) but only if they were dealing with a familiar source. If the source was unknown, information gathering via telephone was only rated number one by 29% of the respondents. The survey also found that known source or not, the fax and telephone rated fairly similar; 5% gave the telephone a number one rating when dealing with unknown sources, while 4% rated it number one when dealing with known sources. In-person interviews rated number one with 23% of the respondents in both the known and unknown source situation.

Bisdorf, Irani, and Telg (2003) found similar results. Reporters in Florida news rooms preferred to receive information electronically rather than fax or hand delivery. Eighty-one percent of the respondents said they like to receive government information electronically, 71.4% preferred to receive releases from public relation firms electronically, and 81% favored electronic transmission of news items from local sources.

The survey also found that the Web is becoming a popular channel in which to find and receive information. “The Web and e-mail are becoming the soul of newsgathering” (Middleberg and Ross, 2000, pg. 4).

Though it is bit different than other channels that “push” information to the media, the Web allows media to “pull” information from it but still provides an outlet for sources to disseminate their information.

Reporters are using the Web more than ever. In a study of computer-industry journalists in 2001, respondents reported averaging 3.39 hours of Web use daily (Hachigian and Hallahan, 2001), though it is important to note that the results may be due to journalists covering the computer industry.

However, according to the study, traditional channels are still used more than the Web.

Web sites ranked behind phone, face-to-face, and news releases as the preferred channels of information, but they were favored over press conferences.

The Middleberg/Ross survey found that when reporters were dealing with breaking news, they tended to use traditional channels of information first. However, when a primary source could not be reached through other channels (namely the telephone), 37% of respondents said they would visit a company's Web site first. This channel outranked using Web-based message boards/chat groups (less than 1%) or using major online news services (12%) as a first choice (Middleberg and Ross, 2002).

Surprisingly, the survey also found the use of a few channels of information that are not highly looked upon in the journalistic realm or considered credible. Sources who post information on two channels, Web chats and Usenet newsgroups, have actually been used as primary and secondary sources of information. Ten percent of survey respondents said that they have used information from these channels as secondary sources, and 2% said they have used it as a primary source. If the source could be confirmed as credible, 29% of respondents said they would use information from these channels, and 17% said they would "simply consider doing so in the future" (p. 23).

While the research indicates that traditional channels of information are still widely used by the media, it also shows that electronic transmission of information and the use of the Internet are becoming very important channels of information.

Research into information channels can have great implications for the agriculture industry. By understanding the channels that editors prefer to use, no matter what type of publication, agriculture information sources can push their information through the media and to their publics, which make up the industry's consumer base. If the agriculture information sources can use the channels that are most preferred by agriculture editors and reporters, agriculture information sources have a much better chance of their message reaching the most people.

Theoretical Framework

The important players in getting this type of information out to the public are the reporters and editors who choose what gets coverage and what doesn't. They play the role of gatekeepers of agriculture news.

The theory of gatekeeping proposed by David Manning White in 1950 was used to look at how an editor could influence what editorial content gets published in newspapers. The theory has evolved since then, but it is still used to describe what information is disseminated to an audience and how (Shoemaker, 1991).

“Whether in news or entertainment industries, a gatekeeper must winnow down a large number of potential messages to a few” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, p. 85).

A gatekeeper can be one of the four roles: reporter, editor, news executive, or news source (Dimmick, 1974). In the agriculture world, reporters and editors often play the same role and can be considered the gatekeepers of agricultural information.

Dunwoody (1980) found that science reporters were often autonomous of their editors' influences on story choices and came up with their own story choices 80% of the time. Agriculture stories often fall under the category of science, and agriculture reporters are often given a loose rein when finding topics and using sources, just as science reporters are.

The reporters and editors who act as gatekeepers are extremely important in bridging the gap between those that create agriculture news and those that will receive it.

“Gatekeeping is important because gatekeepers provide an integrated view of social reality to the rest of us” (Shoemaker, 1991, p. 4). Thus, the messages that

reporters/editors choose to use can influence those who are in the agriculture industry by influencing their perception of the industry (Bealls and Hayes, 1991).

Gatekeeping and Information Sources

According to Shoemaker (1991), many factors influence editors' and reporters' gatekeeping decisions. One such important influence is source use.

Because in many cases, media workers do not themselves experience events, the version of reality as processed by sources is extremely influential in determining what comes to the attention of the media, (Shoemaker, 1991, p. 61).

This may be especially true in the case of reporters and editors who must handle agriculture information but do not have the training to understand the issues in agriculture and the science behind the industry (Reisner and Walter, 1994). According to Whitaker and Dyer (2000), though journalists have been trained to write, they aren't always trained to understand the relationship between agriculture producers and consumers. So, they often rely upon the sources to call attention to an agricultural topic and provide credible information. Because of this, sources actually can control the movement of information they have to the media (Shoemaker, 1991). This may also lead to sources having an influence on which events or topics are considered newsworthy.

In studies of newspaper reporters, those that cover the same beat will come to adopt frequently-used sources' definitions of what news is important, thus affecting gatekeeping decisions (Reisner and Walter, 1994; Dunwoody, 1980).

The extent to which sources influence content in the media can be a result of the relationship between the gatekeeper and the source. Sources believe that reporters should

be open gatekeepers, allowing all provided information into the media, and reporters feel that sources should be open with their information so the reporter can decide which information makes it into the media (Shoemaker, 1991). No matter how open each side of this dynamic is, the source-gatekeeper relationship benefits both sides. The gatekeeper needs sources who provide credible information, and the source needs a gatekeeper to get information to their audience (Shoemaker, 1991). According to Donahue, Tichenor, and Olien (1972), the extent to which a source controls content may be due to how much the reporter identifies with the source.

Gatekeeping and Information Channels

Another important part of the media gatekeeping process is understanding how the information makes it to the editor/reporters' (gatekeepers) attention in the first place. A major antecedent of gatekeeping is which channels the information must enter into to reach the media (Shoemaker, 1991).

A lot of research exists into how information, which includes agriculture information, reaches the general media. However, less research exists into what information channels agriculture editors (gatekeepers) prefer and use most often, which is one reason why this study was proposed. Agriculture is considered a more traditional industry, and some evidence suggests that the industry may have not embraced e-mail and the Internet as much as other industries have (Bisdorf, Irani, and Telg, 2003). My study examined if traditional channels are also the preference of agriculture media, or if, like the general media, the electronic channels are becoming a more favored method. This is important because agriculture communication is a specialized area with its own conventions that don't necessarily follow the norms of mainstream communication or

those of the general media. Also, the changes in the agriculture media and public information source relationship may have caused changes in editors' preferred and actual channel uses.

Information must be timely, technically suitable, intelligibly based, unbiased, complete, understandable, and convenient. All of these attributes determine the value of information (Hechija, 1998). Those sources that can provide these attributes will often be used voluntarily by editors, and thus variable to editors. This research question looks at what attributes of sources editors consider most important using the following factors: (1) cost of access, (2) ability to supply scientific information, (3) time pressure, (4) editor's ability to explain information, (5) relationships with the source, and (6) personal relationships with the source.

RQ2: What sources do agriculture editors use to write publications and why?

It is recognized that decisions about sources are most likely to be based by the editors. As stated in the literature review, past studies have shown that public information sources have been used most often by agriculture publicists (Haber, 1980; Vacker, 1979; Whitaker and Dyck, 2000).

However, few recent studies have examined whether or not current agriculture publications. This research question will help assess what sources agriculture editors are most likely to use, including both the public and private sources. This question will also examine what segments of the public and private industry are most used for information sources and why editors make the choices they do.

RQ3: Are there differences between the editors' perceptions of public and private sources?

Research Questions

Based on the literature review the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What attributes of sources do editors consider most important?

Information must be timely, technically accurate, scientifically sound, unbiased, complete, understandable, and convenient. All of these attributes determine the value of information (Boehlje, 1998). Those sources that can provide these attributes, and others deemed valuable to editors, are thus valuable to editors. This research question looks at what attributes of sources editors consider most important using the following factors: (a) ease of access; (b) ability to supply accurate information; (c) time pressures; (d) source's ability to explain information; (e) recommendations by colleagues; and (f) personal relationships with the source.

RQ2a: What sources are agriculture editors using in their publications and why?

This research question considers what sources are most likely to be used by the editors. As stated in the literature review, past studies have shown that public information sources have been used most often in agriculture publications (Reber, 1960; Vacin, 1979; Whitaker and Dyer, 2000).

However, few recent studies have examined source use in current agriculture publications. This research question will help assess what sources agriculture editors are most likely to use, including both the public and private sources. This question will also examine what segments of the public and private industry are most used for information sources and why editors make the choices they do.

RQ2b: Are there differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources?

Editors use several criteria to evaluate sources that are used for information. This research question looks at the difference in editors' perceptions of public and private sources using the four following factors: (a) accessibility, (b) familiarity (including past suitability), (c) ability to supply accurate, unbiased information, and (d) ability to explain issues in an unbiased manner.

Research has found that these four factors were most important for reporters and editors when using official sources (Powers and Fico, 1994; Stringer, 1999).

Familiarity with a source can play a part in how it is used and how much influence the source can have over the information through the gatekeeping process (Reisner and Walter, 1994; Dunwoody, 1980; Donahue, Tichenor, and Olien, 1972). Gans (1979) found that if a source provided accurate, reliable information in the past, it was more likely to become a regularly used source in the future.

RQ3: What sources do agriculture editors prefer to use and why?

While information from certain sources may make it through the gatekeeping process those may not be the sources that agriculture editors may prefer. Other factors, such as editorial budget, staff size, and perceived credibility in the publication can play a part in the gatekeeping decision. While editors may prefer to use information from certain sources, one or more of the above factors above may not make it possible.

However, if information sources took these factors into account, they might be able to tailor their information to be more in line with what editors prefer.

RQ4: What channels do editors publish the most information from and why?

There has been much research into channel use by the general media (Abbott, 1986; Bisdorf, Irani, and Telg, 2003; Fritz, 1993; Hachigian and Hallahan, 2001; Middleberg and Ross, 2002; Sigal, 1973). However, few researchers have investigated the channels that agriculture editors publish the most information from, which is important because it can affect the gatekeeping process of agriculture editors.

RQ5: What channels do editors prefer to receive information through and why?

While information from certain channels may make it through the gatekeeping process, these may not be the channels that agriculture editors prefer. Other factors, such as cost of channel use, ease of channel use, and staff size can play a part in the channel use.

As with sources, if information providers took these factors into account, they might be able to push their information through channels that editors prefer.

RQ6a: To what extent do public and private sources vary in their use of information channels?

Public and private information sources may vary in their information dissemination practices. This could be due to issues of employee availability and technology training, fund availability, and technology availability.

RQ6b: Does the use of information channels influence which sources editors use?

This question intends to look at whether the use of preferred channels by information sources plays a factor in the use of these sources. For example, if editors prefer to receive information through e-mail, will they be more likely to use information from sources that send most of their information through e-mail?

Methods

For this study, the sampling frame was managing editors from agriculture trade publications that were listed in the *Gale's Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*, which was the recommended frame for being the most accurate (J. Evans, personal communication, April 20, 2006). More specifically, editors of publications that are printed in the Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming region and who represent publications focusing on livestock and crop production were targeted, as the study examined the information sources and channels used in both areas. This region was chosen because of its diversity of both crop and livestock production, leading to publications that reflect that diversity. Also, for this initial study, selecting a sample with one geographical/agricultural mix seemed most appropriate with respect to validity and reliability.

A convenience sample chosen for accessibility and location of regional publications taken from *Gale's Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* included 21 publications representing both crop and livestock production content.

Design

In-depth telephone interviews (Appendix A) were conducted with the editors. This allowed for more extensive closed- and open-ended questions with follow-up probes to ascertain more detailed accounts of editor decision making.

Interviews were scheduled ahead. According to Groves et al. (1988), scheduling an interview is especially important if the interview is long (citing refusal of cold-call telephone surveys 20 minutes long or longer on the basis of length) and if the members of the sample are deemed to be busy, both of which were true of this survey.

A questionnaire draft was pretested by two editors of agriculture publications not in the sample to help ensure clarity and face validity of the survey.

The survey design included the following steps:

1. Advance letters sent. Initial contact with the editors of the publications was established by sending an introductory letter introducing the researcher and the purpose of the study (Appendix B). Dillman (2000) has found that response rates were higher for telephone surveys that were initially introduced in an advance letter than for those that were performed by just cold calling. A cover letter format laid out by Dillman (2000) was used. The letter also informed the editors that they would be contacted by phone and/or e-mail to set up a time to conduct an in-depth telephone interview.

The mailing of letters was staggered. The first wave of letters was sent to the first seven editors in the sample, followed by a second wave of letters to the next seven editors the following week. The next week, a final wave of letters was sent to the remaining seven editors. This was to spread out the calling schedule and not have too many calls to make in too short of a time frame.

Colorado State University Department of Animal Science letterhead was used for the cover letter anticipating that having the name of the university and the college of agriculture associated with the study would add credibility to help ensure the letter got pushed through the gates of the publications to each managing editor and got read.

2. Phone calls to schedule interviews. Ten days after the advance letter was sent, the first round of calls to the editors began (Appendix C).

An effort was made to avoid calling on those days that were the publication's deadlines because editors are usually markedly busier on those days. As recommended by

Dillman (1978), the researcher attempted to call in the early afternoon (avoiding the lunch hour), which is typically office time for the editors.

When contact was made, an interview was either completed or scheduled for a later time. When contact was not made, a first message was left (Appendix D), as well as an e-mail sent (Appendix E) to attempt to schedule an interview.

Dillman (1978) demonstrated that response rates are higher when follow-up phone calls are conducted, so up to three more telephone attempts were made when needed.

3. **First callback.** If an editor did not reply to the initial contact call within three days, the first callback was made to establish contact with the editor or to leave a reminder message (Appendix F).

4. **Second callback.** If a reply to the first callback attempt was not received within five days after that attempt, the second callback was made to establish contact with the editor or to leave a reminder message (Appendix F).

5. **Third and final callback.** If a reply to the second callback attempt was not received by seven days after that attempt, the third and final callback was made to establish contact with the editor. As recommended by Dillman (1978), this final call and message was left with more emphasis on the importance of the editor's participation than those that preceded it (Appendix G).

Of the 21 editors that were contacted, 15 were interviewed for the research, giving a 71% response rate for the study.

Of the six editors in the sample that were not interviewed, three expressed interest in participation upon phone contact; however, two did not follow through on any further

contact attempts, and one had to cancel participation due a personal matter. The remaining three editors did not respond to any contact attempts.

Structure of the Survey Instrument

To address the six research questions posed in the previous chapter, the questionnaire was structured to first gather information about the importance of various attributes or criteria of sources (see Figure 1). This was followed by questions to ascertain respondents' specific perceptions of each of the sources.

The sources were divided into public and private categories. Public sources included cooperative extension, university faculty and staff, state departments of agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Private sources included trade and commodity groups, agribusiness, and farm organizations.

The next set of questions determined respondents' extent of actual and preferred uses of information channels, as well as their perceptions of sources' uses of these channels. The information channels included personal interviews, telephone interviews, e-mail, fax, mail, wire services, and Web sites.

The questions concluded with a brief series of demographic items.

<p>1. How important are the following criteria in making decisions through the web?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Extent of time spent gathering information from sources through?" (1-20) • "Extent of time spent gathering information from sources through?" (1-20) • "Extent of time spent gathering information from sources through?" (1-20)
<p>2. To what extent do public and private sources vary in their use of information channels?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "To what extent do public and private sources vary in their use of information channels?" (1-10) • "To what extent do public and private sources vary in their use of information channels?" (1-10)

Figure 1. Research questions and corresponding survey questions.

Research Questions	Survey Questions
RQ1. What attributes of sources do editors consider most important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How important is ease of access when identifying a source?” (Q.1) • “How important is ability to supply accurate information when identifying a source?” (Q. 2) • “How important are time pressures within the organization when identifying a source?” (Q. 3) • “How important is the source’s ability to explain information when identifying a source?” (Q. 4) • “How important are recommendations by colleagues when identifying a source?” (Q. 5) • “How important is a personal relationship with a source when identifying a source?” (Q. 6) • “Are there any other important issues you have when identifying a source?” (Q. 7)
RQ2a. What sources are agriculture editors using in their publications? RQ2b. Are there significant differences between the editors’ perceptions of public sources and private sources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Which of the information sources that we discussed earlier do you use most often?” (Q. 15) • “Which do you use next most often?” (Q 16) • “And finally, which do you use third most often?” (Q. 17) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How accessible do you find them to be? (For each source, Q. 8-14) • Have they been a suitable source in the past? (For each source, Q. 8-14) • Do they supply unbiased, accurate information? (For each source, Q. 8-14) • Do they supply information without making judgments? (For each source, Q. 8-14) • Overall, how do you value commodity groups as an information source? (For each source, Q. 8-14)
RQ3. What sources do agriculture editors prefer to use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Which of the information sources that we discussed earlier would you prefer to use?” (Q. 18) • “Which information source would you prefer to use next most often?” (Q. 19)
RQ4. What channels do editors publish the most information from?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Which of these do you receive information from sources through most often?” (Q. 20) • “Which of these do you receive information from sources through second most often?” (Q. 21) • “Which of these do you receive information from sources through third most often?” (Q. 22) •
RQ5. What channels do editors prefer to receive information through and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Which of those would you prefer to receive information from sources through?” (Q. 23) • “Which of these would you prefer to receive information from sources through second most often?” (Q. 24) • “Which of these would prefer to receive information from sources through third most often?” (Q. 25)
RQ6a. To what extent do public and private sources vary in their use of information channels? RQ6b. Does the use of information channels influence which sources editors use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do you notice different sources using different information channels?” (Q. 26) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do the different ways you receive information from sources affect your use of those sources?” (Q. 27)

Figure 1. Research questions and corresponding survey questions.

Editors' Perceptions of Sources

To measure the importance of various criteria of sources to editors, the following questions were asked "on a scale of 1 to 3, 1 = very, 2 = somewhat, and 3 = not very":

- "How important is ease of access when identifying a source?" (Q.1)
- "How important is ability to supply accurate information when identifying a source?" (Q. 2)
- "How important are time pressures within the organization when identifying a source?" (Q. 3)
- "How important is the source's ability to explain information when identifying a source?" (Q. 4)
- "How important are recommendations by colleagues when identifying a source?" (Q. 5)
- "How important is a personal relationship with a source when identifying a source?" (Q. 6)
- "Are there any other important issues you have when identifying a source?" (Q. 7)

Next, respondents were asked five questions evaluating each source on attributes of accessibility, familiarity, ability to supply accurate, unbiased information, ability to explain issues in an unbiased manner, and overall perceived value. The following questions were asked, "on a scale of 1 to 3, 1 = very, 2 = somewhat, and 3 = rarely"

- "How accessible do you find them [source] to be?" (Q. 8 – Q. 14)
- "Have they been a suitable source in the past?" (Q. 8 – Q. 14)
- "Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?" (Q. 8 – Q. 14)

- “Do they supply information without making judgments?” (Q. 8 – Q. 14)
- “Overall, how do you value extension agents as an information source?” (Q. 8 – Q. 14)

Sources Used Most Often.

