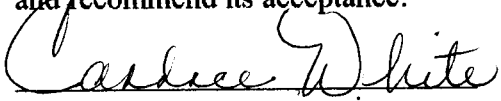


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Stuart Davidson Hames entitled "A Readership Survey of the Alumni Magazine of a Small, Church-Related University." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communications.


James A. Crook, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:




Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of The Graduate School

**A Readership Survey of the Alumni Magazine
of a Small, Church-Related University**

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Stuart Davidson Hames
August 1997**

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ABSTRACT

This research assesses the opinions of the audience of the alumni magazine of a small, church-related university. Target areas in the research included writing and design quality, reading patterns, shelf life, viability as a news source, amount of coverage, interest level per regularly covered topics, and general readership characteristics. Of secondary interest in this study was the area of monetary donations. Part of this research sought to determine if a relationship existed between such donations and the reader's overall opinion of the magazine.

To provide a backdrop for the study, the practice of public relations was examined, specifically public relations in a higher-education setting. The role of alumni magazines in the broad scheme of higher-education public relations was discussed. The relationship between communications research and public relations also was discussed, and alumni research was examined to shed light on the special concerns of fund-raisers who generate monetary support for small, church-related colleges and universities. Also covered in this study was the importance of a magazine's formula and format as determinants of its overall success.

A random sample was drawn, and a questionnaire was mailed to 300 individuals whose names appeared on the magazine's mailing list. A total of 104 usable surveys was returned, resulting in a 35% response rate.

In general, findings indicated respondents had a favorable opinion of the magazine. They were pleased overall with both the magazine's writing and design, and a majority of the readers who participated in this study said they looked to the magazine as either their first or second source of news about the university. Sections devoted to alumni were very popular with respondents, and many suggested more such information be featured in forthcoming issues.

There also was a moderate association found between overall opinion of the magazine and the act of giving money to the university.

The researcher recommended enhancing the magazine's offerings by including more news about physical changes to the campus (the No. 1 reason respondents said they read the magazine), as well as additional news about alumni-related issues. It also was recommended the magazine broaden its scope to appeal to a wider range of readers, therefore exposing it and the university to a larger audience.

Opportunities for further study lie in the areas of audience research, more comprehensive readership surveys, the magazine's mailing list, and comparative studies with like publications.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public relations involves a host of functions designed to facilitate communication between institutions and their constituents. This communication is carried out to provide information about the institution to its publics, to enhance understanding of the organization's policies among its publics, to influence opinions and attitudes of its publics, and to create and maintain a positive image of the institution in the minds of its publics (Grunig, 1992; Lesly, 1983; Cole, 1981; Bernays, 1952). In a nutshell, public relations is the art of managing communication between an institution and its publics (Grunig, 1992).

Communications managers in a variety of settings practice public relations on a day-to-day basis. They do so to achieve certain goals and objectives that are set forth to advance the cause of their particular organization. Managers employ numerous public relations tools to reach these goals and objectives, including media kits, brochures, pamphlets, press releases, newsletters, annual reports, newspapers, and magazines. Financial institutions, government, industry, and education are a handful of the settings in which public relations is employed (Lesly, 1983). This research will focus on public relations in higher education.

In the realm of higher education, public relations plays a principal role in fostering relationships between colleges and universities and their alumni. A source of much-needed volunteer and financial support, alumni comprise very special groups within the publics of a college or university. According to Schoenfeld (1954), they constitute one of the most important segments of a school's publics because they are

more closely tied to the school emotionally than are the school's other publics (Wink, 1979).

More and more, alumni are being looked to for monetary support by institutions faced with climbing tuitions and fees (Melchiori, 1988). Private institutions such as church-related colleges and universities depend on their alumni for philanthropic support perhaps even more so than do public institutions, but, ironically, private institutions have not enjoyed the level of alumni financial support that many public ones have (Smith, 1993).

The influence of alumni is present in many, if not all, areas of an educational institution's operations, from recruitment to student services to curriculum planning to fund-raising. It stands to reason, therefore, that creating and sustaining a meaningful relationship with alumni is paramount for the typical American institution of higher learning (Melchiori, 1988). This is true especially for church-related institutions because such institutions usually are not state-supported.

The task of developing relationships with alumni falls, to some degree, on the shoulders of the public relations practitioner in higher education, because it is from the public relations office that the majority of printed communication is disseminated (Aronson and Spetner, 1993). Of the printed materials produced in the public relations offices of colleges and universities, the alumni publication is the one piece created with alumni as the chief audience. The alumni publication is a vital link to the alumni of a college or university. It has been suggested the alumni publication, in some cases, is the only link alumni have with their alma maters (Armbruster, 1976).

It is, therefore, necessary for an alumni publication editor to become familiar with his or her audience and to know what that audience wants to see in its alumni publication. Editors can obtain this information by conducting audience research. When a periodical such as an alumni publication is at the focus of the research, it is appropriate for an editor

to conduct a readership survey. Gathering information on reader interests is one of an editor's primary objectives when determining the content of a publication (Wink, 1979). Such a survey can help editors gain insight into the interests, attitudes, opinions, and needs of their audiences. Readership surveys, according to Moore and Blue (1979), are the only way to assess reader attitudes toward a publication (LaRochelle, 1994).

The alumni publication of an educational institution can influence the opinions of alumni toward that institution. These opinions may carry important implications for educational fund-raisers. If reader preferences are systematically gathered and incorporated into the editing process, the alumni publication can be a "valuable part" of an educational institution's public relations program (Wink, 1979).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this study the researcher will attempt to determine perceptions and preferences of the constituents of a small, church-related university toward that university's alumni magazine.

The administration of readership surveys is an essential managerial task for the editor of any magazine, including the alumni magazine. Studies of this type keep the channels of feedback open so the editor can remain aware of audience needs and preferences (Redding, 1982). The alumni publication at the center of this research has been published only three years in its present format, and no study of this nature has been conducted to date. It is important such a study be carried out so that its editor can evaluate her efforts and refine them if necessary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to obtain information on the attitudes of the alumni of a small, church-related university toward that university's alumni magazine and

to use that information to assess how well the university is meeting the needs of its audience through the magazine.

A secondary aim of this research is to determine if a correlation exists between the opinions alumni of the university hold about the magazine and the act of giving money to the university. Like educational fund-raisers, public relations practitioners who wear the hat of alumni editor must be in touch with external audiences -- alumni in this case -- to know their needs and to ensure those needs are being met as efficiently as possible through the alumni publication. If the informational needs of alumni are not being adequately addressed by the alumni magazine, will alumni giving be affected?

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

This empirical method has as its foundation the belief that a given audience possesses a complex set of needs for which it seeks satisfaction in the mass media. It assumes the audience is as active, if not more so, than the message sender and that the message is what the audience makes of it instead of what the sender proposes the message to be (Fiske, 1990). This approach does help, although not inclusively, to explain some of the selective actions taken with the media by audience members (Severin & Tankard, 1988).

The first description of the uses and gratifications approach can be traced to a 1959 article by Elihu Katz in which he refuted the claim by Bernard Berelson that the field of communications research was dead. Katz's argument was that communications research, up to that point in time, was concerned with the question "What do media do to people?" He resolved the field might be resurrected by instead focusing on the question "What do people do with the media?" (Severin & Tankard, 1992).

McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) classified audience needs and gratifications into four categories. They included: diversion (the need to escape); personal relationships

(the need for companionship); personal identity or individual psychology (the need for value reinforcement and self-understanding); and surveillance (the need for one to obtain information about things that may affect him or her) (Severin & Tankard, 1992).

Advancing the research in this area, Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) categorized 35 needs taken from literature regarding social and psychological mass media functions. Those needs were assigned to the following categories: cognitive needs (information and knowledge acquisition); affective needs (emotional or aesthetic needs); personal integrative needs (strengthening of credibility, confidence, status, etc.); social integrative (strengthening of familial or friendship contacts); and tension release needs (escape) (Severin & Tankard, 1992).

This approach promotes the idea that audience members are active seekers, selectors and processors of media content. Basic ideals supported by all uses and gratifications approaches are: audiences are active; media use is directed by goals; such use satisfies a broad spectrum of needs; and satisfaction of those needs can be attributed to media content, the practice of exposure to media, or the social scenario in which the media-audience interaction takes place (Bryant and Zillmann, 1994).

By applying the uses and gratifications approach, this research can shed light on the reasons alumni of a selected small, church-related university use their alumni magazine.

