

**Surveying Alumni and Current Alumni  
Survey Research**

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**Disclaimers:**

- I am not an OSU alum;
  - Wife, two sons and two daughters-in law are.
- I am a journalist by trade;
  - Means I'm a constitutionally empowered teller of great truths.
- Part of my job is public relations;
  - Stereotypically means I'm paid to say anything helpful about my employer.
- I'm a science writer;
  - I'm excited by geeky, technical stuff that bores/scares "normal" folk.
- I'm not a statistician or an expert on surveys:
  - But I'm going to talk about what surveys – as well as other communications – really tell us.

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**Communication "facts":**

- Different people, different groups, bring different perspectives and perceptions to every bit of information they're exposed to and that alters what they hear and retain.
- True communication requires:
  - Someone capable of effectively providing information.
  - Someone who wants to receive that information.

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CAN YOU WORD THAT MORE SIMPLY? I NEED TO EXPLAIN IT TO THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP?

MONEY BE GOOD. THIS MAKE MORE. OOGAH!

THAT WAS UNCALLED FOR.

I CAN REPLACE THE PIE CHART WITH A KITTEN.

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**The proverbial question . . .**

*Is the glass of water half-full or half-empty?*

But there are other questions as well . . .

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- Is it a glass, or a cup, or a beaker . . . ?
- Is it water, or ethanol, or Bacardi's rum . . . ?
- How do you measure "fullness" in this container . . . ?

**Main Point:** The more questions asked, the more certain the answers will be. Fewer questions . . . weaker answers!

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### Science Literacy questionnaire:

NSF's Science & Engineering Indicators, 2010 [Table 7-4]

Types of questions:

- *The center of the Earth is very hot.* (True)
- *All radioactivity is man-made.* (False)
- *Lasers work by focusing sound waves.* (False)
- *Electrons are smaller than atoms.* (True)
- *Antibiotics kill viruses as well as bacteria.* (False)
- *Does the Earth go around the Sun, or does the Sun go around the Earth?*

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### Similar Study in 2004 showed that . . .

- The rate of 'scientific literacy' in the U.S. had nearly tripled since 1988 ...
- But it was still just 28%...
- That meant that about 200 million Americans don't understand much science at all.
- US ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Sweden in measures of "civic scientific literacy;"
- Among "Gen-X-ers," 43% are considered science literate.

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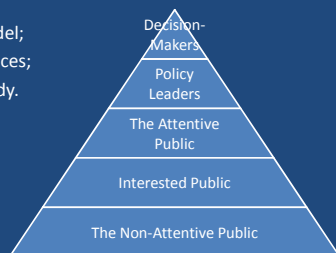
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### How we learn . . .

- "Cognitive deficit" model – (scientists' favorite) – "warehousing";
- "Just-In-Time" model;
- Jon Miller's audiences;
- "Six Americas" study.



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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- A new study provides some of the strongest evidence to date that Americans prefer to read political articles that agree with the opinions they already hold.

Researchers found that people spent 36 percent more time reading articles that agreed with their point of view than they did reading text that challenged their opinions.

Even when they did read articles that countered their views, participants almost always balanced that with reading others that confirmed their opinions.

<http://www.ohio-state.edu/news/2011/09/22/092211research.html>



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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- When given a choice, older people prefer to read negative news, rather than positive news, about young adults, a new study suggests.

In fact, older readers who chose to read negative stories about young individuals actually get a small boost in their self esteem, according to the results.

And what about younger people? Well, they just prefer not to read about older people.

<http://www.ohio-state.edu/news/2011/09/22/092211research.html>

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Take for example, this point raised in the alumni survey as the second-most important indicator that the university "is on the right track going forward":

- "OSU ranks second only to Duke among all universities in the country for industry-sponsored research."

But only 38 percent responded as such, meaning slightly more than one-third of those responding.

And in 2010, OSU's percentage of industry-sponsored research totaled just 16 percent.

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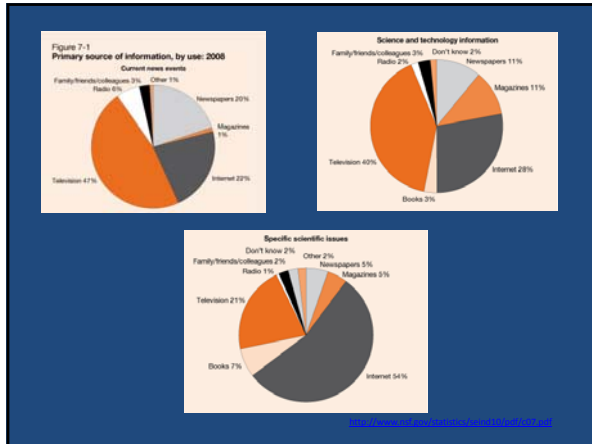
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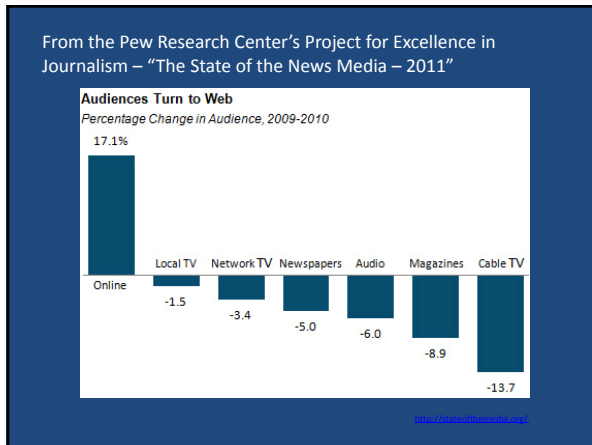
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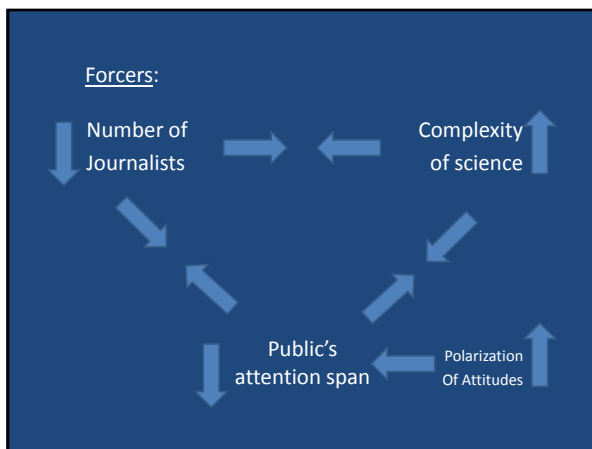
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Dear News Media,

When reporting poll results, please keep in mind the following suggestions:

1. If two poll numbers differ by less than the margin of error, it's not a news story.
2. Scientific facts are not determined by public opinion polls.
3. A poll taken of your viewers/internet users is not a scientific poll.
4. What if all polls included the option "Don't care"?

Signed,  
-Someone who took a basic statistics course.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

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So what does this all mean?

- We have to remember to evaluate the information that comes our way;
- We have to listen for clues that can help with that evaluation;
- We have to consider the source of the information, is there an obvious agenda or point-of-view;
- Are the statements made couched in "conditional" wording – would, could, may, might, etc.;

THE WORD  
- Truthiness

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