To address, respondents were asked:

- “Which of the information sources that we discussed earlier do you use most often?” (Q. 15)
- “Which do you use next most often?” (Q. 16)
- “And finally, which do you use third most often?” (Q. 17)

Sources Preferred for Use

To address, respondents were asked:

- “Which of the information sources that we discussed earlier would you prefer to use?” (Q. 18)
- “Which information source would you prefer to use next most often?” (Q. 19)

Channels Used Most Often

To measure what channels respondents used most often, respondents were asked:

- “Which of these do you receive information from sources through most often?” (Q. 20)
- “Which of these do you receive information from sources through second most often?” (Q. 21)

- “Which of these do you receive information from sources through third most often?” (Q. 22)

Channels Preferred for Use

To address, respondents were asked:

- “Which of those would you prefer to receive information from sources through?” (Q. 23)
- “Which of these would you prefer to receive information from sources through second most often?” (Q. 24)
- “Which of these would prefer to receive information from sources through third most often?” (Q. 25)

Perception of Source’s Channel Use

To address, respondents were asked:

- “Do you notice different sources using different information channels?” (Q. 26)
- “Do the different ways you receive information from sources affect your use of those sources?” (Q. 27)

Demographics

To address, respondents were asked:

- “What is your current circulation?” (Q. 28)
- “Is your publication independent or family owned or is it chain owned?” (Q. 29)
- “How many years have you been working at your current position?” (Q. 30)

Data Analysis

Data analyses include both quantitative and qualitative analyses and will be expanded on in the results section as appropriate.

Among the editors responding, 70% (seven) worked at papers with a circulation of 10,000 or less, 40% (four) at papers with a circulation of 10,001 to 20,000, 27% (three) at papers with 20,001 to 50,000, and 13% (one) at papers with a circulation of 50,000 or more.

Among the editors responding, 70% (seven) worked at papers with a circulation of 10,000 or less, 40% (four) at papers with a circulation of 10,001 to 20,000, 27% (three) at papers with 20,001 to 50,000, and 13% (one) at papers with a circulation of 50,000 or more.

Eighty (57%) of the publications were corporate owned, three (20%) were family owned, two (15%) were association owned, and two (15%) were independently owned. *Editor: What attributes of sources do editors consider most important?*

Using a scale of 1 = very important, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = not very important, editors indicated the importance of six factors when identifying an information source: (a) ease of access, (b) ability to supply accurate information, (c) time pressure, (d) the source's ability to explain information, (e) recommendations by colleagues, and (f) personal relationship with source. Editors were also asked to explain why they gave the answers they did.

All 15 editors indicated that a source's ability to supply accurate information was very important (see Table 1). Many editors also indicated ability to explain information (80%), ease of access (73%), time pressure within their organization (67%), and recommendations by colleagues (67%) as very important. Only 27% felt a personal relationship with the source was very important.

Results

Among the 15 editors, 47% (seven) of the editors had been at their current position for less than 10 years. A third (five) had been in their current position for 10 to 20 years, and 20% (three) of the editors had been in their current position for 20 years or more.

Among the editors responding, 20% (three) worked at papers with a circulation of 10,000 or less; 40% (six) at papers with a circulation of 10,001 to 20,000; 27% (four) at papers with 20,001 to 50,000; and 13% (two) at papers with a circulation of 50,000 or more.

Eight (53%) of the publications were corporate owned, three (20%) were family owned, two (13%) were association owned, and two (13%) were independently owned.

RQ1: What Attributes of Sources do Editors Consider Most Important?

Using a scale of 1 = very important, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = not very important, editors indicated the importance of six factors when identifying an information source: (a) ease of access, (b) ability to supply accurate information, (c) time pressures, (d) the source's ability to explain information, (e) recommendation by colleagues, and (f) personal relationship with source. Editors were also asked to explain why they gave the answers they did.

All 15 editors indicated that a source's ability to supply accurate information was very important (see Table 1). Many editors also indicated ability to explain information (80%), ease of access (73%), time pressures within their organization (67%), and recommendations by colleagues (47%) as very important. Only 27% felt a personal relationship with the source was very important.

Table 1. Over half of the editors (60%) felt that personal relationships with a source were somewhat important. A recommendation by colleagues was somewhat important to 40% of the editors.

Table 2. Two editors each answered that recommendations by colleagues (13%) and personal relationships with the source (13%) were not very important. Only one editor each (7%) answered that ease of access, ability to explain information, and time pressures within the organization were not very important.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Ease of access	0	0	1
Ability to explain info	0	0	1
Recommendation by colleagues	0	2	2
Personal relationship with source	0	2	2

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Table 1

Editors' Rankings of Attributes of Sources Considered Most Important

Factors	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Ease of access	11	3	1
Ability to supply accurate info	15	-	-
Time pressures	10	4	1
Ability to explain info	12	2	1
Recommendation by colleagues	7	6	2
Personal relationship with source	4	9	2

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

To analyze the qualitative "Why" data from Questions 1 and 7, data were summarized in a table (Appendix H through Appendix M). Each respondent's answer was broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final categories were then reported.

Over two-thirds of the editors indicated that time pressures, both within their own organization or those of the source, were a main reason why ease of access was a criteria in choosing a source (Appendix H). Most editors reported that they were short on time to hit deadlines and would use those sources that were easy to access. One editor responded that while he knew good sources, he would not use them if he could not access them easily.

When asked about the factor of providing accurate information, one-third of the editors indicated that accuracy was key to the success of the publication, citing reasons such as possible lawsuits for inaccurate information and readers' dependence on the publication for accurate information (Appendix I). Two editors each mentioned that accuracy was the most important criteria; inaccurate sources and inaccurate data were worthless to their publications.

Two-thirds of the editors felt that time pressures were a factor in using a source because they were under constant pressure to produce timely, accurate information (Appendix J). A third of the editors reported that they weren't under tight deadlines, so time pressures weren't as important as a more frequently published publication.

For the factor of ability to explain information, over one-third of the editors indicated this criterion was important because a source's ability to explain information affected the editors' understanding, which ultimately affects the end communication that reaches the reader (Appendix K). Editors also felt that ability to explain was necessary for unfamiliar or technical information and indicated they would avoid those sources that were overly "technical" in their explanations; however, two editors felt that it was their job to interpret information correctly more than the source's ability to explain.

When asked about the criteria of colleague source recommendations, one-third of the editors responded that they had their own set of established sources, which they trusted and were most likely to use over those recommended by colleagues (Appendix L). However, this was followed closely by the response that colleagues often had a more established set of sources that editors felt they would use. The idea of trust, or distrust, of others' recommendations was expressed by one-fifth of the editors.

For the final criteria, personal relationship with a source, the response most indicated by editors was that a personal relationship created trust between the source and editor allowing for more information to be passed freely, in some instances, having sources give editors exclusive information that they may not give others (Appendix M). Next most indicated was that editors felt a "professional" relationship, not a "personal" one was sufficient.

The editors were also asked an open-ended question as to other factors that they use when identifying a source, other than the six that were offered (Appendix N). While each editor was allowed to offer as many answers as they desired, five (33%) editors indicated that the source's matter expertise in a subject matter was important. Credibility

of the source was indicated by two editors, and credibility of the source's organization (who they worked for, represented, etc.) was a factor for one editor. One editor felt a factor was the uniqueness of the source or the information it would provide, i.e., not widely used by other publications, and one felt the source's willingness to provide information to those outside of its own field was a criteria.

RQ2a: What Sources do Agriculture Editors Use in their Publications and Why?

Editors specified which of seven information sources that are used the most frequently to address Research Question 2a: What sources are agriculture editors using in their publications?

The seven information sources evaluated were cooperative extension, university faculty and staff (excluding cooperative extension), state departments of agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, trade and commodity groups, agribusiness, and farm organizations. Editors were asked to choose most used, second most used, and third most used information source from the list of the above mentioned sources (see Table 2). The frequency of responses and overall use was tabulated for each source.

Table 2

First, Second, and Third Most Used Information Source by Editor

	1st	2nd	3rd
Editor #1	Coop. extension	University	Trade and comm.
Editor #2	Trade and comm.	Agribusiness	University
Editor #3	Coop. extension	University	Trade and comm.
Editor #4	Coop. extension	Trade and comm.	Farm organizations
Editor #5	Coop. extension	University	USDA
Editor #6	Coop. extension	University	Trade and comm.
Editor #7	Trade and comm.	University	Agribusiness
Editor #8	University	Coop. extension	USDA
Editor #9	Coop. extension	Agribusiness	Farm organizations
Editor #10	University	Trade and comm.	Agribusiness
Editor #11	Agribusiness	University	N/A
Editor #12	University	Coop. Extension	Trade and comm.
Editor #13	University	Trade and comm.	USDA
Editor #14	Coop. extension	Trade and comm.	University
Editor #15	Trade and comm.	Coop. extension	USDA
Public source total			
Coop. extension	7	3	-
University	4	6	2
USDA	-	-	4
Private source total			
Agribusiness	1	2	2
Farm organizations	-	-	2
Trade and commodity	3	4	4
Overall use*			
Coop. extension	27		
University	26		
Trade and commodity	21		
Agribusiness	11		
USDA	4		
Farm organizations	2		

* Overall use was calculated by assigning a numerical value to each choice: 1st = 3, 2nd = 2, 3rd = 1. Sources were ranked from highest score (most used) to lowest score (least used).

The most used source named by editors was cooperative extension as listed by nearly half (seven) of the editors. University faculty and staff and trade and commodity groups were the next most mentioned and were most likely to be mentioned as the second most used sources, along with cooperative extension. The remaining sources were sporadically mentioned as third most used sources. In all, public sources trumped private as the most often mentioned as the editors' first or second choices. Nearly all of the editors listed a mix of both public and private sources among their top three.

When the editors' top three sources were combined into an index, cooperative extension was the most often mentioned followed closely by university sources. Trade and commodity groups and agribusiness trailed somewhat, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and farm organizations distantly trailing.

To analyze the qualitative "why" data from Questions 15, 16, and 17, a data table for each question, most used source (Appendix O), second most used source (Appendix P), and third most used source (Appendix Q), respectively, was created and analyzed in the same manner as the qualitative data from the previous research question, with each respondents' answers being broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final concepts were then reported.

Cooperative extension was the most frequently used source, as indicated by seven editors (47%). Four editors (27%) indicated that university faculty and staff was the most frequently used source. Trade and commodity ranked as the most frequently used source

for three (20%) editors, and one editor indicated that agribusiness was the most frequently used source of information.

Of the 47% of editors who indicated cooperative extension was the most frequently used source, their reasoning varied (see Table 3). Three indicated that cooperative extension is most used because it was easy to access. Two responded that the source provided timely information, two responded that it provided specialized information, and two also indicated it provided practical information. Other responses, given by one editor each included expertise of the source, specialized information, and cooperative extension's ability to supply information. Editors were asked to further clarify whether they got information from county, regional, or state extension agents most. Of the nine editors who answered, county agents were rated as the most used, followed by regional, and finally by state.

Of the 27% of editors who responded that university faculty and staff was the most used source, the most frequent reason (three of the four editors) was because of the source's broad base of knowledge. Two editors indicated that the source was most used because of its expertise.

Of the 20% of editors who responded trade and commodity groups were the most used information source, the most common reason was that the source provided specialized information.

Table 3

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Used Source Choices

Factors	Cooperative extension	University	Trade & commodity	Agribusiness
	freq.* n = 7/15	freq.* n = 4/15	freq.* n = 3/15	freq.* n = 1/15
Ease of access	3	3	1	-
Specialized info	1	-	2	1
Timely info	2	1	-	-
Practical info	2	-	-	-
Expertise	1	1	-	-
Familiarity with audience	1	-	1	-
Reliability	1	-	-	-
Dependability	1	-	-	-
Ability to supply info	1	-	-	-
Broad base of knowledge	-	1	-	-

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Second most used information source.

Editors also specified which of the seven information sources that are used second most frequently (see Table 4).

University faculty and staff was the top choice for second most frequently used source as indicated by six editors (40%). Four editors (27%) ranked trade and commodity groups as the second most used information source. Extension was the second most used information source for three editors (20%), and agribusiness ranked as the second most used information source for two editors (13%).

Of the 40% of editors who responded that university faculty and staff was the second most used information source, four of them responded that it was due to the specialized information it provided. Two editors each responded that it was due to the source's expertise and due to its credibility. Other responses indicated that the source provided timely and reliable information.

Of the 27% of editors who responded that trade and commodity groups were the second most used source, two indicated that the source provided specialized information. One editor each responded that the source provided reliable information, provided credible information, provided expertise, and provided a broad base of knowledge.

Of the 20% of editors who responded that cooperative extension was the second most frequently used information source, two responded that it was used because of ease of access. Of the two editors (13%) who answered agribusiness was their second most used information source, responses indicated that the source provided specialized information, provided unbiased information, and had a familiarity with the publication's audience. When asked to clarify which agribusinesses were most likely to provide

information, eight editors responded equipment/implement manufacturers, seven indicated veterinary/pharmaceutical companies, and six indicated seed companies. Other agribusinesses mentioned were feed manufacturers (n = 4), chemical companies (n = 3), and environmental management companies (n = 2). One editor each indicated they received the most information from record management companies, processors, and insurance companies.

Table 4 *Third most used information source*

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Used Source Choices

	University	Trade & commodity	Cooperative extension	Agribusiness
	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.
	n = 6/15*	n = 4/15*	n = 3/15*	n = 2/15*
Factors				
Specialized info	4	2	-	1
Expertise	2	1	1	-
Familiarity with audience	1	-	-	1
Reliability	1	1	-	-
Timely info	1	-	-	-
Ease of access	-	-	1	-
Credibility	-	1	-	-
Ability to explain info	-	-	1	-
Broad base of knowledge	-	1	-	-

* Editors Were Allowed to Give More than One Response

Third most used information source.

Editors also specified which of the seven information sources were used third most frequently (see Table 5).

Trade and commodity groups and the U.S. Department of Agriculture were the top choice for third most frequently used sources, as each were indicated by four editors (27%) who answered the question. Two editors (13%) ranked university faculty and staff as the third most used information source. Farm organizations were also the third most used information source for two editors (13%), as did agribusiness.

Of the 27% of editors who responded trade and commodity groups was their third most used information source, three indicated that the source had a familiarity with the publication's audience, and two indicated that the source provided specialized information.

Of the four editors who responded the U.S. Department of Agriculture was their third most used information source, three indicated it was because the source provided specialized information. Other reasons indicated the source was used because of its ability to explain and its broad base of knowledge.

Of the two editors who answered that university faculty and staff was the third most used information source, one editor each indicated the source provided unbiased information and provided expertise.

Of the two editors that responded that farm organizations was their third most used information source, two indicated the source was familiar with their publication's audience. The two editors who responded agribusiness was their third most used source

indicated the source provided specialized information and the source was familiar with the publication's audience.

Table 3. Third Most Used Source Choices

Factor	Trade J.		Farm		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Specialized info	2	20%	1	10%	10%
Familiar with audience	2	20%	2	20%	20%
Date of issues	1	10%	1	10%	10%
Broad type of coverage	1	10%	1	10%	10%
Extensive accurate info	1	10%	1	10%	10%
Expertise	1	10%	1	10%	10%
Ability to explain info	1	10%	1	10%	10%

* Factors Were Allowed to Cumulate More Than One Response.

Table 5

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Most Used Source Choices

Factors	Trade & commodity	USDA	University	Farm organizations	Agribusiness
	freq. n = 4/14*	freq. n = 4/14*	freq. n = 2/14*	freq. n = 2/14*	freq. n = 2/14*
Specialized info	2	3	-	1	1
Familiarity with audience	3	-	-	2	1
Ease of access	1	-	-	1	-
Broad base of knowledge	1	1	-	-	-
Unbiased, accurate info	-	-	1	1	-
Expertise	-	-	1	-	-
Ability to explain info	-	1	-	-	-
N/A	-	-	-	-	1

* Editors Were Allowed to Give More than One Response.

RQ2b: Are there differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources?

The total mean scores that editors gave agricultural news sources allows the comparison of the evaluation scores that editors gave public news sources versus those of private news sources on those factors important to editors when identifying a source. The five criteria editor's evaluated sources on were: (a) accessibility, (b) past suitability as a source, (c) ability to provide accurate and unbiased information, (d) ability to provide information without judgment, and (e) overall value as a source. Editors used a scale of 1 (very) to 3 (rarely), to rank agricultural news sources - four sources of agricultural news to evaluate that are considered "public" sources, cooperative extension, university faculty and staff, state department of agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as three sources that are considered "private," trade and commodity organizations, agribusiness, and farm organizations.

Editors were positive about the accessibility of the private agriculture news sources with 80% responding that both trade and commodity and agribusiness sources were very accessible and 73% answering the same about farm organizations. Of public sources, cooperative extension was rated as very accessible by 67% of editors (see Table 6).

However, private sources were rated less favorably when it came to the ability to supply information without making judgment, with 57% rating trade and commodity groups as somewhat to rarely able to supply information without making judgments, 85% rating agribusiness the same, and 86% giving the same rating to farm organizations. This theme also was present when rating the source's ability to provide unbiased, accurate

information. At least one-half of the editors rated the private sources, 53% for trade and commodity groups, 93% for agribusiness, and 67% for farm organizations, as somewhat or rarely able to supply unbiased, accurate information.

It is important to note that the researcher attempted to elicit an answer from each respondent; however, in one case, an editor declined to respond regarding a source's ability to provide information without making judgment, as he felt that all sources make judgments.

Table 6

Editors' Frequency Evaluations of Agricultural News Sources on Accessibility, Past Suitability, Ability to Provide Unbiased, Accurate Information, Ability to Explain Information without Making Judgments, and Overall Value

Factor	Public information sources				Private information sources		
	Cooperative extension freq. (%) n=15	University freq. (%) n=15	State dep't of ag freq. (%) n=15	USDA freq. (%) n=15	Trade & commodity freq. (%) n=15	Agribusiness freq. (%) n=15	Farm organizations freq. (%) n=15
Accessibility							
very	10 (67)	7 (47)	4 (27)	5 (33)	12 (80)	12 (80)	11 (73)
somewhat	3 (20)	6 (40)	9 (60)	7 (47)	3 (20)	3 (20)	1 (7)
rarely	2 (13)	2 (13)	2 (12)	3 (20)	-----	-----	3 (20)
Past suitability							
very	9 (60)	9 (60)	6 (40)	8 (53)	11 (73)	5 (33)	6 (40)
somewhat	3 (20)	5 (33)	6 (40)	3 (20)	4 (27)	8 (53)	5 (33)
rarely	3 (20)	1 (7)	3 (20)	4 (27)	-----	2 (12)	4 (27)
Unbiased, accurate information							
very	6 (40)	10 (67)	9 (60)	10 (67)	7 (47)	1 (7)	5 (33)
somewhat	7 (47)	4 (27)	4 (27)	3 (20)	6 (40)	9 (60)	6 (40)
rarely	2 (12)	1 (7)	2 (12)	2 (12)	2 (12)	5 (33)	4 (27)
Explain info w/o judgment							
very	8 (57)	7 (50)	9 (64)	7 (50)	6 (43)	1 (7)	2 (14)
somewhat	4 (29)	6 (43)	3 (21)	2 (14)	6 (43)	9 (64)	7 (50)
rarely	2 (14)	1 (7)	2 (14)	5 (36)	2 (14)	4 (29)	5 (36)
Overall value							
very	10 (67)	12 (80)	4 (27)	4 (27)	9 (60)	3 (20)	4 (27)
somewhat	2 (13)	2 (13)	7 (47)	7 (47)	6 (40)	8 (53)	7 (47)
rarely	3 (20)	1 (7)	4 (27)	4 (27)	-----	4 (27)	4 (27)

Factor one: accessibility.

Mean scores were calculated on each factor for the purpose of comparison. Editors rated trade and commodity groups, agribusiness, cooperative extension, and farm organizations most favorably in terms of accessibility, with the means of 1.20 ($SD = .40$), 1.20 ($SD = .40$), 1.47 ($SD = .72$), and 1.47 ($SD = .81$), respectively. State departments of agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture were rated as least accessible, both having a mean score of 1.87 ($SD = .62$, $SD = .72$, respectively).

When evaluating the accessibility of the sources between those classified as public versus private, editors rated private sources more favorably than public sources, with means of 1.29 ($SD = .59$) and 1.72 ($SD = .72$), respectively. The mean scores of trade and commodity groups and agribusiness, both private sources, were most favorable, while the mean scores of state departments of agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, both public sources, were rated as least favorable (see Table 7).