PROFILE OF A SMALL, CHURCH-RELATED UNIVERSITY

Freed-Hardeman University is a small, four-year university of approximately 1,560 students. It is located in Henderson, Tennessee, about 85 miles east of Memphis. According to the university catalog, the school traces its origin to the 1869 charter of a private high school and college in Henderson, Tennessee. On Nov. 30, 1869, the Tennessee legislature incorporated the Henderson Male and Female Institute. This

legislation permitted the institute to offer high school and college courses and to confer degrees. In 1870 the school opened in a building that stood on the site of the university's current business school.

In March 1877 the school's name was changed to Henderson Masonic Male and Female Institute. In August 1885 the school's charter was again amended, and the school became the West Tennessee Christian College. Arvy Glenn Freed became president of the school in 1895. The school retained that name until 1897 when it became Georgie Robertson Christian College.

On May 21, 1907, the National Teachers' Normal and Business College was incorporated, with Freed serving as president and N.B. Hardeman as vice president. The school was renamed for Freed and Hardeman in 1919. It operated at the status of a college until 1990 when it attained university status under the leadership of current president Milton R. Sewell.

From 1925 to 1974 the school operated as a junior college and awarded diplomas. In 1956 associate degrees were conferred for the first time. Junior- and senior-level courses were added from 1974 to 1976, and the college received regional accreditation as a senior college in 1976. The college began offering bachelor's degrees the same year. Graduate degree programs in education and ministry were instituted in 1989. Counseling and New Testament graduate programs were added to the school's curriculum offerings in 1993.

The university's business, social work, and teacher education programs all have been accredited by their respective professional associations. The university itself is regionally accredited with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Peterson's Register of Higher Education, 1996).

Freed-Hardeman operates on a semester academic calendar. Degrees are conferred in May, August, and December. Students come to the university from almost every state

in America and from several foreign countries. In 1996 undergraduate students paid \$7,774 per year in tuition and fees; graduate students paid \$3,750 per year (Peterson's Register of Higher Education, 1996).

In 1991 Freed-Hardeman's total current funds revenues stood at \$13,597,920. Included in that amount were unrestricted (\$1,045,812) and restricted (\$735,459) private gifts, grants, and contracts (American Colleges & Universities, 1992).

The catalog states Freed-Hardeman University is an endowed, independent, non-profit institution. It is not owned by any church or churches but is governed by a board of trustees whose members are members of the Church of Christ. Most of its students also are members of the Church of Christ, but the university admits students regardless of religious affiliation.

PROFILE OF SEASONS OF FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University is the alumni publication of Freed-Hardeman University,

The mission of the magazine is "to inform alumni, donors, and parents of current students about the good things going on at Freed-Hardeman University to build a favorable public image and ultimately increase their (alumni, donors and parents) support" (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996).

Alumni publications at Freed-Hardeman began in the 1950s, and formats have changed several times since then. The Alumnogram, a newsletter, was Freed-Hardeman's first alumni publication, appearing in the 1950s. The first change appeared in the name of the publication — the Alumnogram became FHC News and Report. The newsletter format was retained.

In the late 1970s or early 1980s, FHC Today emerged as Freed-Hardeman's alumni publication; it took the form of a newspaper tabloid. Seasons of Freed-Hardeman

University, the alumni magazine currently produced, was first published in 1994 (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996).

According to Nancy Bennett, public relations director and alumni magazine editor at Freed-Hardeman University, pressure in the higher education marketplace generated interest in a magazine format. Some of Freed-Hardeman's chief competitors in student recruitment -- namely Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama -- were not producing an alumni publication at the time. Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, and Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas, both of whom Freed-Hardeman does not consider direct competitors, had alumni publications. Since Freed-Hardeman made its decision to change to a magazine format, at least two universities (Harding University and David Lipscomb University) have instituted alumni publications (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996).

Also influencing Freed-Hardeman's decision were the advantages offered by a magazine format. "We thought a magazine format would enable us to tell our story better. With our frequency we could not be a real newspaper. Longer articles in a magazine could tell our story better" (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996).

Faced with limited production funds, the public relations office at Freed-Hardeman chose to use money previously allotted to advertising to supplement its publications budget. Public relations personnel thought university advertisements were not falling into the hands of the individuals they felt they most needed to reach, so they redistributed funds to be used for producing a magazine, which had better potential of reaching Freed-Hardeman's most desirable external publics, namely alumni, donors, and parents of current students (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996).

The magazine primarily serves the external audience of Freed-Hardeman University, namely alumni, parents of current students, and individuals who have donated

money to the school within the last five years. It also, however, serves as somewhat of an internal publication, as it is made available to university employees.

Seasons is published three times a year by the university's Office of Public Relations with editorial assistance provided by the school's alumni relations and development offices. It is a black-and-white magazine with a four-color front and back cover. It averages 28 pages each issue.

The staff of Seasons consists of: an editor, who is the director of public relations for the university; an art director, who serves as the creative director for design services for the university; a photographer; and contributing writers. University alumni, as well as staff from other campus offices, periodically contribute articles.

Topics likely to be featured in Seasons include: gifts to the university; student activities; personnel changes; announcements of upcoming campus events; alumni news; sports; and student and alumni features. These stories appear in such sections of the magazine as Campus Events, Development, Briefs, Sports, and Alumni Events. Other departments within the magazine include From the President's Desk, What's Developing, Estate Planning, Alumni Update, Memorial Gifts, and Calendar of Events. The magazine's circulation is approximately 19,500, and there is no subscription fee.

Seasons is produced on Macintosh computers using PageMaker, Microsoft Word, Aldus Freehand, Adobe Illustrator, and Photoshop software. Graphics generally are limited to variations in type styles, banner headlines, and some charts, maps, and/or graphs accompanying articles. Production of the magazine is built into the budget of the public relations office.

An in-house designed advertisement for a campus event may occupy the inside front cover of the magazine, with the table of contents on the opposite page. The president's column and the masthead always are found on the same page within the first two or three pages of the magazine. News items related to the university usually occupy

the first few pages. Alumni or student feature articles, news briefs, columns regarding development or estate planning, and university sports information fill the remainder of the magazine. Alumni Update, which chronicles recent marriages, additions to families, relocations, job changes, awards, and deaths of Freed-Hardeman alumni, rounds out the magazine, along with a listing of memorial gifts to the school.

The front cover contains a four-color photograph or reproduction of a sketch or painting that is relevant to an article appearing in that particular issue. The back cover often features a four-color photograph and a calendar of the following three months' activities at the university.

Like the other alumni publications analyzed for this study, Seasons maintains a very upbeat tone. No articles that may present negative repercussions for the school are included in its pages. Most articles present glowing reports of the university.

TWO CASE STUDIES OF ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS OF OTHER SMALL, CHURCH-RELATED INSTITUTIONS

For the purposes of this research, a basic case study was conducted of the alumni publications of two small, church-related universities comparable in size and mission to Freed-Hardeman University. Those institutions, both affiliated with the Church of Christ, were David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. The study was conducted to determine what institutions similar to Freed-Hardeman were producing in the way of alumni publications.

The Lipscomb News

This 24-page tabloid newspaper was printed on slightly heavier and whiter paper than standard newsprint. Its modular layout closely resembled that of a newspaper, with a four-column format and justified columns on most pages. The publication size was an 11

1/2 X 15 folded horizontally to a 7 1/2 X 11 1/2.

The Lipscomb News, issued four times a year, was very text-heavy, and this text generally took a news- rather than a feature-style format. The majority of its articles did not include bylines.

All articles in both issues cast the university in a positive light. In the April 1996 issue, the first five to six pages were reserved for general news stories about campus happenings. Fairly lengthy articles highlighting sports news appeared on the next two pages. Five pages were reserved for alumni-related news. Included in these pages were two lengthy articles about alumni and alumni events and an "Alumni in Action" section peppered with alumni news briefs. David Lipscomb University is unique in that it also operates David Lipscomb High School. As a result, news related to high school alumni also appeared within the publication's pages.

"Baby Bisons," a full page documenting additions to alumni families, also appeared in the alumni section of The Lipscomb News. In a section titled "Alumni News," information was featured on alumni job changes, marriages, deaths, and relocations. This section was afforded generous space in the publication (two full pages) and was featured in about 10-point type.

The remainder of the April 1996 issue contained listings of donations. Listed first in about 10-point type were memorial and honorary gifts and memorial scholarships. On subsequent pages were listed 1995 donors in about six-point type.

