

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Ltd.

Australia's Nation-wide Research Organisation

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World Readership Research Papers

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This document has been sent to subscribers and potential subscribers to the Roy Morgan Multi-Media Survey. It clearly explains why the "currency" for all readership research should be "specific issue".

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"Specific issue" readership of a publication (or the average issue of "specific issue" readership over a number of issues) is the internationally accepted, and in fact, the only currency for readership research.

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There is no question that the "through-the-book" readership method which takes a respondent through a "specific issue" of a publication and identifies whether or not that particular issue had been read, is the most accurate.

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The only question is whether other methods (shorter and cheaper) eg. "recency", "filter recall", "first-time reading", "F.R.Y.", etc. get the same answer as the "through-the-book" method.

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Documents enclosed:

A New Look at Reach and Frequency: Proceedings, 15th Annual Conference Advertising Research Foundation - W.R. Simmons, October 14, 1969.

Telescoping: The skeleton in the recent reading closet: Magazine Research Symposium, New Orleans - Valentine Appel, 1981.

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A New Approach In Audience Measurement For Print Media: ESOMAR Seminar "Improving Media Research", Stockholm - Roy Morgan, April 1982.

How a Composite Method Has Overcome Telescoping, Prestige and Replication in Readership Research: "Symposium II" on Readership Research, Montreal - Roy Morgan, June 1983.

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The Ideal Survey - and Until the Ideal Survey: Worldwide Readership Research Symposium V, Hong Kong - Gary C. Morgan, John Davis and Chris Gibson, February 3-8, 1991.

Roy Morgan Readership Seminar: Melbourne and Sydney - Gary C. Morgan, John Davis and Chris Gibson, April 10/11, 1991.

Memo to NZ Buyers of Magazine and Newspaper Advertising Space: Steve Burns, December 15, 1993.

Memo to Users of Readership Survey Data: Gary C. Morgan, December 17, 1993; and *Average issue readership - there is something wrong!*, M.R.G. Conference, Amsterdam - Neil Shepherd-Smith, November 1993.

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REF:L:GCM:NZ Readership Notes

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*A New Look at Reach and Frequency: Proceedings, 15th Annual Conference
Advertising Research Foundation - W.R. Simmons, October 14, 1969.*

(Summary of key points)

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W.R. Simmons focuses on easy to understand issues in determining the best methodology for measuring readership.

He provides evidence, including calling on numerous studies, that unaided recall questions, such as "recency", produce inflated readership estimates and that this inflation is higher for monthlies than it is for weeklies.

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Even if respondents answer "filter recall" (recency) questions correctly, readership inflation will occur. This occurs when readers read the same issue on more than one day. With monthlies this situation is extended leading to even higher levels of inflated readership.

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"Now, the point is, if they can and do answer these questions correctly, any results of the filter-recall (recency) questions will inevitably lead to a serious inflation in average issue audiences. That is to say, the question will lead to an inflation insofar as any of the readers may happen to read the same issue on more than one day. Now it is well known, of course, that monthly magazines tend to be read on as many as five or six different days, and sometime the useful life of a monthly might extend over a period of up to ten or twelve weeks. Similarly, weekly magazines will often be read over a period of two to three weeks or even longer". (See Page 14)

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Simmons highlights the two types of reading that occur. **Initial reading and re-reading.**

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"At this point, it is extremely important to recognize that there are two kinds of reading. There is initial reading and repeat reading, and they have one extremely important difference. A respondent becomes a reader of an issue on the very first day he reads (his initial reading). If he reads the same issue again, he does not become another reader or contribute any further to the size of the audience estimate. (See Pages 14 & 15)

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Readership "recency" questions do not ask the respondents to distinguish their initial reading from repeat reading; they are merely asked to check how many issues they have read or looked into within a specific time period (four week period for weeklies).

Simmons graphically illustrates with easy to understand differing examples, how the "filter recall" recency questions dramatically inflate readership (by 25-100%) because of re-reading.

See Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. (See Page 15)

In each case the amount of inflation in the response is directly proportional to the time interval during which repeat reading occurs and the frequency of repeat reading.

As one would expect:

"There are endless combinations of reading patterns, including initial and repeat reading, that can be examined".

The inflation eg. bias of the readership estimate, is equal to the span of the repeat reading interval.

"Before leaving the reporting bias, let's note that there are endless combinations of reading patterns, including initial and repeat reading, that can be examined.

With respect to each and every issue on which a respondent reports reading, there is an inflationary bias equal to the span of repeat reading interval for that issue taken as a percent of 28 days.

Please note also that we are not talking about a response bias, for with our assumptions of perfect memory, the responses are correct. Instead, it is basically a bias in the questioning method because the respondents are instructed to include their repeat reading." (See Page 16)

In the case of monthly magazines the opportunity for inflation due to repeat reading is therefore much higher.

"For monthlies, of course, the situation might be more serious because of the much longer issue life and the greater number of reading days monthlies enjoy".

Existing empirical evidence shows that recall-type questions have consistency led to an inflation in audience findings, namely:

1. Study for Institute of Practitioners in Advertising report by Corlett and Osborne in Britain
2. Don McGlathery test reported in the Journal of Advertising Research, and Standard Rate and Data Research Services' test.
3. Alfred Politz test reported at the 1967 ARF Conference. (See Fig.1 Page 17)

"It seems evident from this carefully documented test that when you ask respondents about their reading over the last four weeks or four months, the responses lead to an inflation of magazine audiences as compared with the "through-the-book "or "reader-interest" method of questioning. Also note the amount of inflation is considerably higher for monthlies than it is for weeklies." (See Pages 16 and 17)

4. Simmons Market Research Bureau recall (recency) question results asked over 3 years.

In studying questioning bias, most serious researchers have pointed out that when respondents are asked questions to which they don't really know the answer, they tend to fill in the missing data with some speculation on their part which all too often is coloured by a respondents own ego needs.

"We feel that these results reflect tendencies for respondents to claim more frequent reading of the magazines they deem to be prestigious".

Measuring Frequency of Reading

Simmons found from first hand experience, the limitations of using **single interviews** to obtain patterns of reader accumulation, ie. readership growth.

*"We found out that there was a tendency for respondents to claim either **reading both** of the two issue when asked about them in the same interview or else to claim reading neither of them." This is why we need re-interview. (See Page 18)*

And because of this, Simmons highlighted the need for a re-interview survey to measure "frequency" of reading.

"This discovery was, in fact, most unfortunate for us in the following year. Since then, we have found it necessary to make two separate interviews in order to obtain, reliable, information about reading of two separate issues of each publication." (See Page 18)

It is because of this finding that Roy Morgan in Australia and New Zealand use a re-interview survey to measure "frequency" of reading instead of a single interview survey as used in New Zealand by AGB/MRS.