A *t* test analysis was used to answer Research Question 2b: Are there significant differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources?

A *t* test analysis indicated that the difference in editors' perceptions of the public and private sources on the factor of accessibility was significant ($t = 3.28$). Thus, editors did perceive that private sources were more accessible than public sources.

Table 7

Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Accessibility

	Source (Public)					Source (Private)			
	Cooperative extension	University	State dep't ag	USDA	Total	Trade & commodity	Agribusiness	Farm organizations	Total
*Mean	1.47	1.67	1.87	1.87	1.72	1.20	1.20	1.47	1.29
S.D.	.72	.70	.62	.72	.72	.40	.40	.81	.59
Ranking	4	5	6	7	2	1	2	3	1

t test = 3.28; *p* < .05

* Scores ranged from 1 (very) to 3 (rarely).

Factor two: past suitability.

Editors rated trade and commodity groups, university faculty and staff, and cooperative extension most favorably in terms of past suitability, with mean scores of 1.27 ($SD = .44$), 1.47 ($SD = .62$), and 1.60 ($SD = .80$) respectively. Farm organizations, agribusiness and state departments of agriculture were rated least positively, with mean scores of 1.87 ($SD = .81$), 1.80 (.65), and 1.80 ($SD = .75$), respectively.

When evaluating the past suitability of the sources between those classified as public versus private, editors slightly rated private sources more favorably than public sources, with means of 1.64 ($SD = .71$) and 1.65 ($SD = .78$), respectively (see Table 8).

A *t* test analysis was used to answer Research Question 2b: Are there significant differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources? *T* test analysis indicated that the difference in the means, and therefore the difference in editors' perceptions, of the public and private sources on the factor of past suitability was not significant ($t = .07$). Thus, the editors saw no difference between the past suitability of public sources and that of private sources.

Table 8

Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Past Suitability

	Source (Public)					Source (Private)			
	Cooperative extension	University	State dep't ag	USDA	Total	Trade & commodity	Agribusiness	Farm organizations	Total
*Mean	1.60	1.47	1.80	1.73	1.65	1.27	1.80	1.87	1.64
S.D.	.80	.62	.75	.85	.78	.44	.65	.81	.71
Ranking	3	2	5	4	2	1	6	7	1

t test = .07; *p* < .05

* Scores ranged from 1 (very) to 3 (rarely).

Factor three: ability to provide unbiased, accurate information.

Editors rated university faculty and staff, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state departments of agriculture most favorably in terms of the ability to provide accurate, unbiased information, with mean scores of 1.40 ($SD = .61$), 1.47 ($SD = .72$), and 1.53 ($SD = .72$), respectively. Least favorably rated were agribusiness, farm organizations, and cooperative extension, with mean scores of 2.27 ($SD = .57$), 1.93 ($SD = .77$), and 1.73 ($SD = .68$), respectively.

When evaluating the ability to supply unbiased, accurate information between those sources classified as public versus those classified as private, editors felt more positive about the public sources. Public source overall mean score was 1.53 ($SD = .70$) versus the private mean score of 1.96 ($SD = .74$). Except for cooperative extension, all other public sources had lower mean scores than those of the private sources (see Table 9).

A *t* test analysis was used to answer Research Question 2b: Are there significant differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources?

A *t* test analysis indicated that the difference in editors' perceptions of public versus private sources on the factor of unbiased, accurate information was significant ($t = -2.75$). Editors did find that public sources were more able to supply unbiased, accurate information than the private sources.

Table 9

Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Ability to Provide Unbiased, Accurate Information

	Source (Public)				Total	Source (Private)			Total
	Cooperative extension	University	State dep't ag	USDA		Trade & commodity	Agribusiness	Farm organizations	
*Mean	1.73	1.40	1.53	1.47	1.53	1.67	2.27	1.93	1.96
S.D.	.68	.61	.72	.72	.70	.70	.57	.77	.74
Ranking	5	1	3	2	1	4	7	6	2

t test = -2.75; *p* < .05

* Scores ranged from 1 (very) to 3 (rarely).

Factor four: ability to provide information without judgment.

It is important to note that for this factor, $n = 14$, as one editor declined to answer the question, stating that he felt no source could provide information without making judgments.

On the factor of ability to provide information without making judgments, editors felt most positive about state departments of agriculture, cooperative extension, and university faculty and staff with means of 1.50 ($SD = .73$), 1.57 ($SD = .73$), 1.57 ($SD = .62$), respectively. They felt considerably less positively about farm organizations, agribusiness, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with mean scores of 2.21 ($SD = .67$), 2.21 ($SD = .56$), and 1.86 ($SD = .91$), respectively.

When evaluating the factor of ability to provide information without making judgments across those sources classified as public and private, editors indicated they were more positive about public sources, with a mean score of 1.63 ($SD = .74$) versus the private source mean of 2.05 ($SD = .70$) (see Table 10).

A t test analysis was used to answer Research Question 2b: Are there significant differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources?

A t test analysis of the mean scores indicated that the difference in editors' responses on this factor across public and private sources was significant ($t = 3.28$). The editors perceived that public sources were superior to private sources at providing information without making judgments.

Table 10

Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Ability to Explain Information without Judgment

	Source (Public)				Source (Private)				
	Cooperative extension	University	State dep't ag	USDA	Total	Trade & commodity	Agribusiness	Farm organizations	Total
*Mean	1.57	1.57	1.50	1.86	1.63	1.71	2.21	2.21	2.05
S.D.	.73	.62	.73	.91	.74	.85	.56	.67	.70
Ranking	2	3	1	5	1	4	6	7	2

t test = 3.28; *p* < .05

* Scores ranged from 1 (very) to 3 (rarely).

Factor five: overall value.

Editors rated university faculty and staff, trade and commodity groups, and cooperative extension most favorably in terms of their overall value, with mean scores of 1.27 ($SD = .57$), 1.40 ($SD = .49$), and 1.53 ($SD = .81$), respectively. All other sources were viewed as considerably less favorable, all with mean scores at 2.00 or higher. Of these, the least favorably rated was agribusiness, with a mean score of 2.07 ($SD = .68$).

When evaluating public versus private sources on the factor of overall value, editors indicated that public sources were more valuable than private sources, with mean scores of 1.70 ($SD = .79$) and 2.00 ($SD = .72$), respectively. Editors rated all private sources, except for trade and commodity groups, less positively than the public sources (see Table 11).

A *t* test analysis was used to answer Research Question 2b: Are there significant differences between the editors' perceptions of public sources and private sources? *T* test analysis indicated that the difference in the mean scores, and thus editors' perceptions, was not significant for this factor ($t = .80$). Editors did not perceive a difference between the public and private sources in terms of overall value.

Table 11

Editors' Rankings of News Sources on Their Overall Value

	Source (Public)					Source (Private)			
	Cooperative extension	University	State dep't ag	USDA	Total	Trade & commodity	Agribusiness	Farm organizations	Total
*Mean	1.53	1.27	2.00	2.00	1.70	1.40	2.07	2.00	1.82
S.D.	.81	.57	.73	.73	.79	.49	.68	.73	.72
Ranking	3	2	5	4	1	1	6	7	2

t test = .08; $p < .05$

* Scores ranged from 1 (very) to 3 (rarely).

RQ3: What Sources do Editors Prefer to Use and Why?

Editors specified which of seven information sources that they prefer to use most frequently to address Research Question 3: What sources do agriculture editors prefer to use?

Editors specified which of seven information sources that they preferred to use the most frequently: cooperative extension, university faculty and staff (excluding cooperative extension), state departments of agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, trade and commodity groups, agribusiness, and farm organizations. Editors were asked to choose most preferred and second most preferred information source from the list of the above mentioned sources (see Table 12). The frequency of responses and overall use was tabulated for each source.

The most preferred source named by editors was cooperative extension as listed by over half (nine) of the editors. Trade and commodity and university sources were the next most mentioned and were most likely to be mentioned as the second most used sources, followed distantly by agribusiness. In all, public sources trumped private as the most often mentioned as the editors' first choices; however, one private source, trade and commodity groups, was most mentioned as the second most used source. Nearly two-thirds of the editors listed a mix of both public and private sources among their top two.

When the editors' top three sources were combined into an index, cooperative extension was the most often mentioned followed by university sources. Trade and commodity groups trailed somewhat, with agribusiness distantly trailing. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and farm organizations were not mentioned as most preferred sources by editors.

Table 12

First, Second Most Preferred Information Source by Editor

	1st	2nd
Editor #1	Coop. extension	University
Editor #2	Agribusiness	Trade and commodity
Editor #3	Coop. extension	University
Editor #4	Coop. extension	Trade and commodity
Editor #5	Coop. extension	University
Editor #6	Coop. extension	Trade and commodity
Editor #7	Trade and commodity	University
Editor #8	University	Coop. extension
Editor #9	Coop. extension	University
Editor #10	University	Trade and commodity
Editor #11	Agribusiness	University
Editor #12	Coop. extension	University
Editor #13	University	Trade and commodity
Editor #14	Coop. extension	Trade and commodity
Editor #15	Coop. extension	Trade and commodity
Public source total		
Coop. Extension	9	1
University	3	6
Private source total		
Agribusiness	2	-
Trade and commodity	1	7
Overall use*		
Coop. extension	29	
University	23	
Trade and commodity	17	
Agribusiness	6	

* Overall use calculated by assigning a numerical value to each choice: 1st = 3, 2nd = 2, 3rd = 1. Sources were ranked from highest score (most used) to lowest score (least used).

To analyze the qualitative "Why" data from Questions 18 and 19, a data table for each question, most preferred source (Appendix R) and second most preferred source (Appendix S), respectively, was created and analyzed in the same manner as the qualitative data from the previous research question, with each respondents' answers being broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final concepts were then reported.

Cooperative extension was the most preferred information source, as indicated by nine editors (60%). Three editors (20%) indicated that university faculty and staff was the most preferred information source. Agribusiness ranked as the most preferred information source for two (13%) editors, and one editor indicated that trade and commodity groups was the most preferred source of information.

Of the 60% of editors who indicated cooperative extension was the most preferred information source, explanations for the responses varied (see Table 13). Three indicated that cooperative extension is most preferred because it is easy to access. Three indicated that the source provided expertise. Two responded that the source provided timely information, and two also responded that it provided practical information. Other responses included the source provided a broad base of knowledge and specialized information, among others.

Of the 20% of editors who responded that university faculty and staff was their most preferred source, reasons varied from the source's familiarity with the publication's audience and expertise to its ability to provide specialized information.

Table 13

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Preferred Source Uses

	Cooperative extension freq.* n = 9/15	University freq.* n = 3/15	Agribusiness freq.* n = 2/15	Trade & commodity freq.* n = 1/15
Factors				
Ease of access	3	1	1	-
Expertise	3	1	-	-
Familiarity with audience	1	1	-	1
Practical info	2	1	-	-
Specialized info	1	1	-	-
Timely info	2	-	-	-
Credibility	1	-	-	-
Unbiased, accurate	-	1	-	-
Broad base of knowledge	1	-	-	-
N/A	1	-	1	-

* Editors Were Allowed to Give More than One Response.

Second most preferred information source.

Editors also specified which of the seven information sources are second most preferred. University faculty and staff and trade and commodity groups were the top choices for second most preferred information source as indicated by seven editors (47%) each. One editor (6%) ranked cooperative extension as the second most preferred source.

Of the 47% of editors who responded that university faculty and staff was the second most preferred information source, six of them indicated that it was due to the specialized information it provided (see Table 14). Two editors indicated that the source was accurate and unbiased. Of the 47% of editors who responded that trade and commodity groups were the second most preferred sources, three indicated that the source provided specialized information. Other responses indicated that the source provided credible information, was accurate, and was able to recommend other sources, among other reasons.

Table 14

Frequency of Factors in Editor's Second Preferred Source Use

	University	Trade & commodity	Cooperative extension
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 7/15	n = 7/15	n = 1/15
<hr/>			
Factors			
Specialized info	6	3	1
Unbiased, accurate	3	1	-
Familiarity with audience	1	1	-
Source recommendation	-	1	-
Timely info	1	-	-
Ability to explain info	-	-	1
Credibility	-	1	-
Broad base of knowledge	-	1	-
Overall suitability	-	1	-

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

RQ4: What Channels do Editors Publish the Most Information From and Why?

Editors also specified which of the seven information channels that they receive information through most frequently - personal interviews, telephone interviews, e-mail, fax, mail, wire services, and Web sites - to address Research Question 4: What channels do editors publish the most information from and why?

Editors were asked to choose most used, second most used and third most used information channels from the above mentioned list (see Table 15). The frequency of responses and overall use was tabulated for each source.

Channel	Most Used	Second Most Used	Third Most Used	Overall Use
Personal Interviews	15	10	5	30
Telephone Interviews	12	8	4	24
E-mail	18	12	6	36
Fax	5	3	2	10
Mail	7	4	2	13
Wire Services	3	2	1	6
Web Sites	10	6	3	19

Table 15

First, Second, and Third Most Used Information Channel by Editor

	1st	2nd	3rd
Editor #1	Personal	E-mail	Telephone
Editor #2	Personal	Telephone	E-mail
Editor #3	Telephone	Personal	E-mail
Editor #4	E-mail	Web site	Fax
Editor #5	E-mail	Personal	Telephone
Editor #6	Personal	Telephone	E-mail
Editor #7	E-mail	Telephone	Personal
Editor #8	E-mail	Web site	Personal
Editor #9	E-mail	Telephone	Personal
Editor #10	E-mail	Telephone	Mail
Editor #11	E-mail	Telephone	Personal
Editor #12	Telephone	E-mail	Personal
Editor #13	E-mail	Telephone	Mail
Editor #14	Web site	E-mail	Telephone
Editor #15	Telephone	E-mail	Wire service
Channel total			
E-mail	8	4	3
Fax	-	-	1
Mail	-	-	2
Personal	3	2	5
Telephone	3	7	3
Web site	1	1	-
Wire service	-	-	1
Overall use			
E-mail	35		
Telephone	26		
Personal	16		
Web site	5		
Mail	2		
Fax	1		
Wire service	1		

* Overall use calculated by assigning a numerical value to each choice: 1st = 3, 2nd = 2, 3rd = 1. Sources were ranked from highest score (most used) to lowest score (least used).

The most used channel named by editors was e-mail as listed by over half (eight) of the editors. Personal interviews and telephone were the next most mentioned and were most likely to be mentioned as the second most used channel, along with e-mail, which ranked higher as second choice than personal interviews. The remaining sources were sporadically mentioned as third most used source, though telephone ranked highest of all other channels for third most used.

When the editors' top three channels were combined into an index, e-mail was by far the most mentioned followed by telephone. Personal interviews trailed somewhat with Web site and mail distantly trailing. Fax and wire service were only mentioned by one editor each.

To analyze the data from Questions 21, 22, and 23, a data table for each question, most used information channel (Appendix T), second most used information channel (Appendix U), and third most used information channel (Appendix V), respectively, was created and analyzed in the same manner as the qualitative data from the previous research question, with each respondent's answers being broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final concepts were then reported.

E-mail was the most used information channel as indicated by eight editors (53%). Three editors (20%) indicated that personal interviews were their most used information channel, and three editors (20%) also indicated that telephone interviews was

their most used information channel. One editor indicated that his/her most used information channel was Web site.

Of the 53% of editors that used the most information from e-mail, the most common reasons were that the editors had specifically requested to receive information through the channel (indicated by two editors) and that it was time efficient (indicated by two editors) (see Table 16). E-mail was also indicated as easy to use, provided access to large quantities of information and allowed for the ability to check accuracy of information. One editor, however, felt that the channel wasn't time efficient, as it took time to weed through the amount of information it delivered.

Three editors (20%) indicated that personal communication was their most used information channel, of which two noted that this channel was most common during attendance at meetings, tours, conventions, etc. The editors felt it was an easy way to obtain detailed information from suitable past sources.

Of the three editors (20%) that indicated that telephone interview was their most used information channel, the most common reason was that it was time efficient. Other reasons included easy to use, provided ease of access to established sources, and was the most familiar channel to the publication's audience.

Table 16

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Information Channel Uses

	E-mail	Personal	Telephone	Web site
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 8/15	n = 3/15	n = 3/15	n = 1/15
<hr/> Factors				
Time efficient	2	-	1	1
Requested channel	2	-	-	-
Ease of use	1	-	1	-
Ease of access to info	-	1	-	1
Access to large quantities of info	1	-	-	-
Dissemination of credible data	1	-	-	-
Allows for accuracy checks	1	-	-	-
Allows for follow up	1	-	-	-
Past suitability	-	1	-	-
Access to detailed info	-	1	-	-
Audience familiarity	-	-	1	-
Access to established sources	-	-	1	-
N/A	1	-	-	-

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Second most used information channel.

Telephone was the second most used information channel as indicated by seven editors (47%) (see Table 17). Four editors (27%) responded that e-mail was their second most used information channel. Two editors each indicated that Web site and personal communication were the second most used information channels.

Of the seven editors that responded telephone, two responded that the channel provided ease of access to information. Other answers, as given by one editor each, ranged from telephone being the preference of the source to it allowing a way to check accuracy.

The four editors who responded e-mail was the second most used information source did not provide answers that corresponded with each other. They indicated that e-mail was how they requested to receive information and was time efficient, among other responses.

Table 17

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Second Most Used Channel Choices

	Telephone	E-mail	Web site	Personal
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 7/15	n = 4/15	n = 2/15	n = 2/15
<hr/> Factors				
Ease of access to info	2	1	-	-
Allows for accuracy check	1	1	-	-
Allows for follow up	-	-	1	1
Requested channel	-	1	-	-
Time efficient	-	1	-	-
Personal contact	1	-	-	-
Provides photo opportunity	-	-	-	1
Audience familiarity	-	1	-	-
Source preference	1	-	-	-
N/A	2	-	1	1

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Third most used information channel.

E-mail was ranked as the third most used information channel by four editors (33%) (see Table 18). Three editors (20%) each indicated that the telephone and personal communication were their third most used information channel. One editor each responded that mail, wire services, Web site, and fax were their third most used information channels.

Of the four editors that ranked e-mail as their third most used information channel, one felt it gave access to large quantities of information, and one each felt that it was easy to use and allowed for the best access to sources for follow up.

Three editors indicated that the telephone was the third most used information channel because it allowed easy access to information and was easy to use. Two of the editors that indicated personal communication came through attendance at meetings and conventions.

Table 18

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Third Most Used Channel Choices

	E-mail	Personal	Telephone	Web site	Wire	Fax	Mail
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 8/15	n = 3/15	n = 3/15	n = 1/15	n = 1/15	n = 1/15	n = 1/15
Factors							
Access large quantities of info	2	1	-	-	-	1	1
Ease of use	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Allows for follow up	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ease of access to info	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Access to sources	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Access to timely info	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Audience familiarity	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
N/A	-	1	1	1	-	-	1

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

RQ5: What Channels do Editors Prefer to Receive Information From and Why?

Editors specified which of seven information channels they prefer to use most frequently to address Research Question 5: What channels do editors prefer to receive information through and why?

Editors were asked to choose most preferred, second most preferred and third most preferred information channels from the list of the aforementioned sources (see Table 19). The frequency of responses and overall use was tabulated for each source.

Editor #	1st Preferred	2nd Preferred	3rd Preferred
Editor #1	Print	Internet	Mail
Editor #2	Print	Internet	Web
Editor #3	Print	Telephone	Mail
Editor #4	Print	Web	Internet
Editor #5	Telephone	Print	Mail
Editor #6	Telephone	Print	Internet
Editor #7	Print	Telephone	Web
Editor #8	Print	Web	Mail
Editor #9	Telephone	Print	Internet

Channel	Frequency	Overall Use
Print	10	10
Web	5	5
Internet	5	5
Mail	5	5
Telephone	5	5
Web	5	5
Web	5	5

Channel	Frequency	Overall Use
Print	10	10
Telephone	10	10
Print	10	10
Web	5	5
Mail	5	5
Web	5	5
Internet	5	5

* Overall use calculated by summing a channel's value in each editor's 1st, 2nd, & 3rd preferred channel.