The July 1996 issue of The Lipscomb News closely resembled the April issue in the areas of content and layout. It consisted of 20 pages and did not emphasize listings of gifts as did the April issue. Instead, this issue offered more articles and was heavily alumni-oriented, somewhat more so than the April issue. The back covers of both issues featured a calendar of upcoming events and a list of phone numbers to call for information about those events.

The use of color in The Lipscomb News was confined to the front and back covers and the first page. Photographs were of good quality but not particularly noteworthy; several mug shots were used. Headlines were sans serif type, while body text was serif. No advertisements were contained in this publication.

ACU Today

Editors of this publication chose a slick magazine format. It is issued three times a year on lightweight slick stock. The cover was a heavier-weight paper. In its 36 pages were numerous feature articles — the style of writing in this publication was less news-intensive than in The Lipscomb News.

A message from the university president, along with the ACU mission statement, could be found in color on the inside front cover. Filling approximately the first 15 pages were special features about alumni (some of these articles were written by alumni), students, campus events, sports, family relationships, and religion. Page 1 featured a profile of a campus individual.

Short news articles about enrollment, campus changes, faculty and student honors, upcoming events, academics, and social clubs occupied roughly the next eight pages of each of the three issues analyzed. Included in these pages were news briefs on alumni clubs. Estate planning tips, “Alumni Notes” (written by the ACU Alumni Association president), brief news articles on sports, and alumni updates on births, marriages, deaths, relocations, job promotions, and honors helped round out the last few pages of the magazine. Boxed at the top of one of these pages was “EXceptional,” a special feature highlighting selected alumni honors and achievements.

Professional writers, who in some cases are ACU alumni, contribute opinion columns on various issues for the last page of this publication. The back inside cover featured the magazine’s only advertisement -- a four-color ad for the ACU Bookstore.

Articles in this magazine seemed to possess broad appeal. Feature topics in each issue covered both alumni and current students, sometimes in a comparison of past and present campus life. At the same time, however, not much was written about university donors, with the exception of one issue that ran a lengthy story on a university fund-raising campaign. As in The Lipscomb News, articles in ACU Today extolled the virtues of the university.

The style of ACU Today was upbeat and current. Top-quality design and photography graced its pages. Layout typically consisted of either a three-column format on each page or a one-third/two-thirds column format. The editors made frequent use of a scholar's margin down the outside edge of many of the pages.

ACU Today's editors were not afraid to emphasize photography in the issues analyzed for this study. Many of these photographs ran large, taking up a sizeable amount of space on their pages. Color appeared on the front and back outside and inside covers.

Text style varied by issue. Most features used a serif type, but a sans serif was employed frequently also. Headlines used serif type.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following definitions are taken from The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (1996), unless otherwise noted.

Publication - a book, newspaper, engraving, music, etc., issued to the public.

House organ - "a periodical distributed by a business concern among its employees, sales personnel, or customers" (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1985, p. 585).

Periodical - "a newspaper, magazine, etc., issued at regular intervals, usually monthly or weekly" (p. 1110).

Donor - “a person who gives or donates something (e.g., to a charity)” (p. 427).

Small, church-related university - For the purposes of this research, a small university is classified as one having fewer than 5,000 students. As a church-related university, Freed-Hardeman is affiliated with, but not owned by, the churches of Christ.

Freed-Hardeman University defines its alumni as any individuals who have been enrolled at Freed-Hardeman University as students at some point in time, regardless of whether those individuals completed degree requirements. The university defines its friends as those individuals who have donated money to Freed-Hardeman in the last five years.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions addressed in this study are:

- 1) Does reader satisfaction with the magazine have any correlation with the act of giving money to Freed-Hardeman University?
- 2) Does a relationship exist between time spent reading the magazine and the act of giving money to Freed-Hardeman University?
- 3) Do alumni who received a degree from Freed-Hardeman University spend more or less time reading the magazine than do alumni who left the university prior to receiving a degree?
- 4) Do alumni who either were somewhat or very involved in extra-curricular campus activities spend more time reading the magazine than do alumni who were not involved in extra-curricular campus activities?
- 5) What are the overall opinions of readers regarding the magazine’s writing?
- 6) What are the overall opinions of readers regarding the magazine’s design?
- 7) Why do readers read the magazine?

- 8) How long does the magazine remain in reader households?
- 9) How many people per household read the magazine?
- 10) Where does the magazine rank with readers as a source of Freed-Hardeman news?

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter II is a review of relevant literature on the following topics: public relations; public relations and higher education; alumni magazines; research in communications and public relations; alumni research; alumni research and fund-raising; church-related institutions and fund-raising; and magazine formula and format.

Chapter III is a discussion of the methodology used in the study, including sections on survey research and readership surveys, questionnaire design, sampling, materials and procedures used in this study, analysis of results, and study limitations.

Chapter IV is a compilation of the study's results.

Chapter V features a conclusion to the study and some recommendations for further research in the subject area.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The practice of public relations encompasses a variety of activities designed to foster a positive or mutually beneficial rapport between an organization and its publics. Public relations scholars and well-known practitioners have defined this discipline in the following ways. Edward Bernays -- "the father of public relations" -- described the discipline as information that is given to the public, persuasion directed at the public to change actions and attitudes, and efforts to unite the actions and attitudes of an institution with its publics and of publics with that institution (Bernays, 1952).

Philip Lesly, a leading authority on public relations and author of Lesly's Public Relations Handbook, suggested public relations was "helping an organization and its public adapt mutually to each other" (Lesly, 1983, p. 4).

Robert S. Cole has taught public relations at Hunter College, American Management Association and American Institute of Banking. He considered public relations to consist of "activities aimed at generating awareness and appreciation of a concern's policies and performance. These activities are designed to maintain a two-way flow of information so that management can learn of its publics' wants and needs and the public, in turn, can be informed of management responses" (Cole, 1981, p. 3).

A journalism professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, and director of the International Association of Business Communications, James E. Grunig referred to public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics." Coupled with communication management, public relations, according to

Grunig, was “the overall planning, execution and evaluation of an organization’s communication with both external and internal publics” (Grunig, 1992, p. 4).

Practitioners of public relations serve as what Grunig and Hunt called “boundary personnel.” As boundary personnel, practitioners support other areas of an organization by helping those areas communicate across the organization’s boundaries to its external publics. Public relations officials, in turn, interpret those external publics to the organization’s managers. Furthermore, Grunig and Grunig described the role of a public relations department as dealing with the “‘public affairs’ of an organization — the interdependencies that organizations have with other systems in their external and internal environments” (Kelly, 1991, p. 307).

Professional public relations activities are executed to achieve particular objectives. In the realm of these activities are a host of publications designed to communicate to an organization’s publics. These publications include press releases, media kits, position papers, brochures, pamphlets, newsletters, and magazines.

Some of the objectives practitioners hope to accomplish with these activities include: developing prestige or a “favorable image” and reaping its benefits; promoting products or services; identifying and dealing with issues and opportunities; determining how an organization will manage its publics; fostering good will among employees or members of the organization; educating the public on a particular point of view; nurturing positive relationships with supporters or customers; fostering community good will; developing good will with constituent groups; and investigating constituent attitudes toward the organization (Lesly, 1983).

Public relations is practiced universally and can be found in all aspects of life (Lesly, 1983). Various branches of the public relations discipline include financial public relations, governmental relations, community relations, and industrial relations.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Declining enrollments and continuing financial crises within the last two decades have, along with other major trends, heaped enormous pressure on American institutions of higher learning to adapt to the changing times. According to public relations counselor Michael Radock, educational public relations departments must be key players in facilitating this adaptation (1983).

A college or university depends on a number of people for support, financially and otherwise, in its everyday and long-range activities. Small, private institutions that receive no financial assistance from federal sources depend even more so on these special constituent groups than would perhaps larger, land-grant institutions. These demographically diverse groups are “prone to ‘participate’ in the operation of the institution” (Radock, 1983, p. 324). This being the case, educational public relations officials must remain alert to the rapidly changing interests of these groups while striving to creatively meet their needs and demands (Radock, 1983).

Alumni of a university or college comprise one of these special groups vying for the attention of the educational public relations practitioner. Fostering a mutually beneficial relationship with their alumni is a challenge facing college and university administrators today. In most institutions the task of developing and nurturing alumni relationships falls upon public relations, alumni relations, and fund-raising officials.

Public relations departments in higher education bear a major portion of this load, however, because it is in these departments where most printed communication originates. The public relations departments of an organization “are typically responsible for creating a varied spectrum of literature about the organization or client it represents” (Aronson and Spetner, 1993, p. 125).

ALUMNI MAGAZINES

The printed word originating from within the confines of the educational public relations office takes many forms, from brochures to newsletters to fliers to a host of other publicity-related pieces. Judging from a review of literature and from experience as an educational public relations practitioner, the primary formats to which most alumni-oriented publications adhere are the magazine and newspaper tabloid formats. This research will focus on the magazine format.

In some instances printed material is the only contact many alumni have with their alma mater ("Nine Alumni Editors Respond," CASE Currents, 1976). Therefore, a college's or university's alumni publication fills a communications void in the lives of such alumni who regard the publication as the only link they have to their college days. Such a publication can be likened to a company or corporate publication, judging from Riley's (1992) definition: "A 'corporate magazine,' ... is one sponsored by and produced for a single business firm. It can be internal, external or a combination of the two" (Riley, Introduction), meaning that the magazine has as its target audiences those either inside or outside the organization, or a combination of both (Riley, 1992). Corrado (1984) said three types of corporate publications exist — those to be distributed internally, those supporting an organization's business activities and those to be distributed to external publics.

Early company magazines were, for the most part, considered internal because their editorial content was aimed at employees. However, as businesses expanded from "one-factory operations to sprawling corporate giants with interests in many states and in other parts of the world," managers recognized the need to address their businesses' external audiences. A majority of today's corporate publications are produced with external audiences in mind (Riley, 1992, Introduction).

Lesly (1962) said a company's external publication (including the alumni

magazine, in the case of educational institutions) is “of greater value to the publicist” than an internal publication, such as an employee newsletter. A primary aim of the external publication is service. It is, essentially, a sales tool for the company (Lesly, 1962).

Numerous definitions for a magazine exist. Nelson (1987) describes a magazine as consisting of bound pages that have been printed in multiples of four, eight, 16, or 32 (signatures), then folded and trimmed. The term “magazine” can include many pieces of literature and is interchanged frequently with such terms as “publication,” “periodical,” “title,” journal,” and sometimes “book.”

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language identifies a magazine as “a publication that is issued periodically, usually bound in a paper cover, and typically containing stories, essays, poems, etc., by many writers, and often photographs and drawings, frequently specializing in a particular subject or area, as hobbies, news or sports” (Mogel, 1992, p. 4).

Paine and Paine (1987) contend there may be as many definitions of “magazine” as ideas presented in one. Frank Luther Mott, a noted magazine authority, referred to the magazine as a bound pamphlet containing a variety of material and a connotation of entertainment. Most of today’s definitions of a magazine include such requirements as being issued periodically, bound with a paper cover, containing a wide range of articles by several writers and often featuring art, advertisements, or photographs (Paine & Paine, 1987).

Many public relations practitioners choose specialized magazines, such as alumni magazines or agricultural magazines, as the channel for transmitting their messages because, according to Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985), analysts cite specialized media as often being the best way to reach a particular audience (Jeffers, 1989). In a study conducted by Adams and Parkhurst (1984), farmers and ranchers disclosed they selected

farm magazines as their agriculture-information source significantly more often than other communication channels, which, in this particular study, numbered 17 (Jeffers, 1989).

Alumni publications have a rich history of coming to the aid of the troubled college or university. Several alumni publications served as “spokesmen” for American higher education in the turbulent 1960s. Instead of newspapers or television news, it was the Berkeley alumni magazine that gave the most honest, exhaustive story of Berkeley’s Free Speech Movement. Columbia University’s alumni magazine told the most complete story of that university’s 1968 student uprising. The black occupation of Cornell University was portrayed most accurately by Cornell’s alumni magazine (Rhodes, 1976).

For many educational institutions, alumni magazines are the most effective means of championing alumni support and understanding. The publication also may be the only contact many alumni have with the school (Armbruster, 1976). In 1976 nine alumni editors responded to CASE Currents’ request for their interpretation of the alumni magazine’s role. Chuck Creesy, editor of Princeton Alumni Weekly, said, “Alumni magazines should represent the interests of the alumni body but also the sentiments of the independent journalist. You have to relate what’s happening at alma mater to the concerns of alumni in the real world” (p. 11).

Robert E. Simanski, editor of envoy at The Catholic University of America, said, “I see the role of envoy and of similar publications having a broad function as that of helping to continue the education of its readers ... and of presenting the university’s story in a way that is both positive and credible” (p. 12). The editor of McGill News, Louise Abbott, said, “It is my opinion ... that an alumni magazine must be much more than a ‘my-isn’t-alma-mater-wonderful’ house organ. It should aim to present the many facets that any campus issue invariably has” (p. 11).

Editors of alumni magazines can fulfill their communications objectives by

remembering who their audience is. Jennifer Jackson Sanner, editor of the University of Kansas' alumni magazine, said that, no matter who publishes an alumni magazine, it belongs to the alumni. Kansas alumni first want to "know about the University of Kansas — its wonders and its warts — before they turn to news about the alumni association" (Sanner, 1993, p. 52). Alumni magazines are comparable to small-town weekly newspapers. "They chat about the latest gathering ... profile people with impressive or unusual claims to fame and chronicle the latest milestones of just plain folks" (Sanner, 1993, p. 52).

To acquire such a nature for their magazine, alumni editors, according to Sanner (1993) could consider assigning alumni news a special place of its own within the magazine. Alumni association agendas that include "favorite subjects" such as club events, reunions, and alumni board elections, also could merit special attention from the editor. Special gatherings of loyal alumni, such as alumni chapter meetings, could be covered in the magazine. Class notes, personality profiles, and features also should be included. Finally, editors must "make alumni feel at home" (p. 56) by remembering that the alumni magazine can help alumni feel a sense of belonging to the university community by involving them in discussions of various topics.

Coverage of "lively campus topics" can be "what separates the best magazines from the merely good" (Fyten, 1995, p. 18). Such topics should appear boldly on the cover and at the core of the magazine's feature section. "Placing the campus front and center is crucial to building a sense of community among alumni" (p. 18).

RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

A company's communications strategy is that company's plan of action for achieving its goals. This strategy is communicated in messages to company employees and to individuals or groups who buy or use the company's products (Corrado, 1984).

With any communications message, the communications practitioner usually is desiring to achieve a certain effect (Severin & Tankard, 1988). In order to ascertain whether the desired effect has been achieved, communications professionals must initiate research. In the case of a public relations practitioner producing a magazine or other publication for a specific audience, research is necessary to learn that audience's needs, to determine whether those needs are being met, and, if not, to devise and carry out strategies to meet those needs.

There have been at least four major events or social situations that have bolstered the growth of research in communications and mass media, according to Wimmer and Dominick (1987). World War I brought about a need to understand the nature of propaganda. It was believed at that time the media had a very pronounced effect on its audiences. To help explain this effect, researchers developed several communications models, including the hypodermic needle effect.

A second force aiding the development of communications research was the realization by 1950s and 1960s advertisers that data culled from research could be useful in persuading potential customers to buy their products. This realization facilitated research in message effectiveness, audience demographics, ad placement, and medium selection (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987).

Increasing interest in media effects on the public was another contributor to the growth of communications research. A primary focus of much of the research conducted in this area was children and how violent programming affected them (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987).

Growing competition among media for revenue also contributed to the expansion of communications research. This factor grew out of organizational recognition of the importance of long-range planning, the setting of objectives, and increased dependency on data to support organizational decision making (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987).

Historically, communications professionals have spurned measurement and evaluation techniques. They generally have been concerned with producing materials and disseminating information to their publics with little regard for evaluation or feedback. This may have been due to a stigma often associated with communications research — it sometimes tells communicators what they do not want to hear. “Those who stand to lose the most will try to find ways to discredit the research” (Corrado, 1993, p. 203). In some cases where research has been used, it has been used for the wrong reasons. Corrado (1993) suggests research often is used “symbolically — to whitewash a failure, to torpedo a program or to postpone or delay a project” (p. 203).

Today, however, communications managers are keenly aware of how important environmental evaluation and feedback are. They realize now they must be more strategic communicators or face possible replacement in their positions (Corrado, 1993).

Singletary (1994) referred to research as “a part of the ongoing management style, not limited to miracle-cure applications introduced only at the eleventh hour of a management crisis.” He suggests good management planning would involve keeping a “research finger on the pulse of the medium,” and making “adjustments in the product as the pulse indicates” (p. 8).