Table 19

First, Second, and Third Most Preferred Channel by Editor

	1st	2nd	3rd
Editor #1	Personal	E-mail	Telephone
Editor #2	E-mail	Personal	Telephone
Editor #3	Telephone	Personal	E-mail
Editor #4	E-mail	Web site	Fax
Editor #5	Personal	Telephone	E-mail
Editor #6	Personal	Telephone	E-mail
Editor #7	E-mail	Telephone	Mail
Editor #8	E-mail	Personal	Web sites
Editor #9	Personal	Telephone	E-mail
Editor #10	E-mail	Web site	Telephone
Editor #11	Telephone	Personal	E-mail
Editor #12	Telephone	E-mail	Personal
Editor #13	E-mail	Telephone	Web site
Editor #14	E-mail	Web site	Mail
Editor #15	Telephone	E-mail	Wire service
	Channel total		
E-mail	7	3	4
Fax	-	-	1
Mail	-	-	2
Personal	4	4	1
Telephone	4	5	3
Web site	-	2	2
Wire service	-	-	1
	Overall use*		
E-mail	32		
Telephone	25		
Personal	21		
Web site	9		
Mail	2		
Fax	1		
Wire service	1		

* Overall use calculated by assigning a numerical value to each choice: 1st = 3, 2nd = 2, 3rd = 1. Sources were ranked from highest score (most used) to lowest score (least used).

The most preferred channel named by editors was e-mail as listed by nearly half (seven) editors. Personal interviews and telephone were the next most mentioned and were most likely to be mentioned as the second most preferred channel, along with e-mail. The remaining sources were sporadically mentioned as third most preferred sources, though e-mail also ranked highest of all other channels for third most preferred.

When the editors' top three channels were combined into an index, e-mail was by far the most often mentioned. Telephone ranked next, followed closely by personal interviews, with Web site and mail distantly trailing. Fax and wire service were only mentioned by one editor each.

To analyze the qualitative "Why" data from Questions 24, 25, and 26, a data table for each question, most preferred information channel (Appendix W), second most preferred information channel (Appendix X), and third most preferred information channel (Appendix Y), respectively, was created and analyzed in the same manner as the qualitative data from the previous research question, with each respondents answers being broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final categories were then reported.

E-mail was the most preferred information channel for the editors, as indicated by seven editors (47%) (see Table 20). Telephone and personal communication were the most preferred channels for four editors (27%) each.

Of those editors that indicated e-mail was the most preferred channel to receive information, the most common responses, as indicated by two editors each, is that e-mail

is easy to use and time efficient. The responses given by one editor each ranged from the channel allowing for follow up on information to it being convenient.

Two editors each, of the four that preferred personal communication, felt that it allowed easy access to information and allowed for immediate clarification of information. Two editors also responded that personal communication allowed ease of access to sources.

The four editors that preferred telephone communication did not have corresponding reasoning. Their responses ranged from allowing immediate clarification of information to allowing easy access to sources.

The strongest

Access to sources

Allows for follow up

Allows for accuracy checks

Required direct

Personal review

Provides plenty opportunity

Secure preference

Convenient

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Table 20

Frequency of Factors in Editors' Most Preferred Channel Choices

	E-mail	Telephone	Personal
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 7/15	n = 4/15	n = 4/15
<hr/> Factors <hr/>			
Immediate clarification	-	1	2
Ease of access to info	-	-	2
Ease of use	2	-	-
Time efficient	2	-	-
Access to source	-	1	1
Allows for follow up	1	1	-
Allows for accuracy checks	-	-	-
Requested channel	1	-	-
Personal contact	1	-	-
Provides photo opportunity	-	-	1
Source preference	-	1	-
Convenient	1	-	-

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Table 21. Second most preferred information channel.

Five editors responded that telephone communication was the second most preferred information channel (see Table 21). Personal communication ranked next for second most preferred channel, as indicated by four editors. Three editors each felt that e-mail and Web sites were the second most preferred information source.

Of those editors whose second most preferred information channel was telephone communication, three felt it was due to the channel's personal nature, while two indicated it allowed immediate clarification of information. Out of the four editors who indicated that personal communication was second most preferred, two reported that this channel was used mostly through attendance at meetings and conventions.

Table 21

Frequency of Factors in Editor's Second Most Preferred Channel Choice

	Telephone	Personal	E-mail	Web site
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 5/15	n = 4/15	n = 3/15	n = 3/15
Factors				
Personal contact	3	-	-	-
Immediate clarification	2	-	1	-
Access through meetings/conventions	-	2	-	-
Ease of access to info	1	-	-	1
Requested channel	-	-	-	1
Time efficient	-	-	-	1
Allows for accuracy check	-	-	1	-
Allows for follow up	-	-	-	-
Ease of use	-	-	1	-
Allows for "packaged" info	-	1	-	-
Access to source	-	1	-	-
Efficient	-	-	-	-
Organization system	-	-	1	-
Clutter reduction	-	-	1	-

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

Third most preferred information channel.

The third most preferred channel as indicated by five editors was e-mail. Three editors felt that telephone was their third most preferred information channel (see Table 22). Mail and Web sites were indicated by two editors each. One editor each responded that personal interviews, fax and wire service was their third most used information channel.

Of the five editors that ranked e-mail as the third most preferred channel, answers ranged from not desiring other channels to e-mail being easy to use.

Available programs

Available later

Always for follow up

None of them to date

Easy to use

Allowed for "packaged" help

Efficient

Costly collection

NA

* Editors were allowed to give more than one answer

Table 22 *Third Most Preferred Channel Choice*

Frequency of Factors in Editor's Third Most Preferred Channel Choice

	E-mail	Telephone	Mail	Web	Persona l	Wire	Fax
	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*	freq.*
	n = 5/15	n = 3/15	n = 2/15	n = 2/15	n = 1/15	n = 1/15	n = 1/15
Factors							
Other channels undesired	1	-	2	-	-	-	-
Time efficient	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Audience preference	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Acceptable labor	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Allows for follow up	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ease of access to info	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Ease of use	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Allows for "packaged" info	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Efficient	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Clutter reduction	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
N/A	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

* Editors were allowed to give more than one response.

RQ6a: To What Extent do Public and Private Sources Vary in their Use of Information Channels?

Editors specified if and how they perceived different channel uses of different sources to address Research Question 6a: To what extent do public and private sources vary in their use of information channels?

It is important to note that editors were allowed to provide more than one response and were not required to address every source's channel use, only those they felt were relevant to their publications.

To analyze the qualitative "Why" data for this question, a data table (Appendix Z) was created including the full responses from each of the editor and was analyzed in the same manner as the qualitative data from the previous research question, with each respondent's answers being broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final categories were then reported.

Thirteen editors provided explanation; six felt that e-mail was the channel most used by all sources. Two editors felt that mail was rarely used by any source, and one editor indicated that fax was rarely used. However, one editor reported that he still received some information by fax and mail. One editor also indicated that after e-mail, telephone was the channel second most used by all sources. The two editors that did not provide an explanation did respond that they noticed a difference in channel use by

different information sources. One editor felt that technology is not yet widespread in the agriculture industry, so some may use it to disseminate information and some may not.

Seven editors provided detailed responses as to the information channels that were used by sources they work with. Three indicated that cooperative extension used e-mail the most to disseminate information. One of those three editors indicated that cooperative extension rarely used the telephone as an information channel. One editor also responded that he felt cooperative extension most used the personal communication channel.

Four editors indicated that university faculty and staff were most likely to send information via e-mail. One of these editors did mention that though he has specifically requested information through e-mail, he continues to receive some information through mail from university sources.

Three editors mentioned the information channel use of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. One felt that the U.S. Department of Agriculture relied most on its Web site to disseminate its information. One editor indicated that the fax was most commonly used channel by this source, also mentioning that though he has specifically requested information through e-mail, he continues to receive some information through fax from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (as well as from sources providing funding information). One editor felt that the U.S. Department of Agriculture sent its information via e-mail, mail, and Web sites.

Two editors indicated that farm organizations were most likely to push information via e-mail. One of the two also indicated that this source also sends information through mail and Web sites.

For trade and commodity groups' information channel use, one editor felt it used e-mail most, while one editor felt that it used personal communication most.

Agribusiness was indicated to be a diverse information channel user by two editors. Both editors mentioned that they felt agribusiness was most likely to disseminate information through e-mail and mail. One editor also felt it disseminated information through the Web, while one editor felt it also used the personal information channel as well.

One editor felt that state departments of agriculture relied mostly on Web sites to disseminate information.

RQ6b: Does the Use of Information Channels Influence Which Sources Editors Use?

Editors further clarified their perceptions of information channel use by sources to answer Research Question 6b: Does the use of information channels influence which sources editors use?

To analyze qualitative "Why" data for this question, a data table (Appendix AA) was created including the full responses from each of the editors and was analyzed in the same manner as the qualitative data from the previous research question, with each respondents' answers being broken into categories based on major themes and grouped with similar categories. These categories were based on the criteria editors value in sources, as was asked in Questions 1-14 in the survey, but also allowing for those that did not fit those criteria. Percentages of the frequency of these final categories were then reported.

Ten editors indicated that how they received information would affect what information they used from sources. Of these, one editor mentioned that this was due

mostly to time constraints within his organization. Along those lines, a second editor indicated that the easier and more accessible the channel makes information, the more likely he was to use it.

One editor, who printed both a weekly newsletter and monthly publication, responded that while his organization will use information from all channels, time constraints dictate which channel can be used from which source, though noted that the easier it is to find information in whatever form it is delivered the more likely it will be used.

Four editors indicated that no matter the channel the information came through, if it was valuable, it would be used. Of these four, one did respond that while he will use all valuable information from any source, he did want the convenience of e-mail if given the choice.

Of the 11 editors that indicated information channels did influence the information used, seven mentioned that e-mail was the channel they are most likely to use information from. One editor each indicated that e-mail would elicit a definite response from him, and another felt that it gave information the best exposure to himself. Two editors felt that e-mail was most time efficient with one also mentioning that it allowed information to gain his immediate attention and one indicating it allowed cutting and pasting of information quickly. Two editors also responded that e-mail was preferred because of ease of use. This included both ease of use of the information channel itself and, again, the ease of using the actual information through cutting and pasting directly from an e-mail.

Two editors mentioned the type of information they preferred to receive through e-mail, one preferring digital data, such as pictures, and the other preferring to receive press releases through the channel. E-mail was also mentioned as a way to link to information on Web sites, as indicated by one editor.

One editor did feel that e-mail had a drawback, in that it didn't allow for direct questioning of the source, which may then require a follow up phone call.

When it came to telephone as an information channel, one editor felt it was best used for follow up to information sent via e-mail. A second editor preferred to receive information about specific issues through the telephone.

Those editors that mentioned mail had a varied perception of its value as an information source. Four editors indicated that mail was not as preferred as an information channel because it was not time efficient, referencing the time it took to open, read, transcribe, and file as a taking too much time – two editors felt this way about faxes as well. One editor also felt it created extra labor, and a second felt that the information that he received through mail was outdated by the time he received it or had the time to view it.

However, two editors did feel more positive about receiving mail in certain situations. One editor mentioned that receiving printed material through the mail allowed him to read and re-read the information for clarity. A second editor felt that mail was the best way to receive media kits, or other large amounts of data, including CDs that contain several photo images.

Wire services and personal communication were not mentioned by editors in reference to this research question.

Discussion

Agriculture brings billions of dollars into the U.S. economy, and the information agriculture producers use to make management and production decisions can have a major impact on the overall industry. Agriculturalists use trade publications to keep up with new advances, production practices, and markets, and use that information often in their decision making process. Because of this, it is important to understand from where and how information reaches editors who act as the gatekeepers of what does or does not ultimately get published. Editors' criteria for choosing sources, source use, and preference were all examined in this research, as were channel uses, preferences, and influences on information selection to determine the role information delivery plays in editors' gatekeeping decisions.

Source Criteria

Editors ranked sources' abilities to supply accurate information, to explain information, their ease of access, and time pressures within their own organizations as important criteria for using a source of information. These criteria influence if a source will actually be used and whether information will be passed onto the public. Most editors indicated that accuracy was the number one criteria of their publications, as they would lose customers if information they provided was erroneous. Part of accuracy is being able to understand the information that sources provide; the better the sources were able to explain it, the more valuable the sources were. However, hard-to-reach sources tended to be rejected by editors regardless of their accuracy or ability to explain. Editors indicated that they were constantly under deadlines and would use those sources that were the easiest to access and still provide reasonably accurate information.

Editors also expressed their perceptions of public and private sources on the factors of accessibility, past suitability, ability to provide unbiased, accurate information and overall value.

Private sources (agribusiness, trade and commodity groups, and farm organizations) ranked highly on the factor of accessibility, though public sources ranked higher overall on all other factors. One exception was trade and commodity groups, which were the top sources for the factor of past suitability, third for ability to provide unbiased, accurate information and second for overall value. Other private sources, agribusiness and farm organizations, ranked at the bottom of the list for all factors except accessibility. Of note, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and state departments of agriculture consistently ranked fairly low on all factors, except for ability to explain information without making judgments – many editors indicated that they did not use these sources at all.

Source Use and Preference

When asked to rank their first, second and third most used sources, public sources, lead by cooperative extension (as indicated by 47% of editors) and university faculty and staff (as answered by 27%), were the most often mentioned as their first or second choice. This finding regarding editors overall value for public sources supports that of Reber (1960), Vacin (1979), and Whitaker and Dyer (2000). Specifically, it supports the findings of Vacin (1979) that land grant universities are a highly used information source in farm magazines.

This trend also followed for the most preferred information source. Public sources, specifically cooperative extension and university faculty and staff, were most likely to be mentioned as first and second most preferred sources.

Editors indicated that cooperative extension ranked high because of its ease of access and ability to provide timely, practical information. Interestingly, a private information source, trade and commodity groups, ranked as the third most mentioned in both source use and source preference, giving some support to Wolf (1998), who argued that agriculture information was becoming increasingly privatized.

However, these findings unexpectedly do not support the idea that agribusiness is becoming a main provider of information as proposed by Wolf (1998). While Wolf argued correctly that with public source funding cuts, private sources are able to offer a larger amount of specialized information than their public counterparts, editors still value the public sources of cooperative extension and university, mainly on the basis of lack of bias and ability to provide information without judgment. Agribusiness, specifically, did not provide unbiased information or information that wasn't an "advertorial." Editors' feelings of information from agribusiness being biased supports Reisner and Walters (1994) finding that using these sources is looked at as causing pro-industry bias, resulting in stories actually being advertisements and indirect endorsements by the publication. Editors specifically mentioned seed companies, farm equipment manufacturers, and agrichemical companies as most common sources of information in agribusiness, supporting findings of Wolf (1998) and Reisner and Walters (1994).

However, these results of editors' source uses and preferences could be affected in the near future by continuing trends in the agriculture industry regarding funding and

research. It is significant in this study that cooperative extension is clearly the most valuable information source to editors based on several criteria; however, it is one program that has also taken funding cuts and position consolidation or elimination in states across the nation. Commonly, county extension agent positions are being consolidated into regional positions or eliminated outright, limiting the actual amount of sources available. Universities are also changing, with some reducing funding to or eliminating part or all of their agriculture programs. With these two sources gone or in a diminished capacity, it opens up the doors for the private sources, especially those that aren't deemed to be "selling" something, to become more valuable. Trade and commodity groups seem poised to become more prominently used by editors if they can't get the information they want from public sources. While agribusiness does not seem a popular source in this study, possibly by offering more unbiased information, instead of advertorials, it may position itself to become a more used source, especially in light of the sheer amount of information it can provide. These groups have the funding to research and disseminate information, but editors may not value them until they share information no matter how it is used or if it gives them publicity.

Channel Use, Preference, and Influence

E-mail was found to be the most used and most preferred information source, supporting Middleberg and Ross (2000), who found that newspaper, magazine, and broadcast reporters in United States and Canada preferred e-mail over telephone. It also supports Bisdorf, Irani, and Telg (2003) who found that reporters preferred to receive information electronically rather than by fax or hand delivery. Findings of e-mail as most used and preferred contradicts information from Bisdorf, Irani, and Telg (2003), which

suggested that agriculture may not have embraced e-mail and the Internet as much as other industries, at least in terms of publications. However, my results may be due to the advancements in technology and availability of Internet access in rural areas since the time of the 2003 study.

E-mail was often noted to be time efficient, easy to access, easy to receive large quantities of information through, and easy to “cut and paste” information to be used for publication. Ease of use of the channel was an overall theme, and many editors mentioned that they had requested to receive information via e-mail exclusively. Fritz (1993), though in the beginning stages of e-mail, also found this, indicating that media were open to using electronic transmission, specifically “computer-to-computer” transmission, which today includes e-mail and the Internet.

However, it also was noted that e-mail was impersonal and hard to use for information follow up (or interviews, etc.). This is likely why telephone and personal communication were used and preferred after e-mail as both allow for immediate follow up and clarification of any questions the editors have. Several editors supported this by indicating e-mail was a good channel to receive information through initially, but then they would follow up on this information via telephone or personal communication.

A majority of editors indicated that the channel that information was sent through did influence their use of that information. This could be one reason why the sources of cooperative extension, university faculty and staff, and trade and commodity groups were the top ranked sources. Editors indicated that all three sources mainly used e-mail to disseminate information, thus providing them more easily accessed information that they found valuable.

However, not all electronic channels were used or preferred by editors. Web sites were still found to rank behind telephone and personal communication (which were ranked behind e-mail), supporting findings by Hachigian and Hallahan (2001). Editors indicated navigation issues when using the Web as a negative aspect of the channel. With the amount of time that people spend on the Internet each day, it was unexpected that it ranked so low with editors in this study; however, the accuracy of information provided via Web was mentioned as an obstacle, and it does not get information to the editor without effort on their part.

This could also be a reason why state departments of agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture were not ranked higher by editors as a source of information. The editors who discussed these two sources' channel uses indicated that both relied on their respective Web sites to disseminate information, which would require editors to visit and "pull" information, rather than having the information sent to them, causing more time and energy investment on the editors' parts.

Several editors mentioned that while they requested information be sent via e-mail, they often received the same information from several different channels, supporting Sigal (1973); However, the majority felt that it was not a positive aspect, creating clutter and redundancy, which lead to loss of efficiency and time for the editors and their staff. Among the editors, agribusiness was rated as sending information through the most channels – with editors citing personal, e-mail, mail and telephone transmission of the source's information. This supports findings by Reisner (1991) that found agriculture journalists felt most pressure to run information from advertisers (usually

agribusiness), as this group provides story ideas, press releases, sources on issues, etc. — using all channels available to get their information across.

Findings from this study do show that editors are looking for information that is quick to come in, easy to access, and easy to convert to publication format. Those channels where editors have to search, re-type, and wait to receive data (fax, mail, Web, or wire service) do not have a high value to the majority of editors, with mail, fax, and wire services the lowest ranked channels.

For sources that want to continue to have their information published or for those that are hoping to gain more exposure, sending information to editors that can be accessed and used easily through e-mail would be beneficial. Sources that use e-mail seem most likely to get their information to the editor; those that do not may risk editors overlooking their information.

The study also shows that some editors do not like receiving the same information through various channels. Sources may be able to reach the editor, and save money, by using the most effective channels that appeal to editors instead of sending information through all of them.