Communications research can be considered a type of social science research, which is research involving systematic, objective methods in the study of human behavior (Singletary, 1994). Communications personnel should be interested in learning about the attitudes and behaviors of the individuals making up their organization’s publics, so they should take part in social science research to meet these objectives. This type of research is important at three levels, according to Singletary (1994). Its importance is found on a personal level, an economic level, and an institutional level. On the personal level, the social science researcher wants to understand complex events and behavior. Research data aids in the making of business decisions on the economic level.

The institutional level involves the interaction of media, society and the individuals making up society.

The use of public relations research -- a branch of communications research -- has increased over the last several years, and this trend is expected to continue. This research has made progress toward using a greater variety of methods to design, coordinate, and monitor communications programs. Researchers in this area are striving to illustrate the importance of public relations programs to an organization's "bottom line" (Lucarelli, 1994).

According to Kelly (1991), Edward R. Bernays once wrote that "improving public relations for an individual or institution is not a matter of using this or that tool or technique to bring about the desired effect. The total person or institution needs to be brought into a better relationship or adjustment with the environment upon which he or it depends" (p. 206).

Grunig suggested four "models" of public relations that help explain how an organization manages its environmental relationships. Practitioners employ press agency (a one-way flow of communication for the purpose of publicity), public information (a one-way flow of communication to disseminate information), two-way asymmetric communication (using scientific research to persuade), and two-way symmetric communication (using scientific research to reach a mutual understanding). Press agency, public information, and two-way asymmetric communication help an organization adapt to its environment by dominating it. Two-way symmetric communication, which Grunig thinks is the best method for socially responsible organizations to use, helps an organization manage its interdependencies by creating a dialogue with its publics and maintaining a balance between autonomy and accountability through negotiating (Kelly, 1991).

Public relations, according to Grunig, is a key character in managing the

interrelationship an organization must maintain with the various publics that embody its environments (Kelly, 1991). Individuals who engage in public relations research study the behavior of their subjects, or audiences. They begin the research process with environmental assessment, which is an ongoing process of monitoring an organization's environments to identify and record any trends to which the organization may have to respond.

To better equip themselves to handle the complexities of such research, communications professionals have begun to recognize the need for continuing education in the fields of public relations and social science research (Brody & Stone, 1989). The success of the practitioner depends on that practitioner's willingness and ability to constantly add to his or her knowledge base and skill levels through an "ongoing renewal process," replacing static knowledge and skills acquisition with a dynamic "synthesis of information from all their environments" (Brody & Stone, 1989, p. 6). In a study of public relations practitioners in higher education, Cameron, Lariscy, and Sweep (1992) found that practitioners who majored in public relations in college and pursued post-baccalaureate degrees in the field were more likely to practice systematic public relations research.

By broadening their base of public relations knowledge, practitioners are prepared to undertake public relations research. This research can be either formal or informal. Formal research includes all research that employs the use of statistical methods. All other forms of research, including systematic media scanning and the use of focus groups, can be classified as informal research. Practitioners may wish to conduct informal research first to see if it will satisfy their organization's needs, because formal research can be time-consuming, somewhat expensive, and risky (Brody & Stone, 1989).

Insight into the attitudes and opinions of an organization's constituent groups is essential in planning and coordinating public relations programs and in determining

which public relations activities are appropriate for an organization. Knowledge of audience opinions and attitudes also is necessary to discover whether a public relations program is helping to meet organizational objectives (Brody & Stone, 1989).

Corrado (1993) suggests four reasons why public relations research should be conducted. First, there may be a tremendous amount at stake. Second, more than one issue may be involved; there may be an explanation for the problem beyond the obvious conclusions already reached. Third, when dealing with human behavior, outcomes are difficult to predict, and no one person has the answer. Fourth, every communications decision reached must be justified; this can be done through research.

Brody and Stone (1989) contend most research in public relations is conducted with two primary objectives in mind. Through research practitioners seek to define attitudes and opinions of an organization's constituents and to provide insight into those constituents' perceptions of the organization and issues surrounding it. Since these perceptions are in a continuous state of modification, practitioners constantly must monitor environmental developments that may affect organizational audiences.

As stated earlier, in the case of a public relations practitioner producing a magazine or other publication for a specific audience, research is necessary to learn that audience's needs, to determine whether those needs are being met, and, if not, to devise and carry out strategies to meet those needs. Alumni comprise a very important group in a university's environment, especially that of a small, church-related institution. For the public relations office of such an institution endeavoring to produce an alumni publication, the need for research into the attitudes and needs of its publics (i.e., alumni) is paramount.

Alumni research

“...The need for alumni research has only been realized as more and more institutions recognize that they depend on their alumni to promote their images, build bridges to state and federal governmental agencies and to industry, bring in new students, and, most important, supplement institutional financing” (Melchiori, 1988, p. 1).

A significant population of a college's or university's publics, alumni possess a greater appreciation for their alma mater's objectives and a greater knowledge of their alma mater's needs than do other publics making up their alma mater's environments (Wink, 1979). Alumni influence essentially all facets of an educational institution's operations, from curriculum planning to resource allocation to student recruiting to fund-raising. Consequently, data gleaned from alumni research is being used in all vice presidential areas of the institution and by the institution's president, trustees, and board members. Alumni voices even are being heard at state levels around the country. State officials ask for alumni opinions on the education those alumni received. These opinions subsequently are noted when officials plan how funds will be allocated statewide for education (Melchiori, 1988).

The very survival of institutions may rest on the shoulders of their alumni. More and more institutions are realizing how vitally important strong alumni involvement is in planning and funding (Fisher, 1988). Indeed, as important as alumni are to the operations of an educational entity, research into alumni traits, characteristics, attitudes, opinions, and behaviors should pervade all institutional functions, such as academic affairs, students services, and development. In turn, the findings from alumni research should be used to draft academic policies, plan and evaluate programs, and budget day-to-day operations (Melchiori, 1988).

Research involving alumni has been practiced more extensively throughout the last decade. Organizations such as the Association for Institutional Research and the

Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) are using alumni research today. The Independent Sector, which is a "national forum to encourage giving, volunteering, and not-for-profit initiative" (Melchiori, 1988, p. 2), has as one of its concentrations of study the topic of alumni behavior (Melchiori, 1988).

College and university officials have recognized the value of alumni as sources of financial support. Faced with having to market their institutions to both prospective students and to groups they hope will lend resources and support, officials have begun targeting alumni as a main destination of institutional marketing pitches (Melchiori, 1988).

The term "alumni" can be difficult to define, because 10 different institutions of higher education may have 10 different criteria for classifying their alumni. According to Melchiori (1988), three groups of alumni can usually be observed. Degree alumni can be considered any alumni who received bachelor's, master's, doctoral, or professional degrees or who completed certificate programs, medical residencies, or postdoctoral programs. Non-degree alumni are those alumni who did not receive a degree from the institution in question. Melchiori (1988) stated smaller, and typically private, institutions add these individuals to their alumni directories. It is more difficult for larger institutions to do this because of the high number of non-degree students passing through their doors. Friends, or associate alumni, are people who are interested in the welfare of the institution but who have not attended the institution.

The small, church-related university at the focus of this research considers an alumnus/a anyone who has attended the university, regardless of whether that individual was granted a degree from the institution. It classifies its "friends" as those individuals who have donated money to the school in the past five years (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996).

Melchiori (1988) asserts that more research should be conducted with the belief

that alumni are long-term providers to a college or university. Alumni traditionally have filled provider roles for their alma maters, roles such as donors, lobbyists, recruiters, volunteers, and career consultants, to name a few. However, most alumni research in the past has been limited to the study of such factors as alumni satisfaction with the education they received or success in finding a job after graduation, with the focus not on the individual alumnus/a but on the institution itself (Melchiori, 1988).

Implications of alumni research for fund-raisers. Fund-raising for education in the United States began when this country's first Colonial colleges were established. At that time presidents of the various schools most likely raised initial funds. Benjamin Franklin supported the giving of funds to higher education (Smith, 1993). His gift of 1,000 pounds helped establish Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1787 (Smith, 1993).

For colleges and universities today, fund-raising has become serious business. It has exploded within the past 30 years during times of rising tuitions and fees (Pearson, 1996). Institutions, many of which spend more money than they get from tuitions, struggle for financial gifts in an increasingly competitive fund-raising environment. According to Edward Resovsky, director of principal gifts for the University of Pennsylvania's Philadelphia campus, raising money has become so important for higher education that having fund-raising skills will be essential in choosing college and university administrators (Eng & Heller, 1996).