Limitations

Since the sample was taken from *Gales Directory of Broadcast and Media*, it is limited to only what is included in that list. This may leave out other agriculture publications that are not listed in that specific directory. Also, the sample for this study was a not probabilistic, so generalizability to the entire population of agriculture editors is a problem (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). Rather, the goal here was to focus on particular types of publications in one region. This has the advantage of giving greater

focus and more clear explanation and specificity. Further, the sample size was small ($n = 21$), and while there was a 71% response rate, that only yielded data from 15 editors. Therefore, it is harder to find statistically significant relationships from the data to justify that the results did not just happen by chance alone.

Limitations also exist in the method the survey was administered. While an in-depth interview can provide a wealth of information in great detail, limitations to the method do exist. The interview ranged from 30 minutes to one hour, on average, creating the chance that the respondents may have become tired or bored. Also, though each respondent was asked the same questions initially, the probe questions used to get more in-depth explanations of an editor's answer varied across respondents.

In addition, in-depth interviews are sensitive to interviewer bias where the interviewer may inadvertently communicate through nonverbal cues or tone of voice, etc., which may affect the validity of the respondents answer (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003).

In-depth interviews also make data analysis difficult, and the data taken from the interview can be open to interpretation errors (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). This effect was somewhat controlled by having the same interviewer also interpret results, though that can also lead to bias in the interpretation.

Future Research

Information from this study can be used and expanded upon by other researchers. Other studies could expand this research by duplicating the study but including a greater number of agriculture editors. A nationwide sample, for example, could include agriculture publication editors from all regions of the nation and examine what source

and channel use is across all regions, not just the area this study addressed. A larger sample could make generalizations of key findings to all editors more valid and be used to support or oppose the findings of this study. Moreover, publications may differ by their type of agricultural content and the audiences aimed for.

Future research could also expand on the specific kind of data each source provides, deeming what subject matter editors most value specific sources for or where they might be weakest. This research could delve deeper into specific situations or issues that editors may seek out a specific source, including those that did not rank as highly valuable in this study.

In addition, the readers of agriculture publications are the ultimate end user of information. A study into what publications (or even other media) this audience gets their agricultural news from and the information that publications provide that they deem most valuable can build upon the findings here and give insight into how editors' gatekeeping decisions are matching with what readers want.

Further research into channel use can also be recommended. To build on the findings here, future research should survey editors on specific combination of channels that best get information onto the editor's desk. In other words, does sending information via one channel and following up through another channel garner the attention and use of an editor as opposed to disseminating information via one channel or a different combination of channels.

Also, recently, social media, such as twitter and Facebook, have emerged as another way to disseminate information. A study looking at the impact and use of these

channels by agriculture editors would yield a more recent view of how they receive and use information in light of such new technologies.

- ... releases are affected by electronic dissemination. *JCT Quarterly*, 4(2), 39-44.
- Beall, G.A., & Poyak, J.H. (1991). *Big Game and Crystal Ball*. Paper presented at the 77th International Conference of Agricultural Extensionists in Education, Rapid City, S.D.
- Blackett, E., Inaki, T., & Taly, R. (2001). Assessing Internet use in Florida newsrooms. Retrieved June 2003 from www.agnews.com/resources/2003/06/01/01.htm.
- Boehm, M. (1974). Information and media flow in agriculture: The role of the public and private sectors. In Steven A. Wolf (Ed.), *Professionalism and agricultural journalism* (pp. 25-37). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Boyer, K., McCreesh, P., & Tucker, M. (1986). *Agricultural Communications: Changes and Challenges*. Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA.
- Dillman, D.A. (1978). *Mail and telephone surveys: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dillman, D.A. (1998). *Mail and Internet surveys: The Total Design Method* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Greenick, J. (1974). The gatekeeper: An inevitable barrier? *Journalism Monographs*, 27.
- Greenick, D.A., Tideman, P.J., & Olson, C.M. (1972). Gatekeeping: Mass media systems and information control. In P.O. Riffe & P.J. Tideman (Eds.), *Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research* (341-76). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Grossman, R. (1980). The scholar writes, mass club: A communication link between science and the lay public. *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 3(1), 14-22.

References

- Abbott, B.A. (1986). Electronic gatekeeping: How Iowa Extension home and family news releases are affected by electronic distribution. *ACE Quarterly*, 69(4) 36-44.
- Beall, G.A., & Hayes, J.H. (1991). *Big Green and Careful: How major California newspapers covered two ballot initiatives in the 1990 general election*. Paper presented at the 75th International Conference of Agriculture Communicators in Education, Rapid City, S.D.
- Bisdorf, E., Irani, T., & Telg, R. (2003). Assessing internet use in Florida news rooms. Retrieved June 2005 from www.agnews.tamu.edu/saas/2003/bisdorf1.htm.
- Boehlje, M. (1998). Information and technology transfer in agriculture: The role of the public and private sectors. In, Steven A. Wolf (Ed.), *Privatization and agricultural industrialization* (pp. 23-38). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Boone, K., Meisenbach, T., & Tucker, M. (2000). *Agricultural Communications: Changes and Challenges*. Iowa State University Press: Ames, IA.
- Dillman, D.A. (1978). *Mail and telephone surveys: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dillman, D.A. (2000). *Mail and internet surveys: the Tailored Design Method* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dimmick, J. (1974). The gate-keeper: An uncertainty theory. *Journalism Monographs*, 37.
- Donahue, G.A., Tichenor, P.J., & Olien, C.N. (1972) Gatekeeping: Mass media systems and information control, In F.G. Kline & P.J. Tichenor (Eds.), *Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research* (41-70). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Dunwoody, S. (1980). The science writing inner club: A communication link between science and the lay public. *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 5(3), 14-22.

- Fritz, M. (1993). Use of electronic transmission by agricultural communicators. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 77(1), 1-8.
- Gans, H.J. (1979). *Deciding what's news*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Groves, R.M., Biemer, P.P., Lyberg, L.E., Massey, J.T., Nicholls, W.L., & Waksberg, J. (1988). *Telephone survey methodology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Goe, W.R., & Kenney, M. (1988). The political economy of the privatization of agricultural information: The case of the United States. *Agriculture Administration and Extension*, 28, 81-99.
- Hachigian, D. & Hallahan, K. (2001). Journalists' perceptions of public relations Web sites. PRSA Educators Academy, Atlanta, GA.
- Harris Interactive Inc. (2005). Agricultural Media Study. Retrieved March 2006 from http://www.americanbusinessmedia.com/images/abm/ppt/research/Agri%20Council%20%20presentation_April141.ppt.
- Lambur, M., Kazmierczak, R., & Rajotte, E. (1989) Analysis of private consulting firms in integrated pest management. *Bulletin of the Entomological Society of America*. Spring 1989, 5-11.
- Maddox, S.J., Mustian, R.D., & Jenkins, D.M. (2003, February). *Agriculture information preferences of North Carolina farmers*. Paper presented at the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists: Agriculture Communications Section, Mobile, AL.
- Middleberg, D. and Ross, S. (2002). *Change and Its Impact on Communications*. Retrieved June 2005 from www.middleberg.com.
- National Research Council (NRC) (1996). *Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities: Public service and public policy*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

- Powers A., & Fico, F. (1994). Influences on the use of sources at large US newspapers. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 15(4), 87-97.
- Reber, N.F. (1960). *Main Factors that Influence the Editorial Content of Farm Magazines*, doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania. University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Reisner, A.E. (1991). Comparing Ethical Concerns of Agricultural and General Journalists. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 75(1), 42-48.
- Reisner, A., & Hays R.G. (1990). Feeling the heat from advertisers: Farm magazine writers and ethical pressures. *Journalism Quarterly*, 67, 936-942.
- Reisner, A., & Walter, G. (1994). Agricultural journalists' assessments of print coverage of agricultural news. *Rural Sociology*, 59(3), 525-537.
- Shoemaker, P.J. (1991). *Communication concepts 3: Gatekeeping*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Shoemaker, P.J., & Reese, S.D. (1991). *Mediating the message: Theories of influence on mass media content*. Longman Publishing Group, White Plains, NY.
- Sigal, Leon V. (1973). *Reporters and Officials*. Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Stringer, S.B. (1999). *An Evaluation of Agriculture News Sources*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Vacin, G. (1979). An analysis of farm magazine content. *ACE Quarterly*, 63(3), 11-24.
- Wimmer, R.D., & Dominick, J.R. (2003). *Mass media research: an introduction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Whitaker, B. K., & Dyer, J. E. (2000). Identifying source of bias in agricultural news reporting. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 41(4), 125-133.

Wolf, S.A. (1995). Cropping systems and conservation policy: The roles of agrichemical dealers and independent crop consultants. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, 50(30), 263-270.

Wolf, S.A. (1998). *Privatization of information and agricultural industrialization*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Appendices A

Interview Questions

Control Number _____

Do a scale of 1 to 3, with 1=very, 2=somewhat and 3=not very

1. How important is a source of access when identifying a source?
Why?
2. How important is ability to supply accurate information when identifying a source?
Why?
3. How important are time pressures within the organization when identifying a source?
Why?
4. How important is the source's ability to obtain information when identifying a source?
Why?
5. How important are recommendations by colleagues when identifying a source?
Why?
6. How important is a personal relationship with a source when identifying a source?
Why?
7. Are there any other important issues you have when identifying a source?

I would like to ask you a series of questions about some information sources that you may use, some are public sources and some are private.

8. The first is Cooperative Extension agents, on a scale of 1 to 3, 1=very 2=somewhat and 3=not very.

- How accessible do you find them to be?
- Have they been a reliable source in the past?
- Do they supply unfiltered, accurate information?
- Do they supply information without making judgments?
- Overall, how do you value Cooperative Extension agents as an information source?
- Do you use county, regional or state extension agents more?

9. Next is University faculty and staff.

- How accessible do you find them to be?
- Have they been a reliable source in the past?
- Do they supply unfiltered, accurate information?
- Do they supply information without making judgments?
- Overall, how do you value University faculty and staff as an information source?

10. Next is any source you deal with at your State Department of Agriculture?

- How accessible do you find them to be?

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Control Number _____

On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1=very, 2=somewhat and 3=not very

1. How important is ease of access when identifying a source?
Why?
2. How important is ability to supply accurate information when identifying a source?
Why?
3. How important are time pressures within the organization when identifying a source?
Why?
4. How important is the source's ability to explain information when identifying a source?
Why?
5. How important are recommendations by colleagues when identifying a source?
Why?
6. How important is a personal relationship with a source when identifying a source?
Why?
7. Are there any other important issues you have when identifying a source?

I would like to ask you a series of questions about some information sources that you may use, some are public sources and some are private.

8. The first is Cooperative Extension agents, on a scale of 1 to 3, 1=very 2=somewhat and 3=rarely;

How accessible do you find them to be?
Have they been a suitable source in the past?
Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?
Do they supply information without making judgments?
Overall, how do you value extension agents as an information source?
Do you use county, regional or state extension agents more

9. Next is University faculty and staff

How accessible do you find them to be?
Have they been a suitable source in the past?
Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?
Do they supply information without making judgments?
Overall, how do you value University Faculty and Staff as an information source?

10. Next is any source you deal with in your State Departments of Agriculture?

How accessible do you find them to be?

18. Have they been a suitable source in the past?
Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?
Do they supply information without making judgments?
Overall, how do you State Departments of Ag as an information source?

11. Next is any office you may deal with in the USDA
How accessible do you find them to be?
Has it been a suitable source in the past?
Does it supply unbiased, accurate information?
Does it supply information without making judgments?
Overall, how do you value USDA as an information source?

Just a few more sources to go.

12. Next are trade and commodity groups (e.g. Cattlemen's Association)
How accessible do you find them to be?
Have they been a suitable source in the past?
Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?
Do they supply information without making judgments?
Overall, how do you value commodity groups as an information source?

13. Next are Agribusinesses (seed companies, implement manufacturers/dealers, etc.)
How accessible do you find them to be?
Have they been a suitable source in the past?
Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?
Do they supply information without making judgments?
8a. When using agribusiness sources, what are the most common businesses that provide information? Please explain.
Overall, how do you value Agribusiness as an information source?

14. The final source is farm organizations (state farm bureaus)
How accessible do you find them to be?
Have they been a suitable source in the past?
Do they supply unbiased, accurate information?
Do they supply information without making judgments?
Overall, how do you value farm organizations as an information source?

15. Which of the information sources that we discussed earlier do you use most often?
a. Why
16. Which do you use next most often?
a. Why?
17. And finally, which do you use third most often?
a. Why?

18. Which of the information sources that we discussed earlier would you prefer to use?
 - a. Why?
19. Which information source would you prefer to use next most often?
 - a. Why?

Now, let's look at how you receive information from sources. I'm talking about receiving information through personal interviews, telephone interviews, e-mail, fax, mail, wire services and Web sites.

20. Which of these do you receive information from sources through most often?
 - a. Why?
21. Which of these do you receive information from sources through second most often?
 - a. Why?
22. Which of these do you receive information from sources through third most often?
 - a. Why?
23. Which 3 of those would you prefer to receive information from sources through?
 - a. Why?
24. Which of these would you prefer to receive information from sources through second most often?
 - a. Why?
25. Which of these would prefer to receive information from sources through third most often?
 - a. Why?
26. Do you notice different sources using different information channels?
27. I have asked which ways you prefer to receive information. Do the different ways you receive info from sources affect your use of those sources?

Demographics:

28. What is your current circulation?
29. Is your publication independent or family owned or is it chain owned?
30. How many years have you been working at your current position?

Appendix B

Participant's Name

Address

Address

Title,

I am writing to ask your help my master's degree research of the information sources and information channels that agricultural editors like yourself use in regional agricultural trade publications. My study focuses on agricultural publications in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas.

I understand that you are an editor for (PUBLICATION NAME) in (PUBLICATION LOCATION). I would like to interview you by phone. To see if you're willing to help me with my research project, I will call you during the week of (DATE) to set a time for a possible telephone interview.

My survey, which will take about 30 minutes, will explore your use of information sources for producing agriculture news and from where you receive your information. Your participation is voluntary and you may quit the survey at any time. To ensure the accuracy of my survey, I would also like to record our interview; however, this also is voluntary and you may request to not be recorded at any time.

Your answers, along with the responses from other editors, will help explain the relationships between sources of agricultural news and the media and what information is ultimately reaching farmers and ranchers.

You are free to decline to help with my survey or answer any specific questions. If you agree to help, your willingness to help with the survey will be considered implied consent. Your response will be confidential, and neither you nor your publication will be linked to specific finding in my thesis or any resulting article or presentation.

If you have any questions before I call, please do not hesitate to contact me at (970) 218-0080 or at Rebecca.Talley@Colostate.edu.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Talley

Master's student, Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
Colorado State University

Appendix C

First Call Telephone Script

Control Number _____

Hello, my name is Rebecca Talley, and I'm a graduate student at Colorado State University. I am conducting a research study about the information sources and information channels used by agriculture editors.

May I speak to _____ (NAME OF EDITOR/MANAGING EDITOR)?

If _____ (NAME OF PERSON) is not available, ask,

*When might be a good time that I could call back to reach
_____ (NAME OF PERSON).*

About a week ago, I sent you a letter explaining our research project; the letter was from myself, Rebecca Talley, of Colorado State University.

Do you recall having received my letter?

Yes. If yes, then say,

As you recall, the letter indicated that I would be asking you to help us by completing a telephone survey. I am researching what information sources and information channels are used and preferred by agriculture editors. I will also ask a few background questions.

It will take about 30 minutes.

Participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. I would also like to record this interview for accuracy of results, if you consent. You are free to decline to answer any questions; however completion of the survey will be considered implied consent. Your response will be held in the strictest confidence, and neither you nor your publication will be named in a report of the results

May I conduct the survey now?

Yes. If yes, then ask

Do I have your consent to record this interview?

Yes. If yes, then say

Thank you for your consent to have our interview recorded, I will now begin recording.

No. If no, then say

Thank you for your response and I will not record our interview.

We will now begin the survey. Don't worry, I'll read you the response categories. Go directly to the survey

No. If no, then ask

When would be a convenient time for me to call back?

Enter call-back/appointment time on log sheet.

No. If no, then say,

I am researching what information sources and information channels are used and preferred by agriculture editors. I will also ask a few background questions.

The survey will take about 30 minutes.

Your answers are confidential. I will not record your name, address, or telephone number with your answers nor will I present results of the study in such a way that individual responses can be traced.

May I conduct the survey now?

Yes. If yes, go directly to the survey

No. If no, then ask

When would be a convenient time for me to call back?

Enter call-back time on log sheet.

Appendix D

First Message Telephone Script

Control Number _____

Hello, my name is Rebecca Talley, and I'm a graduate student at Colorado State University. I am conducting a research study about the information sources and information channels used by agriculture editors.

About a week ago, I sent you a letter explaining that you have been selected to participate in my research project, which would consist of a 30-minute phone interview.

Please feel free to call me at 970-218-0080 to schedule an interview time or learn more about my research.

Thank you.

I am willing to inquire about scheduling an interview with you for the research project. You can contact me by telephone (970-218-0080) or email (Rebecca.Talley@Colorado.edu) with a time that I could contact you by telephone to either schedule or conduct the interview.

Thank you very much for helping with this important study.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Talley
Master's student, Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
Colorado State University
970-218-0080
Rebecca.Talley@Colorado.edu

Appendix E

E-mail Script

Control Number _____

Dear (NAME),

Hello, my name is Rebecca Talley, and I'm a graduate student at Colorado State University. About a week ago, I sent you a letter explaining my research project; the letter was from myself, Rebecca Talley, of Colorado State University.

The letter indicated that I would be asking you to help me by completing a 30-minute phone interview to explore your use of information sources for producing agriculture news and from where you receive your information. Your participation is voluntary and you may quit the survey at any time.

I am writing to inquire about scheduling an interview with you for the research project. You can contact me by telephone (970-218-0080) or e-mail (Rebecca.Talley@Colostate.edu) with a time that I could contact you by telephone to either schedule or conduct the interview.

Thank you very much for helping with this important study.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Talley
Master's student, Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
Colorado State University
970-218-0080
Rebecca.Talley@Colostate.edu

Appendix F

Second, Third Message Telephone Script

Control Number _____

Hello, my name is Rebecca Talley, and I'm a graduate student at Colorado State University. I am conducting a research study about the information sources and information channels used by agriculture editors.

Recently, I sent you a letter and left phone messages briefly explaining that you have been selected to participate in my research project, which would consist of a 30 minute phone interview.

Please feel free to call me at 970-218-0080 to schedule an interview time or learn more about my research.

Thank you.

Appendix G

Final Message Telephone Script Control Number _____

Hello, my name is Rebecca Talley, and I'm a graduate student at Colorado State University. I am conducting a research study about the information sources and information channels used by agriculture editors.

Recently, I sent you a letter and left phone messages briefly explaining that you have been selected to participate in my research project, which would consist of a 30 minute phone interview.

Your participation in this survey would be greatly appreciated, as the answers you provide can be extremely important in understanding the relationship between sources of agricultural news and the media. It will also help in understanding the type of information that is ultimately reaching the agriculture producers, who may in turn, use that information to make decisions about their operations.

Please feel free to call me at 970-218-0080 to schedule an interview time or learn more about my research.

Thank you.

Appendix H

Editors' Source Criteria: Ease of Access Qualitative Data

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	Primarily we are a weekly publication, so we have weekly deadlines, and a lot of times it can be an urgent situation, so getting ahold of someone quickly and within a reasonable amount of time to get the story written to meet our deadline is very important.	Time Pressures
#2	A lot of times you need information quickly, so you need someone unique to get that to you in a timely fashion.	Time Pressures
#3	In our publication, usually the people that we want to talk to and use as sources are probably pretty busy, we would like them to be as extremely available to us, but we understand that their schedules can be as busy as ours.	Time Pressures
#4	Because in the job I do, time is of the essence, trying to get everything ready for each weekly paper, and if I have to go to a long process of trying to search for information, I might get a lot less done.	Time Pressures
#5	Any reporter, they are going to go to the easiest access people first.	First Use
#6	A lot of times we are working on deadlines, and particularly when issues come up like Farm Bill, we are working on issues. If I have someone to call and work with quickly and is easy to understand, that is extremely valuable to be able to get to use them.	Time Pressures
#7	Everybody is so busy. I have noticed in the last 3-5 years in particular, our publication works with a lot of university experts and veterinarians. Getting ahold of them whether e-mail or on the phone is a challenge because everyone is running in 100 different directions. It's more of source scheduling issue than the fact that they don't want to talk to us.	Time Pressures
#8	It's my job to get ahold of them. It's nice if it's very easy, but my job is to get them if that's who I want.	Editor's Responsibility
#9	I would say if a reporter can't get ahold of someone, they aren't much use. We certainly have people that would be a good source, but we	Hard to Access Leads to Source Disuse

	can't ever get ahold of them, but we've stopped even trying to contact them.	
#10	Because of my time, and usually the time necessary to get other things done, and chasing sources makes my job harder.	Time Pressures
#11	I always want to know where it came from. Is it credible in other words.	Credibility
#12	It is always important because we are all short of time.	Time Pressures
#13	Time constraints would be the primary reason.	Time Pressures
#14	Because you are on a deadline. Our publication is a little different than most, we are more frequent than the monthly. We come out in the first part of the year, four times a month. Ease of access if obviously very important.	Time Pressures
#15	Simply because of deadlines	Time Pressures

Appendix I

Editors Source Criteria: Ability to Supply Accurate Information Qualitative Data

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	Our publication will fail if we don't have accurate information. Our producers and our readers have to have accurate information.	Success of Publication
#2	Accuracy is the most important thing. You have to tell it like it is.	Most Important Criteria
#3	Our publication is very data driven. We would like to have accuracy and verified numbers, not just anecdotal feelings. We want to speak from research perspective first, as that research tends to back up a point of view. Figures, percentages, monetary values, all of those are very important.	Allows for Verified Information
#4	That's extremely important in the business that we are in because if we don't have accurate information, it pretty much always comes back to bite you. I mean, we will have complaints, we can have lawsuits, we can have all types of situations from the source not being accurate.	Success of Publication
#5	They provide me with bogus stuff, I am not going back to them.	Inaccurate Sources Are Useless
#6	If information is not accurate, it is pretty useless, and as a publication, the main thing that we have is our credibility, and if our information isn't correct, we lose that.	Success of Publication
#7	You just have to have the best people and the most accurate research or discussion or confirmation that you can't get. Accuracy is absolutely important.	Allows for verified information
#8	That's everything. If they can't supply accurate information, you shouldn't be talking to them.	Inaccurate Sources Are Useless
#9	We depend on accuracy 100 percent. It's just a number one thing with us.	Most Important Criteria
#10	Of course, we have to be accurate in what we supply to our readers or they won't keep coming back or they are not going to keep relying on us for accurate information.	Success of Publication
#11	I just want to know that I am dealing with a credible source, because we need to get a lot of information.	Credibility
#12	My reason would be we deal in a lot of details	Allows for Verified Information

	and scientific data, so accuracy is always important.	
#13	That's the basics of journalism. It just has to be accurate or it's worthless.	Inaccurate Data is Useless
#14	That's our hallmark, it's very important. If the information isn't accurate, it misrepresents what we are doing.	Inaccurate Data is Useless
#15	Simply because our readers depend on us as a news source.	Success of Publication

#2	We publish every other month. We don't put much as important magazines.	Magazines don't Tight
#3	I take up with a big part largely because we are usually created by tradition.	Pressure to Produce Timely information
#4	Especially when we have something going on. For instance maybe there is an issue out there that our readership needs to know about or there's a witness who they need to get funding for something and have the information in front of me. I need it to be correct and I need it there as soon as I can get it to, and I need to have it by that next deadline. I need to make sure the information we are giving to the public is useful and accurate. Since we have guidelines Web based- if it's really timely I will push it to the Web right away before I even get it in the print side.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#5	This is a monthly magazine. We wouldn't like a daily.	Magazines don't Tight
#6	I usually publish twice a month, so my time pressure is not quite the deadline pressure that it would be for a weekly or daily. But on some sensitive topics, and also, we do a Web page updates, our readers in timely, reliable information.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#7	Depending on which vehicle that we are reporting - we have an e-mail newsletter, we have the print paper, and if we have Website - obviously if it's a news item we need that quicker. In any case, all of the deadlines are shorter than people might perceive them to be, as you just don't have the time to work on things as you need to be able to find the best sources to talk to as soon as possible. If that person is not available, I usually you go to who you can get - the person has to be valid of course. At some point you have to say I am going and I say I need for this reason.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#8	It ranges across all these different vehicles, especially if it's very important and time sensitive.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information

Appendix J

Editors Source Criteria: Time Pressures Qualitative Data

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	We are a weekly publication. We do a lot of late breaking type of news, coverage of crop conditions, farm bill and policy issues, so we are under quite a bit of pressure to produce and publish timely, accurate articles. I would say it's very important.	Pressure to Produce Timely/Accurate Information
#2	We publish every other month. We don't hit nearly as important restrictions.	Deadlines Aren't Tight
#3	Time figures a big part largely because we are usually crushed by deadlines.	Pressure to Produce Timely Information
#4	Especially when we have something going on. For instance maybe there is an issue out there that our readership needs to know about or there's a situation where they need to get funding for something and I have that information in front of me, I need it to be correct and I need it there are soon as I can get to it, and I need to have it for that next deadline. I need to make sure the information we are giving to the public is useful and accurate. Since we have gone to Web based- if it's really timely I will push it to the Web right away before I even get it to the print side.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#5	This is a monthly magazine. We aren't like a daily.	Deadlines Aren't Tight
#6	I usually publish twice a month, so my time pressure is not quite the deadline pressures like it would be for a weekly or daily. But on time sensitive topics, and also, we do a Web page updates, our mantra is timely, reliable information.	Deadlines Aren't Tight Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#7	Depending on which vehicle that we are reporting – we have an e-mail newsletter, we have two print pubs, and a we have Web site - obviously if it's a news item we need that quicker. In any case, all of the deadlines are shorter than people might perceive them to be, so you just don't have the time to work on things so you need to be able to find the best person to talk to as soon as possible. If that person is not available, I admit you go to who you can get – the person has to be valid of course. At some point you have to say I am done and I can't wait for that person.	Pressure to Producer Timely, Accurate Information Ease of Access Dictates Source Use
#8	It ranges across all three answers. Because sometimes it is very important and other times it is	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information

	down the road. With what we do there is always a time pressure.	
#9	Since we are the just once a week, our deadlines, doesn't tend to be as hectic, so we can be a little more flexible with times in terms of talking with people and getting those interviews. It is important with late-breaking news right before deadlines, but most of the time, it's not a huge issue.	Deadlines Aren't Tight
#10	Primarily we a monthly magazine, although we do have a weekly newsletter.	Deadlines Aren't Tight
#11	Again, I want to know where it is coming from, and I won't use it until I know that.	Credibility
#12	Time pressures are always on us with deadlines, so I would say it's very important to me.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#13	Obviously, with deadline pressures and wanting to get information out on a timely basis, you have to identify sources as quickly as possible so you can have a credible story.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#14	Again, very important because we have more frequent deadlines.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information
#15	Because we all work on a deadline in this business, particularly on press days, with spur of the moment stories, it's important to get the information in there, so you have to work with those deadlines but make sure story is accurate and informative.	Pressure to Produce Timely, Accurate Information

Appendix K

Editors Source Criteria: Ability to Explain Information Qualitative Data

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	I have to be fair and accurate and reliable in my reporting, and I can only be as fair and accurate as my source is.	Influences End Communication
#2	If it's something we are not familiar with.	Needed for Unfamiliar/Technical Topics
#3	A lot of times the topics we are discussing are new or cutting edge, and their ability to relate that to us as a writer helps us to communicate that to a readers. Our sources do a great job of that most of the time.	Influences End Communication
#4	I need to be able to understand what I am trying to get out to the public. I always feel like if I can't understand something easily, chance are our readership can't understand it either, so I always look for, actually there are occasions when I am looking at a source and it seem to have the information but it is written in really doctoral terms, I will pass that one up to find one that is more reader friendly.	Influences End Communication Avoid Over Technical Sources
#5	There are certain people we avoid even though they are knowledgeable because when they start talking it goes right over my head.	Avoid Over Technical Sources
#6	Because I am not a scientist. I'm a mere journalist, and it is extremely important for him to be able to explain to me who when I write I can understand it enough to explain it the reader who is also often not a scientist.	Influences End Communication
#7	There are certain sources you avoid calling because they are hard to get useful information out of. There are some that I am not going to call them unless I absolutely have to because it will take so much time and effort to sift through to get what I need.	Avoid Over Technical Sources
#8	It's my job to understand them. It helps if they are good, but that's part of my job – that I understand what he is saying and actually will put it in a form that other people will.	Editor's Responsibility to Understand
#9	For our reporter, sometimes they are wandering into topics where they are not 100 percent comfortable, and don't have the background knowledge, so it's very important that their	Influences End Communication

	source is able to explain it to the reporter in a way that trickles down to the reader.	
#10	Especially when talking about scientific or statistical information. They have got to be able to explain what they are talking about.	Needed for Unfamiliar/Technical Topics
#11	They have to know what they are talking about.	Credibility/Accuracy of Source
#12	The reason is always accuracy and making sure that you can relate information to the reader accurately.	Influences End Communication
#13	So that I understand the issue from their perspective.	Understand Source Perspective
#14	Obviously, if you don't understand what he is talking about, it doesn't do you any good, so it's very important.	Influences End Communication
#15	As long as they can communicate things in a manner that I can understand. It's my job to interpret them for our readers.	Editor's Responsibility to Understand

Appendix L

Editors Source Criteria: Recommendation by Colleague Qualitative Data

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	A lot of that depends on the story that I am working on. If it's a really complicated story that I need a lot of perspectives on, then the more sources I can get, the better. Most of the time, I am able to ... most of my sources are my sources; really, I don't consult my peers for other sources.	Have Established Set of Sources
#2	I use that as a contact quite often.	Used Often
#3	My colleagues have a lot of years of experience and know a lot of people in the industry, where as I am newer and may not know the contact or who the go to person is. So, a lot of collaboration in our staff is how we get the story.	Colleagues Have Established Set of Sources Editor Has Less Experience
#4	Reason I say that is because some of my colleagues tend to try to want to get something in the paper that I don't think are ... you know the age old problem trying to get in advertorial or something like that that is not going to benefit the readers as much as it would benefit the advertisers trying to get free advertising. So, what I try to do is I will consider the source, whether they are a reliable source, whether they are an important source, say the publisher tells me I need to get something in there versus someone else who doesn't have much bearing on what the paper should look like. So, I will consider the source and then go ahead from there and do my best to get something about the subject in there.	Examine Intentions of Colleagues
#5	One of my colleagues recommends someone it's the last person I am going to use.	Trust
#6	We all have different biases and opinions on what a good source would be. I trust my own contact list better than I would somebody else's.	Have Established Set of Sources Trust
#7	Either we all know the people, but we don't exchange names. From the industry recommendations or people within the industry that would be very high, but colleagues I don't think there is a big exchange. We do report on the ... industry, if anybody within the industry recommends a researcher, that carries a lot of weight because those people are real industry people and they have dealt with them, or the	Examine Intentions of Source

	concerns or the research or the disease, it is a filtering mechanism. If you have the person or information that is wanted, then it is worth me paying attention.	
#8	We are a trade association, and so we tend to favor sources within the association. Plus, there are other people who have more contacts than I do in certain areas, though.	Colleagues Have More Established Sources
#9	People hear that certain things happen, and they can tell you who to talk to about it, and 99 percent of the time, they are absolutely right. Colleagues can give you an insider that gives you a different perspective that you might not have thought about.	Colleagues Have New Perspective
#10	I know who the sources are who I want to use but do accept recommendations from colleagues, but it's just not high on my list.	Have Own Established Set of Sources
#11	They have some great ideas, so I think it is very important. You don't want to go on a branch that doesn't have anything on it.	Colleagues Have Established Sources
#12	We are a very small staff, by that definition, one colleague, I guess, so we do share information as far as identifying good sources on stories.	Staff Size Influence
#13	Because referrals are the way the world goes around. You can't be every place at all times, and it is a lot easier if you have a network of folks that can suggest sources for you.	Colleagues Have Established Sources
#14	I want to develop my own source. I ask people for recommendations, but sometimes they're not very good recommendations.	Have Own Established Set of Sources Trust
#15	We all have our own sources that we use and develop a relationship with. We will certainly use each other's sources, but for the most part, we have our own network.	Have Own Established Set of Sources

Appendix M

Editors Source Criteria: Personal Relationship with Source Qualitative Data

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	I think the relationship should remain a business relationship, but it should be enough of a personal relationship where that person would feel comfortable calling you up if he or she had a tip or story idea or something else they wanted to tell you.	Professional Relationships Suffices
#2	Depends on who they are and what their expertise is.	Depends on Expertise
#3	It helps if you know them – or at least connect to that source a little bit. A lot of our sources are researchers, university professionals are often times our primary sources for stories. Our third group of sources is producers. It's not important to have relationship with professionals and researchers because that's their job and they are goal oriented to explain it to you. However, when you are talking to producer, you have a personal connection with them, maybe some common interest it helps you get a different perspective on a story. It kind of depends on the person. Sometimes it helps, I feel, to be a little bit removed or a little bit neutral when you get onto an operation, because you are kind of getting just getting how they are, you are not having your personal bias influence any of that.	Perspective Allows for Bias Influences
#4	The reason I am saying that is that a lot of my sources, I don't have personal relationships with them because they are more organizations. I will also say on the other side it is really important for you to have a good relationship with the people that do occasionally send you information, because of course, if they are providing you very accurate information and they can make a one-on-one contact with you, they are going to continue to provide that information. So, I do rely the people I do have good personal relationships with out there in the field of editorial, but like I said, a lot those I am using are the services. I	Provide Accurate, One-on-One Contact

	use CPA a lot, AP a lot, so I guess I don't have personal relationships with them.	
#5	There are certain people I go to because I know them. I've got a personal relationship with them.	Use Sources that are Known
#6	You build up a level of trust. There are people that will talk to me who may not talk to somebody else because they know I am not going to hang them out to dry.	Trust
#7	Somewhere between very or somewhat – there are people I don't know very well, I would consider I don't have strong personal relationship with them, but I would call them or talk to them. I wouldn't hesitate. But I will say it does help. It is important there is a definite comfort factor between the source and you. Just not having a relationship wouldn't keep me from calling them. When you are reporting within an industry, they may not know you personally, but they know the publication. The relationship may not be personal, but the industry reputation or connection does matter.	Trust Will Use Unfamiliar Sources
#8	If you have too strong of a personal relationship, you probably aren't as objective as you need to be. If you do have, you might have a tendency to keep going to "the well."	Allows for Bias Influences
#9	There are some people that can be hesitant to talk to reporters. If you have developed a good repoire with them, and they trust you and you are accurate, if you talked with them, they are more willing to give information that you need as opposed to someone you don't have a relationship with or someone you might have a bad relationship with.	Trust
#10	Certainly, I use a lot of personal relationships in sources, but sometimes, you can overuse those, and I like to develop new sources as well.	Need Diversity
#11	Can be very important, it's a matter if you trust a person. You don't know if you trust a person or not until you get to know them.	Trust
#12	In our case, I feel it is important, but we don't always have that luxury because we do deal with people that we don't know on occasion. Though I and my partner, the other staff	Relationship Aids Reporting

	<p>member, we have been involved in this industry, both of us here for over 30 years. We know a lot of people and have a lot of personal relationships with people. We make an effort to do that. We think it helps us in our reporting to have a relationship with these people on an ongoing basis.</p>	
#13	<p>Because I think a professional relationship is adequate, I don't think it has to be a personal relationship.</p>	<p>Professional Relationship Adequate</p>
#14	<p>Personal relationships aren't as important as professional relationships.</p>	<p>Professional Relationship Adequate</p>
#15	<p>Because a lot of these stories, particularly the stories that are not in the home area, you are calling somebody cold, then have to develop relationship with them during the course of the interview.</p>	<p>Must Develop Relationship</p>

Appendix N

Editors Source Criteria: Other Important Criteria Qualitative Data

	Editors Reasoning
#1	N/A
#2	Looking for someone who has expertise in the field they are in.
#3	I would say I look for a degree of credibility, and when I visit with extension personnel, researchers. I look for data or a delve of information they have done on this topic they have done themselves. When I am visiting with producers, I see how many years they have facing an issue or working through this.
#4	N/A
#5	Are they going to give me impartial information? I am less apt to go to a chemical company representative, than university or USDA because the university person tends to be more unbiased. How quotable are they? There are certain people that you know when you talk to them they will give you great quotes. I avoid people you have to drag info out of. People who won't talk to you because their work hasn't been published – they will make a presentation at a field day, and when you follow up they don't want to talk to you because it hasn't been published yet. Avoid people who pass you onto PR person. Dealing with agencies, some are really good and they know the industry, some know squat. You have to explain the info you want to get from them.
#6	I would say experience. I would be more likely to talk to specialist, who has been in the area for 3-4 years, as opposed to one who is new on the job. Doesn't mean I wouldn't contact him, but I would value the experienced source more.
#7	Going outside of agriculture it is harder. I did a story about addiction (in terms of food being addictive) – was impossible. I wondered what's the deal here? Being in agriculture they don't know me from Adam. We have a cozy interactive relationship internally, but can be, when we cross over into the other more general sources, it can be tough.
#8	Belief in their expertise on the subject, whether that comes through recommendation, or writing for that scene of theirs or maybe the fact that other news sources started to use them on this topic, whatever it is.
#9	Whether or not they are from a reputable organization. If I need information on schools, I would want to make sure people I am talking to has current information and is an accurate source.
#10	One of the most important is "unique." I use the word unique as I want a source my publication versus my competitors. I know that my competitors are going to be at the same meetings and the same speeches I will see, but I want to use a unique perspective, I like to use a unique person, so if my reader has read a similar story in my competitors magazine, it won't be the same story in my magazine. At least it will have some uniqueness to it.
#11	Has to be credible. If I get a release, and it just doesn't make sense, that's important.
#12	Just finding the right person for the right topic. We try to identify specialists in an

	area, so we drill down pretty deep to find exactly the right person.	
#13	Obviously, I am looking for credibility. Someone who doesn't have credibility is not a source in my book, I'm looking for somebody that has some experiences, has some credentials to back up their answers to my questions.	
#14	N/A	
#15	A relationship with the story and some level of expertise on the subject.	
	Having to have what you want what is going on that is the story, your story, right? Then you're for the most part really really up-to-date with what is happening. A number of them today today is really up-to-date with what is happening for the reader.	
#12	Trade and community groups. They have a lot of information on specific agencies.	Specialized Information
#13	Extension. They're probably not first go to sources. I think they have a really good handle. They tend to be specialists in their area. When I am looking for a really specific topic, I can find an extension agent on a state level, which is an agency and range specific. That they are just more focused on that.	Specialized Information
#14	Extension. Why? Because they are the most forthcoming with the information, on a regular basis and they don't see that I have the information. I want because it is really accessible as well, and it's like done in a very timely manner.	Level of Access, Ready Information
#15	Extension. Take up 80% of cooperative extension and university. Suburban it's a few like. Some of the university people really set more like extension. It is because they have more down to the dirt information, and that the get up will really use. They have more practical stuff. They will be out in growers' fields and looking at spraying and that stuff.	Practical Information
#16	Extension. Reliable, usually dependable.	Quality, Level of Access, Dependable
#17	Trade and Community Groups. They are focused	Specialized Information