Higher education has been the recipient of almost \$1 out of every \$10 given to charitable organizations since 1980, second only to religious organizations. In the past 15 or so years, higher education has seen the amount of its charitable donations increase two-fold (Eng & Heller, 1996).

Alumni are frequent sources of such financial backing for private colleges and

universities today. They provide about half of all private gifts to educational institutions (Kelly, 1991). In 1992 financial gifts from alumni constituted the most important source of voluntary funding to higher education (Baade & Sundberg, 1993).

This special audience gives repeatedly, often with no specifications on how the money should be spent (Eng & Heller, 1996). In a study of alumni giving conducted by the Council for Aid to Education, monetary contributions soared more than 75 percent from 1985 to 1992, making up 27 percent of 1992's total voluntary donations (Baade & Sundberg, 1993).

Amount of support varies from institution to institution. Larger schools enjoy the most alumni support in total dollars, but it is the smaller, mostly liberal arts, schools that generate more support per alumnus. Liberal arts schools accrue approximately 25 percent more financial support per alumnus than do doctoral-granting schools (Baade & Sundberg, 1993). However, public-versus-private status is not a factor in determining which type of school receives the most alumni financial backing. Private colleges and universities do not receive more support per alumnus than do public colleges and universities if the schools are comparable in size and perceived educational program quality (Baade & Sundberg, 1993).

A majority of alumni research is conducted for the purpose of enhancing the financial resources of an educational institution. Recently, a specific area of alumni research has emerged that documents alumni characteristics "for the purposes of market segmentation and long-range planning" (Melchiori, 1988, p. 11). Such research enables a college or university to gather information on alumni donor attributes and to use this information in budgetary planning.

Motivational factors influencing alumni giving has been another focal point of alumni research efforts. Harrison, Mitchell, and Peterson (1995) suggest that, from casual observance, alumni appear to give money to their alma maters because they recognize

their alma maters' financial needs. Closer observation reveals otherwise. While such financial need may be the only motivation for some alumni to respond to fund-raising pleas, other factors play a role in alumni giving decisions.

Some alumni support their alma maters because of what benefits they perceive the institution provided them in the past. Others contribute because they believe the institution may have the potential to help them, if not when they give then at some point in the future. Still others donate to receive a certain perceived status or recognition from their alma maters (Harrison, Mitchell, & Peterson, 1995).

In a study by Harrison, Mitchell, and Peterson (1995), the most significant influence on alumni giving was the amount of money and time an institution spent on developing and maintaining alumni relations. The researchers found that Greek affiliation positively affected alumni giving while the percentage of students who were enrolled part-time affected alumni support negatively. An institution's level of planned giving also positively affected alumni support. On the other hand, the school's NCAA division, the size of the school's endowment, whether the school was public or private, and whether it was a research/doctoral school seemed to have no impact on alumni giving.

Contributing monetarily to higher education has been explained in terms of an "interdependent utility thesis." This thesis holds "that a prospective donor's utility is influenced directly by the utility of others. Therefore, one's satisfaction can be enhanced by giving to another, since the increase in the other person's utility could compensate the giver for his 'loss'" (Harrison, Mitchell, & Peterson, 1995, p. 399).

In a study by Grill (1988), 24,538 alumni of the College of Education at Pennsylvania State University were classified as donors and non-donors. Discriminating variables in this study were categorized as demographic characteristics, behavioral characteristics, and attitude. Demographics included age, marital status, sex, income, graduation year, number of degrees, occupation, and receipt of financial aid. Behavioral

characteristics examined were readership of alumni publications, participation in undergraduate activities, and degree of involvement with the school after graduation. Attitudinal factors included those determined by any emotional bond with the school. Grill discovered the variables having the most profound effect on whether an alumnus/a was a donor or non-donor were postgraduate involvement with the school, year of graduation, income, and age (Pearson, 1996).

The plight of church-related institutions. “Church-related colleges comprise approximately one-half of the private colleges and universities in the nation” (Smith, 1993, p. 3). These institutions have been especially hard-hit by financial burdens. According to Smith (1993), Brubacher and Rudy in 1976 reported only 100 such colleges of the 500 founded in the 16 states before the Civil War had survived as permanent educational institutions.

Today, the revenue of church-related colleges and universities is comprised of an important segment of voluntary donations. Generally there are six primary sources of charitable donations to church-related schools. These sources are alumni, non-alumni individuals, foundations, business corporations, religious denominations, and miscellaneous others (Smith, 1993).

Literature suggests church-related colleges and universities have not experienced the strong level of alumni giving that larger public universities have. According to Smith (1993), “a ... cause of economic strain at these schools emerges from giving trends among voluntary supporters. Gifts in recent times fell behind the pace of inflation and cost per student expenditures” (p. 28).

Indeed, the 1990s has been a financially burdensome decade for church-related schools. Skyrocketing costs associated with inflation and higher curriculum and student expenses, along with fewer graduating high school students — among other trends —

have hampered the efforts of such institutions to keep pace economically (Smith, 1993).

It has been suggested that for fund-raising to be successful for church-related schools, as well as for public schools, external audiences should be involved in an institutional strategic planning process. These external groups include alumni, parents of students, and friends of the school (Smith, 1993). Furthermore, Smith (1993) supplied evidence supporting the assertion that higher-education fund-raising could be more successful if institutional goals were clearly stated and agreed upon by schools and their internal and external constituents. Smith continued by saying fund-raising for church-related colleges and universities takes place most successfully in an environment where internal goals match the goals of the external audiences being appealed to for support.

It is necessary to reiterate the importance of delving into the characteristics and attitudes of alumni through alumni research methods. As the literature has stated, alumni play a crucial role in the survival of colleges and universities, especially those affiliated with religious organizations. By gathering information on alumni characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and needs, fund-raisers can learn the most productive ways of soliciting these individuals for support. As Leslie and Ramey (1988) said, church-related colleges and universities should endeavor to enhance their understanding of their most important donor groups (Smith, 1993).

The primary purpose of this research is to learn audience opinions of the magazine of a small, church-related university by conducting a readership survey of a sample of that audience. Like educational fund-raisers, public relations practitioners who serve as alumni editors also must be in touch with external audiences, primarily alumni in this case, to assess their needs and to ensure those needs are being met through the alumni publication. A secondary aim of this research is to determine if a correlation exists between giving and the opinions magazine readers hold about the publication.

MAGAZINE FORMULA AND FORMAT

Editors choose the magazine over other publications for various reasons, including appearance and staying power. Bivins (1992) suggested a law school might choose to produce a magazine as its alumni publication because the magazine communicates a formal, businesslike image, one appropriate for such a school. Nelson (1987) attributed the magazine's success partially to its stamina over newspapers — magazines tend to stay on a reader's bookshelf or coffee table longer.

For whatever reasons editors decide to produce a magazine, they must first set objectives for their periodical. This is the first step in creating a successful publication (LaRochelle, 1994). With the objectives in mind, a magazine editor devises a formula that he or she thinks best serves the magazine's audience (Nelson, 1987).

Articles and stories that are unique to a magazine make up that magazine's formula. When devising a formula, the magazine's editor(s) must ask, "Why does this magazine exist?" Is its primary goal to make money? Does it exist for public relations purposes? Is it produced to serve the needs of an organization's members? (Nelson, 1987).

Other questions an editor should ask himself or herself when making editorial considerations include "What overall message do I want to send and to whom?" "What image do I want to convey?" and "What do I want to include and exclude?" Editors also should consider how many pages to include in the publication, the frequency of publication and how different, if at all, their publication will be versus those of their competitors (Aronson & Spetner, 1993). The goals of the magazine should be prime considerations when planning its formula.

With the magazine's goals and formula established, the next task is to develop the most appropriate and effective format for the publication. According to Nelson (1987), "the format is the look of the publication: its size, its shape, its arrangement of copy and

pictures on the page” (p. 161). Magazines come in three basic sizes. Life-size magazines are roughly 10 1/2 X 13, Time-size magazines roughly 8 1/2 X 11, and Reader’s Digest-size approximately 5 1/2 X 7 1/2. The size of pages can bear serious implications for design (Nelson, 1987).

Nelson (1987) said the well-designed magazine was a rarity into the 1930s. Up until that time, most American magazines resembled newspapers in their layout. But, he added, magazines have been design innovators among the print media over the last several years.

The design of a publication can dictate that publication’s success. It also has been suggested that publications have the potential to help depict a company as professional, responsible, and conscious of quality (Young, 1994).

Bivins (1992) said:

“the well-designed newsletter won’t shout ‘look at my look.’ Instead, it will simply say, ‘pick me up and read me.’ More than anything else, the design you choose and the skill you use in implementing that design will be nearly subliminal to the message you impart. ...The non-verbal message imparted through choices of paper, color and format is as important as anything you have to say; because if you fail to entice your readers through these subtle nuances, you may not have any readers” (p. 33).

Generalizable to all publications are five basic design principles, according to Bivins (1992). These principles are balance, proportion, sequence, emphasis, and unity. Balance refers to the rule that elements placed on one side of a page should “weigh” the same as elements on the other side of the page. Proportion is a measure of relationships among objects on a page. Articles and their pull quotes, pictures, and cutlines form what Bivins (1992) referred to as a “proportional whole in relationship to the rest of the page” (p. 35). The third principle, sequence, refers to how elements are positioned on a page to aid the natural tendency of readers to read from left to right and top to bottom. Emphasis involves how design draws readers to a particular spot on a page. Nelson (1987) referred

to this principle as contrast. Finally, unity can be thought of as consistency of the publication as a whole. It implies that each element will somehow be related to the whole publication (Bivins, 1992).

In Salopek (1995), Jan White, a consultant in graphic design with more than 30 years of experience, offered five principles of editorial and design success. They included reaching the reader, writing better captions, using powerful photographs, maintaining design consistency, and venturing beyond the individual's sphere of experience.

Brubaker (1990) offered six steps to producing an excellent employee newsletter. Although newsletters were the focus of this article, the steps described can be applied to magazines and other publications. The steps include defining audiences and goals, finding a competent editor, considering the first impressions your publication will make, acknowledging content, evaluating production methods, and participating in the publication-improvement process.

Good design alone will not make that publication useful or important in the eyes of its readers. However, coupled with well-planned and well-written content, it can add a degree of pleasantness to that publication (Nelson, 1987). Publication design, along with content, can help editors and designers illustrate the worth of their periodicals (Salopek, 1995).

SUMMARY

According to the literature surveyed for this study, various conclusions can be drawn regarding the importance of public relations and its applications in a higher-education setting. Public relations serves a supportive role in American higher education as it strives to create goodwill among the members of a college or university's publics. Such support is especially ponderous to private colleges and universities that do not look to their state governments for financial backing.

In the course of nurturing relationships with and procuring support from its publics, an institution employs a diverse mix of public relations tools. One such tool is the alumni magazine, the focal point of this research. Alumni publications have the potential to be far-reaching, positive-image-building instruments for our country's schools of higher learning. To be that, however, editors of these publications must approach the production of them with certain individuals in mind, namely the publication's audience.

Research into reader interests is a must for the editor of the successful publication. An editor should want to stay in touch with the readers of his or her magazine to be informed about what that audience wants to see in the magazine. Keeping open the channels of feedback between an editor and an audience is one of the four main reasons to conduct a readership survey. If an editor can determine an audience's interests, he or she can be better equipped to serve those interests in the magazine being produced. If their interests are being served in the magazine, readers may be more likely to support the institution represented by the magazine. For a small, private, church-related university, that support can range from positive word-of-mouth to substantial monetary donations.

To determine what interests readers, an editor can and should take advantage of the insight a readership survey provides.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to gather feedback from the audience of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University regarding their opinions about the alumni magazine.

SURVEY RESEARCH AND READERSHIP SURVEYS

“Today, survey research is perhaps the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences. ... it is far and away the most common method reported in recent articles of the American Sociological Review” (Babbie, 1995, p. 256). References to its use stretch back to biblical times when God instructed Moses and Eleazar to conduct a census of all the inhabitants of Israel 20 years old and above (Babbie, 1995). Another early survey was conducted by Charles Booth in the latter 19th century and early 20th century. His study, “Life and Labour of the People in London (1889-1903),” was the first English social survey to be conducted on a large scale (Converse, 1987).

The purpose of conducting surveys is to uncover how individuals think, believe, feel, and act (Redding, 1982). With the help of survey research, a communications practitioner can gather volumes of data quickly and efficiently and use the data to answer research questions (Singletary, 1994). This method is appropriate for descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory research and, to a large extent, is used in studies that feature individuals as the units of examination (Babbie, 1995).

Babbie (1995) posited that survey research may be the best available method when social scientists are looking to collect original data that can be used to describe a

group of individuals that is too large for direct observation. "Surveys are also excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population" (Babbie, 1995, p. 257). Public opinion polls are popular examples of this use.

Such research carries with it some advantages and disadvantages. It can be employed to study phenomena in a natural setting and to collect large amounts of information with relatively modest effort, its cost usually is reasonable, and data already exist that might prove helpful to the research. The most notable disadvantage is the lack of control over independent variables. Other disadvantages include likelihood of bias detection in question wording and survey research's reliance on sampling techniques (LaRochelle, 1994; Wimmer & Dominick, 1987).

Predicting reader interest is one of an editor's primary goals when deciding what information to include in a publication (Wink, 1979). Readership surveys are useful tools in assessing these interests. In fact, Moore and Blue (1979) identified readership surveys as "the only real way to find out what readers think of the company publication...." (LaRochelle, 1994, p. 37).

The use of readership surveys has risen in popularity. Marcia Bullard, editor of USA Weekend, saw readership surveys as valuable in helping point out to her what topics readers want to see covered in that publication (Kerwin, 1993). Corrado (1993) referred to readership surveys as "classic communication measurement" but added they only measured the fact that people were attracted to an article and not whether they were influenced by it. He went on to claim such surveys worked well in helping make adjustments in a communications program but were not helpful in measuring the impact that program had.

Redding (1982) suggested the four most legitimate reasons to conduct a readership survey. They are:

“To keep open feedback channels, so that a publication — or an entire communications program — may remain sensitive to its audience; to conduct a comprehensive ‘audit,’ so that reliable estimates may be made of effectiveness (effectiveness being defined in a number of ways, e.g.: interest, credibility, retention of information, persuasiveness, etc.); to obtain immediate, pinpointed audience reactions to particular features of a publication or of a communications project (e.g.: reactions to a specific article, or to a specific in-house videotape production); and to determine whether a relevant audience will accept changes that are being contemplated (such as: introducing a new ‘Personals’ section, shifting to a weekly schedule, starting up a new publication, or even terminating one)” (p. 3).

Taking advantage of the benefits a readership survey provides can enable a publications editor, including an alumni editor, to tap into his or her audience’s interests and, in turn, to serve those interests more proficiently within the publication.

This readership survey was conducted by mail, despite the mail survey’s less-than-flattering reputation. Characterized by low response rates (Dillman, 1978), this method was deemed by the researcher to be most suitable in this particular study. Telephone and face-to-face interviews were considered too costly and time-consuming, and the researcher believed the information sought in this case was best gathered through the use of a mail questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to gather feedback from a sample of the audience of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University regarding the magazine. It is the hope of the researcher that the method of this study can be applied to the alumni publications of other small, church-related universities.

A research instrument was designed to obtain responses to the research questions in this study. Questions were posed to measure reading habits, uses of the magazine by the audience, degree of satisfaction with overall design, degree of satisfaction with overall content, and audience demographics.

Also included in the questionnaire were questions to measure donor activity so a relationship might be identified between such activity and opinions about the magazine.

Reader habits

The researcher posed some questions to learn how readers spent their time in the magazine. More specifically, one question was asked to determine whether individuals read only portions of the magazine, read it from cover to cover, or never read it. Another question asked for the length of time respondents read the magazine.

Uses of the magazine

Information was sought on why readers read the magazine. Respondents were asked to identify their degree of interest in various topics that appeared regularly within the magazine.

Readers were asked how useful they thought Seasons was as a source of information about Freed-Hardeman University. They were given a variety of potential information sources and asked to rank those sources according to how they would use them to get news about Freed-Hardeman.

Degree of satisfaction with design

The researcher designed one question in the instrument to tap into the readers' opinions about the magazine's design. In the form of a Likert scale, respondents were asked to circle a number closest to the adjective that best described their feelings about the magazine's design. The adjective pairs "dull/eye-catching," "cluttered/uncluttered," and "unappealing/appealing" were used.

Degree of satisfaction with writing

As a second part to the question described in the previous paragraph, readers were asked to circle a number closest to the adjective that best described their feelings about the articles appearing in the magazine. Adjective pairs used included “interesting/not interesting,” “easy to understand/hard to understand,” and “informative/uninformative.”