Appendix O

Most Used Information Sources

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	Extension: It goes back to us being a weekly and having to have timely info about what is going on out in the field, right then, right there. Those guys, for the most part, are really up to date with what is happening. A matter of them being better at supplying me timely information for our readers	Timely Information
#2	Trade and commodity groups: They have a lot of information on specific specialties.	Specialized Information
#3	Extension: That's probably my first go-to source. I think they have a really good handle; they tend to be specialists in their area. When I am looking for a really specific topic, I can find an extension agent on a state level who is an agronomy and range specialist, that they are just more focused in on that.	Specialized Information
#4	Extension: Why Because they are the most forthcoming with the information, on a regular basis, and they make sure that I have the information I need because it is easily accessible as well, and it's also done in a very timely manner.	Ease of Access Timely Information
#5	Extension: Toss up between cooperative extension and university. Sometimes it's a fine line. Some of the university people really act more like extension. It's because they have more down in the dirt information, stuff that the growers will really use. They have more practical stuff. They will be out in growers' fields and looking at diseases and that stuff.	Practical Information
#6	Extension: Reliable, available, dependable.	Reliable Ease of Access Dependable
#7	Trade and Commodity Group: We are dealing	Familiarity with Audience

	with the same industry and kind of working for the same industry. My point is, we're all talking to the same people, looking at the same issues, dealing with the same challenges because of the news side of the equation.	
#8	University: Generally because they are doing research in areas or have completed research in areas we are interested in. We are a trade association, so we have a lot of demonstrated expertise in the association, so it just depends on what is called upon. If we need an expert opinion, we will use someone within the association. But it will also be, say if we are trying to talk about a calving program about what is better we will use university or extension for their recommendation. Pitfalls in association industry such as ours, there is so much difference from region to region. You can't advocate one plan over another for the most part. You can't say this breed of cattle is better.	Specialized information Broad Base of Knowledge
#9	Extension: They are the most accessible, first of all. Secondly, their information is unbiased and accurate, and thirdly, most are able to provide us with very specific information.	Ease of Access Unbiased and Accurate Specialized Information
#10	University: No matter where they are, if they are doing genetic testing that info can be just as valuable in North Dakota as it is in Texas and Colorado. As a national publication, I recognize those university personnel, while they work for a specific university, they are a national source, and they are called on a lot times to speak at national meetings.	Broad Base of Knowledge
#11	Agribusiness: We use research out of pharmaceuticals.	Specialized Information
#12	University: University people obviously do state of the art research, breaking, new to the ... industry, in our case.	Specialized Information
#13	University: Very broad base of knowledge to provide. The information they have is very timely and is very pertinent to the	Broad Base of Knowledge Timely Information

	audience we service. They have a very broad base of knowledge not only within subject areas but among areas – feeds and nutrition – there's really a broad base there.	
#14	Extension: Cooperative extension here in (this state) is a little different that the rest of the country. They do a great deal of applied research – probably more applied research than at the university level. It's not uncommon to have four or five Ph.D.s on extension staff. I just rely on them because they make farm calls and know what's going on in the community. They do regular research and really applied research. Extension service has backbone of (publication name) from the very beginning.	Practical Information Familiarity with Audience
#15	Trade and Commodity Groups: Accessibility and also relation to our subject matter.	Ease of Access Specialized Information

Appendix P

Second Most Used Information Source

	Editor Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	University: They also can provide information on what is happening now and also can provide updates on ongoing research and new products that are coming out, as well as how existing products and technologies are performing.	Timely Information
#2	Agribusiness – They are the one that provide information on the products.	Specialized Information
#3	University: In contrast to extension, where I think extension folks have a good balance between specialists and producer interactions, university folks are very specialized, and they also have research to back them up. They also bring credibility to their research area.	Specialized Information Credible
#4	Trade and Commodity Groups: They tend to have meaty information in depth information for our readers and a lot to do with things that are going on politic wise or things that might affect them as far as the Farm Bill, I like to get that information out there.	Specialized Information
#5	University: They are so focused on stuff and lab research, but it's like, when is it ever going to get to a state when a grower can actually use it? Get stuck in a lab and don't get down into the dirt and understand real world applications. They don't really do something that a grower can use right away.	Specialized Information Not Practical
#6	University: Similar to the extension, primarily the reliability and credibility.	Reliable Credible
#7	University: Because, for my publication, they're doing the research. They are looking at production and management for research issue that are important for my readers. Probably more of an industry connection situation.	Specialized Information Familiarity with Audience
#8	Extension: They do an excellent job in explaining research.	Ability to Explain

#9	Agribusiness: They tend to also have a good idea of what's going on locally, and they can provide unbiased information. They give a good picture of what's going on in local area, which is helpful.	Familiarity with Audience Unbiased, Accurate Information
#10	Trade and Commodity Groups: They are more national in scope. They have their producer members from all over the country, as opposed to being regionalized or state.	Broad Base of Knowledge
#11	University: Research	Specialized Information
#12	Extension: Responsible for delivering that (university-generated) information to producers. So, they are valuable as a source to us.	Ease of Access
#13	Trade and Commodity Groups: They are a good source of reliable information, very credible.	Reliable Credible
#14	Trade and Commodity Groups: If I want to deal with a specific issue on a commodity, such as cotton or grain or grapes, they seem to be more accurate information. They know more about their business, we have so many crops out here, commodity groups are very helpful with all the commodities in (publication's state).	Specialized Information Familiarity with Audience Not Easily Accessed Specialized Information Ability to Explain
#15	Extension: Intimate knowledge of subject matter and accessibility.	Specialized Information Ease of Access

Appendix Q

Third Most Used Information Source

	Editor Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	Trade and Commodity Groups: They are really a direct line to the producer, and the producer is our reader	Familiarity with Audience
#2	University – I do have two professors that write for me on a per issue basis, so we use them quite a bit.	Specialized Information
#3	Trade and Commodity Groups: I think they bring a balance because they are looking at things on a national level and not just regional- or state-specific level. But they're kind of a national perspective on what this issue means or what's important here.	Broad Base of Knowledge
#4	Farm Organizations: I know that I can rely on the information there, even though they don't send it as much. Usually well worth reading when I do get it, and I just feel that they are connected with our readers and that information needs to get out there to.	Unbiased, Accurate Information Familiarity with Audience Not Easily Accessed
#5	USDA: It depends on the individual, but a lot of those guys are out there even though they may be doing high-powered research, they know how to explain it to someone like me who has a science background but doesn't have a Ph.D. in molecular biology.	Specialized information Ability to Explain
#6	Trade and Commodity Groups: They are very accessible, and their membership consists of the better farmers and ranchers in the area, and they typically stay on top of issues that affect their membership.	Ease of access Familiarity with Audience Specialized Information
#7	Agribusiness: That is agribusiness specific to the industry because those are the services and products that our readers want to know about, those are the people that are doing research and good technical people and have good information and good answers.	Specialized Information Familiarity with Audience
#8	USDA: We exist because we have an office in Washington, D.C. A lot of policies on USDA has to enforce. A lot of programs our people use are USDA programs.	Specialized Information

Appendix R

Most Preferred Information Sources

	Editor Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	Extension: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used") It goes back to us being a weekly and having to have timely info about what is going on out in the field, right then, right there. Those guys, for the most part, are really up to date with what is happening. A matter of them better at supplying me timely information for our readers.	Timely Information
#2	Agribusiness	N/A
#3	Extension: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used") That's probably my first go-to source. I think they have a really good handle. They tend to be specialists in their area, when I am looking for a really specific topic, I can find an extension agent on a state level who is an agronomy and range specialist, that they are just more focused in on that.	Expertise
#4	Extension: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used") Why? Because they are the most forthcoming with the information, on a regular basis, and they make sure that I have the information I need because it is easily accessible as well, and it's also done in a very timely manner.	Timely Information Ease of Access
#5	Extension: They are not as often on sabbatical or out of the office as often. They will respond back.	Ease of Access
#6	Extension: It's just accessible and credible.	Ease of Access Credibility
#7	Trade and Commodity Group: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used") We are dealing with the same industry and kind of working for the same industry. My point is, we're all talking the same people, looking	Familiarity with Audience

	at the same issues, dealing with the same challenges because of the news side of the equation.	
#8	University: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used"). Generally, because they are doing research in areas or have completed research in areas we are interested in. We are a trade association, so we have a lot of demonstrated expertise in the association, so it just depends on what is called upon. If we need an expert opinion, we will use someone within the association. But it will also be, say if we are trying to talk about a calving program about what is better we will use university or extension for their recommendation. Pitfalls in association, industry such as ours, there is so much difference from region to region. you can't advocate one plan over another for the most part. You can't say this breed of cattle is better.	Familiarity with Audience Practical Information
#9	Extension: They are definitely our top choice.	
#10	University: Because the national organizations tend to be a little more biased than university people. I know that the PR guy from national cattlemen's, I know how who he is working for. The university guy is not going to have that same bias. Although I know that everyone has some bias.	Unbiased, Accurate Information
#11	Agribusiness: I suppose on the reasons is that they do a good job of giving you information. There are packets of information from pharmaceutical companies.	Ease of Access
#12	Extension: Because they are a little more practical in the application of the information that we are looking at.	Practical Information
#13	University: They have a very broad base of knowledge, especially in our case, where we use extension and university people from local land grant. The information they have also is targeted to our readership. They are accessible.	Expertise Ease of Access Specialized Information
#14	Extension: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used"). Cooperative extension here in (this state) is a little different than the rest of the country. They do a great deal	Practical Information Familiarity with Audience

	of applied research – probably more applied research than at the university level. It's not uncommon to have four or five Ph.D.s on extension staff. I just rely on them because they make farm calls and know what's going on in the community, they do regular research and really applied research. Extension service has backbone of (publication name) from the very beginning.	
#15	Extension: Generally, they are the most knowledgeable, broad-based staff that we deal with.	Expertise

Appendix S

Second Most Preferred Information Sources

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	University: (Answered “same reason as why it is the most used”). They also can provide information on what is happening now and also can provide updates on ongoing research and new products that are coming out, as well as how existing products and technologies are performing.	Timely Information
#2	Trade and Commodity Groups – (Answered “same reason as why it is the most used”). They have a lot of information on specific specialties.	Specialized Information
#3	University: (Answered “same reason as why it is the most used”) In contrast to extension, where I think extension folks have a good balance between specialists and producer interactions, university folks are very specialized, and they also have research to back them up. They also bring credibility to their research area.	Specialized Information Credibility
#4	Trade and Commodity Organizations: (Answered “same reason as why it is the most used”) They tend to have meaty information in-depth information for our readers and a lot to do with things that are going on political wise or things that might affect them as far as the Farm Bill, I like to get that information out there.	Specialized Information
#5	University: (Answered “same reason as why it is the most used”). They are so focused on stuff and lab research, but it’s like when is it ever going to get to a state when a grower can actually use it? Get stuck in a lab and don’t get down into the dirt and understand real world applications. They don’t really do something that a grower can use right away.	Specialized Information Not Practical
#6	Trade and Commodity Groups: They are really good contacts.	

#7	University: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used"). Because, for my publication, they're doing the research. They are looking at production and management for research issue that important for my readers. Probably more of an industry connection situation.	Specialized Information Familiarity with Audience
#8	Extension: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used"). They do an excellent job in explaining research.	Specialized Information Ability to Explain
#9	University: They can provide excellent information from that academic viewpoint, most often it's been heavily researched, they have spent a lot of time looking into it. They are just not as accessible to us a lot of times, which is unfortunate.	Specialized Information Not Easily Accessed
#10	Trade and Commodity Groups: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used") They are more national in scope, they have their producer members from all over the country, as opposed to being regionalized or state.	Broad Base of Knowledge
#11	University: I believe they are doing a lot of important research and go back and check it well. I think they are probably a good source of information and quite accurate in that sense.	Specialized Information Unbiased, Accurate Information
#12	University: Because of their breaking research, and it's the other thing I would add, it's refereed research and usually unbiased, and so that's why.	Specialized Information Unbiased, Accurate Information
#13	Trade and Commodity Groups: Credibility factor. They are producer based, which means that they offer a grassroots perspective.	Credibility Familiarity with Audience
#14	Trade and Commodity Groups: (Answered "same reason as why it is the most used") If I want to deal with a specific issue on a commodity, such as cotton or grain or grapes, they seem to be more accurate information. They know more about their business, we have so many crops out here, commodity groups are very helpful with all the commodities in (publication's state).	Specialized Information Unbiased, Accurate Information
#15	Trade and Commodity Groups: Simply because a lot times they are able to turn you onto other story leads or other ideas that are	Source Recommendation

	happening, other story ideas that are happening in their areas.	
--	---	--

Most Used Interview Categories

41	<p>Subject: Anger + Frustration</p> <p>Personal: I try to attend as many different field days and that's primarily the typical personal contacts I have with various services that I run... It's been my experience, I will only see you a month away and it's taking a significant amount of time to meet new people and find new ideas and leads that are available here where services are provided. It's very important to me when I can't have a lot of time to spend.</p>	<p>Major Categories:</p> <p>Accountability of Marketing/Communication Business Research/Qualitative</p>
42	<p>Personal: One of our primary functions is to report on meetings and conversations and the type of thing. The things that we are always focused on. The magazine is 41 years old, was built as an information source for... feeders. It's the main way of communication for people who I am serving.</p>	<p>Accountability of Marketing/Communication Fast Turnaround</p>
43	<p>Telephone: Telephone interview is</p> <p>being reporting environment, directly getting out and working, involves your services are not too pretty difficult and not profitable. We can do a lot of phone to phone interviews where we have an interview guide set up so we can record the conversation. It gives me time to get through and make the conversation brief. Most people are pretty busy, so you can say "May I have a 30 min telephone interview, I would like to do" instead of taking up, if you have to go that process, you spend a lot of time sitting apart to spend. So you spend... hours of</p>	<p>Costly/Time Time Efficient</p>

Appendix T

Most Used Information Channels

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	<p>Personal: I try to attend as many different field days, and that's primarily the type of personal contact I have conferences, seminars, that I can... It's been my experience, I not only can get a news story out of attending a seminar conference, I can also meet new people and find new ideas and leads that can snowball into other stories and articles. It's very important to me to consistently have a lot of story ideas.</p>	<p>Accessible at Meetings/Convention Source Recommendation</p>
#2	<p>Personal: One of our primary functions is to report on meetings and conventions and that type of thing, The things that we are always famous for. The magazine is 47 years old, was built as an information center for ... feeders. It's the main way of communication for people who I am serving.</p>	<p>Accessible at Meetings/Convention Past Suitability</p>
#3	<p>Telephone: Telephone interview in today's operating environment, actually getting out and traveling to where your sources are can be pretty difficult and cost prohibitive. So , we do a lot of phone to phone interviews where we have an interview guide set up so we can record the conversation, it gives me time to go through and rehash the conversation later. Most people are pretty busy, so you can say "Hey I have a 30 min telephone interview I would like to do" instead of taking up, if you have to go visit someone, you spend a lot of time visiting space to space. So you spend 2 hours or</p>	<p>Cost Efficient Time Efficient</p>

	a morning or an afternoon. .	
#4	E-mail: I think that is the easiest way to get information out these days. I think it's quick, it's pretty much instant. I think it is a good way to get it out to as many people at once.	Ease of Dissemination
#5	E-mail: I get so much from chemical companies and equipment manufacturers who want me to write something about their product.	Access to Large Quantities of Info
#6	Personal Communication: That would be one-on-one interviews, I get more detail and information that way.	Access to Detailed Info
#7	E-mail: Everybody just responds to e-mail. I just tried to line up an interview with a retailer – I called him 4 times this week. I sent him an e-mail, and within 30 minutes, he called right back.	Access to Sources
#8	E-mail: Because we get the publications all the time, where people have these books – ok this is a magazine, editor information, writer's guides and things like that – and I always state my preference for information is through e-mail, so I tend to get it that way.	Requested Channel
#9	E-mail: There is so much flying around these days. Part of it has to do with the fact that a lot of sources are rural and some of them are remote, and some of the may be many miles away from where a reporter is, it's easier to e-mail or talk over the phone, as opposed to someone making the long trek out to a remote location.	Ease of Information Access
#10	E-mail: We have a long tradition, especially with producers, of sending them what is written before it is published, especially when you are dealing with producers that are not used to speaking with a reporter. They say	Ease of Accuracy Check Ease of Use Time Efficient

	<p>things, and they may mean them, but once they see them in print they say, "I didn't mean to say that" or it comes off wrong. That is not what we are about. Use e-mail, and of course, it makes everything so much easier to hit a button and send it to someone. E-mail is a godsend. Plus now with our own newsletters, when I get information from national organizations or universities they can send it today, and I can use it today.</p>	
#11	<p>E-mail: Well, I give my e-mail out to sources that I need to use and will use it. Plus on credibility, so it's just a good way of communicating. It seems to me, that I get so much e-mail, that I have my office manager go through and eliminate stuff. I only get credible information, but I feel it takes people awhile to get back to what they were doing after e-mails, it's still an interruption.</p>	<p>Requested Channel Credible</p> <p>Not Time Efficient</p>
#12	<p>Telephone: It's easy to pick up the phone and call someone. Because we are so well connected behind the industry and have been around forever, we know a lot of people, so it's easy to pick up the phone and call the people that are the right specialist in the area.</p>	<p>Ease of Use Access to Sources</p>
#13	<p>E-mail</p>	<p>N/A</p>
#14	<p>Web Sites: Accessibility primarily. It's instant, it's quick; also, obviously with e-mail and Web sites you can download, collect things, and put them in a story.</p>	<p>Ease of Access Time Efficient</p>
#15	<p>Telephone: Those are my personal preferences. Those are the ones that are the most timely and frequently the ones that are most important to our subscribers.</p>	<p>Time Efficient Source Preference</p>

Appendix U

Second Most Used Information Channels

	Editors Answer+Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	E-mail: A lot comes back to my doing, what I've signed up for. If I know of a particular organization that has an e-mail news service, I will sign up for that and get daily updates for that. Every morning, when I open up my e-mail and all during the day, I'm constantly getting updates from the House, Senate updates. I have signed up for a lot of these and just receive e-mails.	Requested Channel Access to Info
#2	Telephone: Feeders understand telephone better than they do e-mail.	Audience Familiarity
#3	Personal: Personal interviews are great because they give you an opportunity for photographs. You get a chance to go to a producer's operation. Our primary goal is to take photos, and we can always follow up with a phone interview or an e-mail.	Provide Photo Opportunity Allows for Follow-Up
#4	Web site: Because they will send me an e-mail with a link or something.	Allows for Follow-Up
#5	Personal Communication	N/A
#6	Telephone: It's more personal than electronic, but not quite as personal as face-to-face.	Personal
#7	Telephone: Good for suggestions.	Source/Lead Recommendation
#8	Web sites	N/A
#9	Telephone: There is so much flying around these days. Part of it has to do with the fact that a lot of sources are rural and some of them are remote, and some of the may be many miles away from where a reporter is, it's easier to e-mail or talk over the phone, as opposed to someone making the long trek out to a remote location.	Source Preference Ease of Access
#10	Telephone: Of course, you really can't	Ease of Info Access

	replace the telephone because it allows you to get in touch with anybody at anytime and if there is a question of accuracy.	Immediate Clarification
#11	Telephone: N/A	N/A
#12	E-mail: more and more we use e-mail a lot to check stories for accuracy and so on, so if we use someone as a source in a story, we send check copies to the sources. So, e-mail is indispensable for that.	Allow Accuracy Check
#13	Telephone Interviews: N/A	N/A
#14	E-mail: Obviously with e-mail and Web sites you can download, collect things, and put them in a story. Those basically become my notes. I plan them out and go from there. It's easier to do electronically.	Ease of Info Access
#15	E-mail: Those are my personal preferences. Those are the ones that are the most timely and frequently the ones that are most important to our subscribers.	Time Efficient

Appendix V

Third Most Used Information Channels

#1	Telephone: I do get a lot of calls from people who have a lot of ideas.	Access to Source
#2	E-mail: An awful lot of the industry information comes through and blurbs from off of different organizations, and it comes by e-mail.	Access to Large Quantity of Info
#3	E-mail: I think e-mail is really easy to do, but I think you get really canned answers. You don't get really candid remarks from a person as you would speaking to them. With e-mail, you can always go back and edit things, as a person responding to e-mail questions, and you get canned, generic answers. So, if you want canned generic answers e-mail is a choice. Sometimes, a lot of my interviews will follow up with e-mail. They will provide supplemental information they will provide research that supplements what we visited about.	Ease of Use Not Personal
#4	Fax: They do still tend to fax me a lot of stuff.	Access to Large Quantity of Info
#5	Telephone Communication	N/A
#6	E-mail: It's just so easy.	Ease of Use
#7	Personal	N/A
#8	Personal: What I value most is people that I meet at meeting because you just get so much information that you can put into print, and you get perspective that sometimes open up those avenues. Least favorite is PR agencies that call asking "did you get my press release?"	Access at Meetings/Conventions Access to Large Quantity of Info
#9	Personal Interview: There is so much flying around these days. Part of it has to do with the fact that a lot of sources are rural and some of them are remote, and some of them may be many miles away from where a	Not Ease of Access to Source

	reporter is, it's easier to e-mail or talk over the phone, as opposed to someone making the long trek out to a remote location.	
#10	Mail: Mail is still important. We get a lot of publications here. I still get a lot of news releases by mail. I keep telling them to quit using mail so much, because there is a lot of them that could get by e-mail, and two days later get it in the mail. They've asked me, but they're not doing a good job. Universities are the worst. I get a lot from national organizations who have a bigger budget, who need to manage better than they do. The bigger the group, the bigger the breed association, or the bigger the national organization, the more likely they are to manage themselves better. Angus assoc. - everything I get from them is e-mail. They get it, but have funds and resources to hire someone who can do the purge on the lists. Smaller groups are so busy getting news releases out, just don't have the manpower to go back spending half the day cleaning out the lists.	Access to Large Quantity of Info
#11	Personal Interview: N/A	
#12	Personal: Meetings, we go to a lot of meetings. We have a lot of interactions with good sources in industry.	Accessed at Meetings/Conventions Access to Sources
#13	Mail	N/A
#14	Telephone Interviews: You can transcribe while you talk.	Ease of Use
#15	Wire Services: Those are my personal preferences. Those are the ones that are the most timely and frequently the ones that are most important to our subscribers.	Timely Info Audience Familiarity

Appendix W

Most Preferred Information Channels

	Editor Answer + Reasoning	Concepts
#1	Personal: Nothing really beats going out and meeting people and talking to them and dealing with them face-to-face.	Access to Source
#2	E-mail: E-mail is certainly the easiest since I don't run a staff. I am the only person that really is collecting information. E-mail is very easy.	Ease of Use
#3	Telephone: The combination works really well to do phone interviews and e-mail follow up. I guess that's probably my preference if you are just looking for general information.	Allows Follow Up
#4	E-mail: I prefer e-mail – I think it works very well. It's a lot easier to copy and paste from e-mail rather than type them.	Ease of use
#5	Personal: If you are going along, when I don't quite understand, someone can explain something to you, whereas e-mail is cold. You will send questions and they will answer two questions.	Immediate Clarification
#6	Personal: (Same reasons as most used channel). I get more details and information that way, face-to-face.	Ease of Access to Information
#7	E-mail: I do prefer to get news information or ideas through e-mail. If someone sends an e-mail with that idea that's great, but I often	Allows Follow-Up

	like to talk to them on the phone because e-mail can only do so much.	
#8	E-mail: It's partly a function of how we work, you check your e-mail a gazillion times a day, and I feel I can even use it as a little bit of a storage system.	Time Efficient Creates a Storage System
#9	Personal interviews: Are the best way to talk to a source and get information, and it allows you to establish a relationships with people, which is so important. It raises questions that you wouldn't think about over the phone and e-mail. It also allows more photo opportunities.	Establish Relationships Immediate Clarification More Detailed Photo Opportunity
#10	E-mail – not as time consuming.	Time Efficient
#11	Telephone: On the phone you can clarify, by e-mail you have to go back and forth.	Immediate Clarification
#12	Telephone: (Same reason as most used channel). It's easy to pick up the phone and call someone because we are so well connected behind the industry and have been around forever. We know a lot of people, so it's easy to pick up the phone and call the people that are the right specialist in the area.	Ease of Use Access to Source
#13	E-mail: Personal and are one-on-one contact. I prefer because it is more convenient for the interviewer and the interviewee. The only problem is the inability to ask follow-up questions immediately. You have to exchange e-mails two or three times to get your	Personal Convent Not Immediate Clarification Not efficient

	questions answered. Is a little less efficient than the telephone interviews.	
#14	E-mail: I would prefer electronic, from an electronic source.	Requested Channel
#15	Telephone: Because those are the things that are important to people that I deal with on a daily basis.	Source Preference

#16	Personal interview: I would like to see the person so receive that information, but a little bit easier for me to find out that on the right person. It is a little more organized way of doing things.	
#17	Personal interview: If you are trying to perhaps a story, where you have a lot of personal people involved, you need all participants.	Creation of Personal Story/Project, etc.
#18	Web site: I don't mind going to a Web site or look up things. It takes a little time for you but that's okay.	Lack of Access to Site
#19	Telephone: If you are going along, what I don't quite understand, someone can explain something to you, what you want to ask. You will avoid questions, and they will answer the questions. You can't generalize how when you have a lot of time to do a summary.	Intermediate Communication/Personal
#20	Telephone: It's more personal than the other, but quite as personal as face-to-face.	Personal
#21	Telephone: If someone sends you an e-mail with that idea, that's good, but I often like to talk about on the phone because e-mail can only do so much.	Lack of Access to Site
#22	Personal interview: A meeting that I choose to attend. That would be my first choice, but I don't get out a lot of time.	Assessment of Meeting/Communication
#23	Telephone: It's more personal than face-to-face, but it's not as personal as face-to-face.	Personal

Appendix X

Second Most Preferred Information Channels

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Concepts
#1	E-mail: The e-mail and telephone cut down significantly on paperwork and clutter and things like that. It's easier for me to send something by e-mail, and if I realize that I am not the person to receive that information, it's a whole lot easier for me to forward that to the right person. It's a simpler more organized way of doing things.	Clutter Reduction Ease of Use Organization System
#2	Personal Interviews: Done at conventions.	
#3	Personal Interviews: If you are trying to package a story, where you have to take pictures and provide graphics, you need all components	Creates a Packaged Story (photos, etc.)
#4	Web site: I don't mind going to a Web site to look up things. It takes a little time for me, but that's okay.	Ease of Access to Info
#5	Telephone: If you are going along, when I don't quite understand, someone can explain something to you, whereas e-mail is cold. You will send questions, and they will answer two questions. You can't personalize like when you have a telephone to check accuracy.	Immediate Clarification Personal
#6	Telephone: It's more personal than electronic, not quite as personal as face-to-face.	Personal
#7	Telephone: If someone sends me an e-mail with that idea, that's great, but I often like to talk them on the phone because e-mail can only do so much.	Ease of Access to Info
#8	Personal Interviews: A meeting that I choose to attend. That would be my first choice, but I don't get out to a lot of them.	Accessed at Meetings/Conventions
#9	Telephone: Phone is less personal than face-to-face would be but still	Personal

	important. You have voice contact at least.	
#10	Web sites: It's about time, again.	Time Efficient
#11	Personal Interviews: I guess the credibility factor. After awhile, you know who you are talking to, either you believe them or you don't.	Access to Source
#12	E-mail: More and more we use e-mail a lot to check stories for accuracy and so on, so if we use someone as a source in a story, we send check copies to the sources, so e-mail is indispensable for that.	Allows Accuracy Check
#13	Telephone Interviews: E-mail and telephone interviews are both personal and are one-on-one contact. The only problem with e-mail is the inability to ask follow up questions immediately. You have to exchange e-mails two or three times to get your questions answered. Makes it a little less efficient than telephone interviews.	Immediate Clarification
#14	Web site: I would prefer electronically, through an electronic source.	Requested Channel
#15	E-mail: it's efficient.	Overall Efficient

Appendix Y

Third Most Preferred Information Channels

	Editors Answer + Reasoning	Major Categories
#1	Telephone: E-mail and telephone have cut down significantly on paperwork and clutter and things like that.	Clutter Reduction
#2	Telephone	N/A
#3	E-mail: The combination works really well to do phone interviews and e-mail follow up. I guess that's probably my preference if you are just looking for general information. If you are trying to package a story, which when you have to take pictures or provide graphics, you need all three of those components.	Allows Follow-Up Can Provide a Packaged Story
#4	Fax: I don't mind typing a fax	Acceptable Labor
#5	E-mail: Mail I hate. Don't use wire services. Web sites tend to be ... there is a lot of hooley out there. Web site to me are sort of like an advertisement. May use as a source, but will call to check up. Always call the originator or the site or the information of the data. E-mail is cold – you will send questions, and they will answer the two questions, you can't personalize like when you have a telephone to check accuracy.	Other Channels Not Desired Impersonal Not Immediate Clarification
#6	E-mail: (Same reasons as most used channel). It's just so easy, though not as personal as telephone or face to face.	Ease of Use Impersonal
#7	Mail: Because I don't know how a Web site or wire service would work.	Other Channels Aren't Desired
#8	Web sites: They are very handy. I use those often, sometimes it depends sometimes you have real navigation issues. The information you are looking for is there and you can run into a block. I just went through a thing with one of the phone calls, and I was trying to find a zip code, and it's one of my biggest complaints is that you go to a Web site and the hardest thing to find is an address and	Ease of Use Navigation Problems

	telephone.	
#9	E-mail: It's a wonderful tool, and you can certainly communicate fast that way, but it's a little impersonal.	Time Efficient Impersonal
#10	Telephone: I prefer telephone the least, although I use it a lot, primarily because it is time consuming. I get a lot of phone calls. We know the ag audience is older, the beef audience is even older and it is a lot older than the dairy audience or pork. A great percentage of them don't have e-mail than their counterparts in other areas of agriculture, but they rely on telephones.	Audience Preference Time Inefficient
#11	E-mail: E-mail becomes kind of a tag situation, by e-mail you have back and forth, back and forth. We get a lot of information that way (via e-mail).	Time Inefficient
#12	Personal Interviews: (Same reasons as channel use). Personal interviews is likewise valuable. Meetings, we go to a lot of meetings. We have a lot of interactions with good sources in the industry.	Access to Source Accessed at Meetings/Conventions
#13	Web sites: I am always looking for a person's title or what their background is or some position that an organization has on an issue, and it's really easy access.	Ease of Access to Info
#14	Mail: I don't want to get telephone calls. I would prefer electronically, from an electronic source.	Requested Channel Other Channels not Desirable
#15	Wire Service: It's efficient.	Overall Efficient

Appendix Z

Different Sources Using Different Channels

#1	I think it just seems to me like everything I get is e-mail. I just get very little actual mail anymore, all of it seems like e-mails. I think that all of them seem to have changed over to e-mail.	Yes E-mail Most Used by All Print Rarely Used by Any
#2	They do, depending on who they are. Everybody else thinks we have moved into the information age, but not necessarily all the people in the country have, so it just depends on how technical they are.	Yes Technology Not Widespread
#3	Extension is most likely to use e-mail for kind of general information. Pretty rare they call. I don't think USDA puts out information. I think they just have a Web site and you can come to that. Cattlemen's organizations really use e-mail, same as commodity groups, same as state farm bureaus. Don't use information from state departments of ag, kind of like USDA, you have to go to their Web site. Agribusiness sector communicates a lot of different ways – they will send you something through snail mail, something through e-mail, a lot of times it's a trade show visit if you are person to person, face to face will get you information that way. University uses e-mail kind of primary.	Yes Extension – E-mail Most Used Telephone – Rarely Used by USDA/State Dept's of Ag – Rarely Disseminate Info Web site Most Used Trade and Commodity – E-mail Farm Orgs – E-mail Agribusiness – Mail, E-mail, Personal University – E-mail Most Used
#4	Definitely, extension will e-mail without fail, and I will get more than I could ever put in that paper. The USDA will fax me, as will anything to do with funding that's coming up for people to apply for; without fail I will get in a fax, and I can't figure that out. They have repeatedly called and said how would you like your information be delivered, and I will say here is my e-mail address, and they will still fax me,	Extension – E-mail Most Used USDA – Fax Most Used Fax Also Used for "Funding Issues" Though specifically requests information electronically, it still come by fax

	they have been doing it for 3 years.	
#5	It depends on the university – most stuff comes through e-mail, though universities often send letters, even though I have signed up for e-mail. I get more e-mail than you can imagine.	University – e-mail Most Used, Mail Used Though Specifically Request Electronic, Print still Sent
#6	Most everybody, just general information, most everybody uses e-mail.	E-mail Most Used by All
#7	Not so much anymore, I see everyone using e-mail. I will say again agribusiness does one of the worst jobs. Unless they have a new product, they don't come out with research information, they are just as connected, I think they are losing a lot of opportunity. Certainly 10 years ago, that would not have been the case. My mail service has dropped dramatically, you used to get a lot of stuff from mail from universities or association or agribusiness. You just don't now, it's all e-mail.	E-mail Most Used by All Mail Most Rarely Used
#8	Everybody tries to get away from paper, and I would tend to say universities probably tend to be more on the electronic edge. Companies will come at you any way they think they can get their information in the door. So, it's not unlikely to get an e-mail, a direction to a Web site, a DVD with mail along with a press release that was an exact copy of what was sent to me. One thing you don't see any more is a fax machine. When I started here, you did a lot of communication by fax, now I can barely work our machine.	Universities – Electronic Sources Most Used Agribusiness – E-mail, Web, Mail are Most Used. Diverse Dissemination Fax – Rarely Used
#9	I guess I would say that the bigger organizations, state farm bureaus, USDA things like that are on a bigger scale and are operating much more through e-mail, regular mail, Web sites and things like that. Smaller organizations, county extension and even some trade and commodity groups tend to access you more	Farm Organizations, USDA – E-mail, Mail, Web Most Used Extension, Trade and Commodity – Personal Most Used

	through personal contacts, whether that is stopping by your office or calling you.	
#10	Yes, more and more people, especially university personnel, are prone to using e-mail, especially departments as opposed to extension. The animal science department, they have my e-mail and they are more targeted.	University – E-mail Most Used
#11	You get more and more e-mail, I guess.	E-mail most used by all
#12	Everybody uses e-mail more than mail today. E-mail is the most common of those, telephone being second, probably.	E-mail Most Used by all Telephone Second Most Used
#13	Yes, they use different channels.	
#14	I get very little snail mail from cooperative extension. About 85-95% is electronic. People are still sending faxes. I do get snail mail but usually just toss it.	Extension – E-mail Most Used Faxes Used Mail Used
#15	Almost all things we get from sources are via e-mail	E-mail Most Used by All

Appendix AA

Channels Use Affecting use of Information

#1	No, I think that if the information is important to our readers, I am going to use it. Even though I may strive for convenience and want the convenience of e-mail, the bottom line is that if it's news, and it's a value to our readers, it needs to be dealt with.	Valuable Information Will be Used
#2	I think it would for anybody. The availability of or if you send me an e-mail saying "hey, I am doing this and this and this," then I am going to respond very definitely.	E-mail – Elicits Definite Response
#3	This day and age, e-mail is probably the best way to get in front of us. I say that as a double-edged sword, they may get overlooked. From my perspective on my desk, e-mail is probably the best way to get it in front of me, a phone call really cements that. I act on phone calls more. If I get something through snail mail, I rarely go through it, by that time it is outdated, especially if it's a press release from a company. In today's age, e-mail the best way to get that information. Unless something substantial comes through snail mail, a lot of agribusiness send media kits with their entire lines and cds or junk drives with all the pictures on it, in that case it's easier to use the mail option. If you have so much data, can't make easy in e-mail. Sending a media kit is effective, they kind of pile up on my desk, but at least I have them, and I know where they are.	E-mail -Best Exposure to Editor Mail - Outdated, When it Arrives Best method of Electronic Pictures Best Method for Large Amounts of Data (media kits)
#4	Actually, that is a yes. It's sadly because of my time constraints. If I have something, that's on e-mail that I can copy and paste and get done in a minute and a half, that is much more appealing to me than having to take a long press release, sort through it, figure out what is important enough to get in the press release to our readers and then type it up. So, I would be more apt to use an e-mail than I would something that is mailed in or faxed to me sometimes simply because I wouldn't have time to get it out because of the extra labor it would take. It all comes down to time, time, time.	Time Pressures E-mail – copy and paste Time efficient Mail – Extra time, extra labor
#5	I have this high tech company that sends me hard	Mail – not time efficient

	copies and a photo. Now, when I get their press release, I look it over and toss it because I don't have the time to call them and get digital images. It does affect me, I ask can't you send it by e-mail, and they will answer "we are working on it."	E-mail – Preference for Digital Data (pictures)
#6	Yes, it does, if I am just getting news releases like from a seed company or something like that, I prefer to get them through e-mail. If I am getting information about an issue, like worms attacking corn in Texas, I prefer to get a phone call.	E-mail – Prefer Electronic Data for Press Release Phone – Prefer for Issue Information
#7	Yes, probably, it's sad but true. For one thing, it is much easier to, if it is a new product, it's easier to pick it up and use it, cut and paste and edit and rewrite it.	E-mail – Electronic Data, Ease of Use
#8	No, if the information is correct, I will use it. The old bit is it's the quality of information and the ease with which it can be used. If you have it so they can find the important information quickly, you have a much higher chance of the information being used. If a company faxes a 2-page press release, odds are there might be just a paragraph that is really vital to you, if a company reasons they also have put in this other stuff. Any more, I don't have to rely on print. Even stuff coming through is much smaller stream than it was a few years ago.	Valuable Information Will be Used Easier to Find Information, Higher Chance of Use Print Less Sent
#9	No, good information is good information no matter how you get it.	Valuable Information Will be Used
#10	My answer is yes, it does affect the way that I use that information and those sources, but it doesn't prevent me from using those sources. What it does is, it affects my ability to use it in the most timely of manners. My inbox is overflowing, so you send me a news release, it may get here in 2 days, but there is no guarantee it will get opened in two days. But e-mail comes in dings. I will read it, it has just made it exponentially easier for me, as opposed to opening the envelope, finding a place to file the paper – don't want to type all this in, so is there a Web site I can go find this already typed. E-mail it's not just a little easier, it's a lot easier.	E-mail – Immediate Access Ease of Access Print – Delayed Access
#11	Yes, if I get something that is printed, I can go back over it and search for more information. E-mails are clipped information, you can't ask	Print – Allows for Clarity E-mails – Can't ask Question

	questions. You can go back re-read it and maybe figure it out. Do that and then call the person for information.	May Have to Call for Back Up
#12	Not necessarily, if it is good information, we will use it regardless of how they deliver it.	Valuable Information will be Used
#13	It depends. We have several publications here, have a weekly newsletter and a monthly publication – any of those different vehicles are sufficient for our magazine just because the timeliness isn't as great as our newsletter and Web site. Yes, it does affect sources we use. We probably use all sources for magazine and limit the scope for our newsletter and limit further for our Web site.	Time Pressures Dictated
#14	Oh, yeah, if it's easier for me to use, I want to use it. If I have to rewrite, if I have to transcribe it, have to scan I am less interested in using it. Obviously, I am not going to reject information if I think it's important, but how I use it and what gets in the press depends a lot on how I get it.	Print – Time to Read and Make Electronic a Negative Valuable Information will be Used
#15	Sure. The easier, the more accessible, the more likely I am going to use as a source. If I have to fax things back and forth, I am less likely to want to use them than talking on the phone or e-mailing them.	Ease of Use and Access