Donor activity

To identify any correlation that may exist between alumni satisfaction levels regarding the magazine and donor activity, a question regarding donor activity was included in the questionnaire.

Respondents were queried as to whether they had donated money to Freed-Hardeman University within the last six months. Care was taken to point out such gifts did not include tuition, loan payments, or admission to university functions. A six-month time frame was chosen primarily because the researcher did not think it would be difficult for respondents to recall, whereas asking them to remember whether they had donated within the last year might present them with a difficult challenge.

The next question asked subjects to identify a dollar range into which their gift would fall, provided they answered the previous question in the affirmative. If they answered the previous question in the negative, they were instructed to skip the question regarding the dollar range.

Audience demographics

Questions concerning reader demographics comprised the final section of the questionnaire. Of particular importance in this study were the following characteristics: graduation year; whether the respondent received a degree from Freed-Hardeman or another institution or not at all; level of involvement in extracurricular activities while

enrolled at Freed-Hardeman; and whether respondents classified themselves as alumni, parents of current students, friends or a combination of the three. Respondents also were asked to identify their age, sex, and income.

A question was worded to determine the number of individuals in the respondents' household. Respondents were asked to include in that number any children who were away at college. The question immediately following that asked how many in the household read the magazine. These two questions were not included in the latter part of the survey with the other demographic questions. Instead, they were inserted in the section of the survey that dealt with the magazine's shelf life and whether it was passed on to individuals outside the respondent's household.

SAMPLE

The population of readers of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University numbers approximately 19,500 individuals. This number is comprised of alumni, parents of current students, and friends of the university. The Office of Alumni Relations, in conjunction with Freed-Hardeman's Computing Center, generated a copy of the mailing list used for each mailing of the magazine. The list was mailed to the researcher.

A systematic sampling of 300 recipients was selected from the Seasons mailing list. Every 65th name on the list was chosen to receive the survey. This number was calculated by dividing the population size by the sample size (Babbie, 1995).

Prior to sending the survey to sample members, permission to conduct human subjects research was sought and granted from the Office of Research Administration at the University of Tennessee. The questionnaire also was faxed to Freed-Hardeman University for review by the school's vice president for academic affairs, who, as a regular part of his duties, approves all such studies involving the university.

Pretest

The source of problems with internal validity often is the survey instrument itself (LaRochelle, 1994). To guard against bias in question wording, which compromises the integrity of the survey, the researcher pretested the survey. The instrument was administered to six individuals associated in some capacity with Freed-Hardeman University, such as faculty, staff, or alumni. Interviews were conducted after each questionnaire was completed to gather feedback regarding the questionnaire's construction.

A majority of the feedback gathered in the pretest was incorporated into the survey for administration to the study sample. For example, a question offering reasons why readers might read the magazine was expanded to feature more reasons, and a question asking respondents to rank sources of Freed-Hardeman news was restructured. A question regarding the number of individuals per household that read the magazine was added. Also, a question asking respondents to rate Seasons' writing and design using sets of bipolar adjectives was changed. Here, the original blanks where respondents were instructed to place an "X" were changed to numbers, 1-5, and respondents were asked to circle the number closest to the adjective most accurately representing their feelings. The blanks originally used seemed to confuse the pretest group.

Participants in the pretest were not included in the sample for the actual survey.

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

Dillman's (1978) total design method was implemented in part in this study. This method has two parts, the first of which is identifying "each aspect of the survey process that may affect either the quality or quantity of response" and manipulating those aspects to bring about the best possible response (p. 12). The second part involves organizing "the survey efforts so that the design intentions are carried out in complete detail" (p. 12).

A seven-page survey with 23 questions was designed for use in this study. Three-hundred copies were made on light-blue paper, and the pages were printed on both the front and back to reduce postage costs. A one-page cover letter printed on University of Tennessee School of Journalism letterhead was included. The letter outlined the purposes of the study, confidentiality matters, and general instructions. It also stressed the importance of the audience members' opinions and how their responses would be used to publish a better magazine. The researcher signed the original letter, and copies were made.

A three-digit code number was placed in the bottom-right corner of the first page of each questionnaire. This code was used to track when completed surveys were received so as to not duplicate mailings.

The third item in the mailing was a self-addressed, stamped, business reply envelope from the University of Tennessee's College of Communications. The researcher's initials were placed in the bottom-right corner of each reply envelope for identification purposes. These materials were sealed in University of Tennessee School of Journalism envelopes. Addresses were printed on the researcher's dot-matrix printer using 4-inch-by-15/16-inch labels, which were placed on the School of Journalism envelopes. The initial mailing was delivered to the post office Feb. 3, with the deadline for all returns set for Feb. 28.

Adhering to Dillman's (1978) recommendations for follow-up mailings, the researcher mailed a reminder postcard approximately one-and-one-half weeks after the initial mailing. At that point in the study, 20 subjects had responded to the initial mailing. The postcards were printed with 20-cent postage, so no additional postage was required for this mailing. A message reminding subjects of the survey and of the value of their opinions was printed on 3 1/3-inch-by-4-inch labels and affixed to the back of the postcard. The School of Journalism's return address was stamped with a rubber stamp in

the front, top-left corner of the postcard. The researcher signed each postcard to lend an air of personalization to the study.

Exactly three weeks after the first mailing, a third mailing was executed, in keeping with Dillman's (1978) total design method. Included in this mailing was a second copy of the survey, a College of Communications business return envelope, and a letter from Nancy Bennett, the magazine's editor. The letter, printed on Freed-Hardeman University Office of Public Relations letterhead, again reminded the subjects about the survey and stressed the importance of the subjects' participation in the study. In this letter the subjects were notified of a deadline extension for returns. Because this mailing was sent three to four days before the original Feb. 28 deadline, the researcher thought it necessary to reschedule the final deadline for March 10.

Throughout the duration of the study, lists were maintained of all subjects in the sample, if and when subjects returned their questionnaires and when subsequent mailings were sent.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The statistical software package SPSS/PC was used to organize the results of this study. Each respondent was assigned an identification code — the same three-digit code used for tracking purposes in the mailout. Each code was followed by 55 pieces of coded information, and the data consisted of 112 cases.

The data gathered in this study either was nominal or ordinal level. Wimmer and Dominick (1987) pointed out two studies that used ordinal scales. In 1979 Haskins and Kubas measured reader interest in comic strips in an effort to predict readership of the comics. That same year Williams and Semlak used ordinal scales to rank topics of importance to individuals during an election campaign to see how that importance corresponded to the relative amount of media coverage those issues received.

One assumption that must be made for Pearson's r to be a valid description of a relationship between variables is that the data represent interval or ratio measurements. The majority of the data in this study was ordinal or nominal, therefore, the Spearman Correlation was deemed more appropriate (Wimmer and Dominick, 1987).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As is common with many studies of this nature, financial limitations prevented the researcher in this study from obtaining a more representative sample. From a list of more than 19,000 names, 300 were chosen to receive the survey. Ideally, a minimum of 1,000 names would have constituted the "n," but funding and time restraints forced the researcher to conduct the study with a much smaller number.

Given the small sample size used in this study and the large number of respondents who did not answer some questions, it cannot be said these results, as a whole, are representative of the population of Seasons readers. Instead, this serves as an exploratory study, shedding light on Seasons and the opinions of its readers who participated in the study and providing the magazine's editor with a general idea of how study participants perceive the publication.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A total of 114 recipients of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University responded to the researcher's request for participation in this study. Dividing the number of responses by the sample size yielded a response rate of 38%. Of the 114 responses, 112 were surveys and two were letters explaining those respondents' reasons for not participating. Of the 112 surveys, 104 were completed and usable (35%), and eight were returned blank.

Percentages given in this chapter are rounded.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

A relatively even split occurred in the number of men and women who completed the survey. Forty-five (40%) of the respondents were male, while 57 (51%) were female. Ten respondents did not identify their sex (Figure 1*).

The average age of respondents was in the 35-44 age range. Approximately one out of every four respondents fell into this category. The 45-54 age range was the next most-frequently chosen response (21 or 19%). The under 25 category was least represented (4%). The mean rating for age was 3.679, roughly halfway between the 35-44 and 45-54 ranges. It can be determined that the average age of respondents to this survey was approximately 45 (Figure 1).

Income levels for nearly half the respondents fell between \$25,000 and \$75,000.

*All figures may be found in Appendix A.

One-quarter said they earned from \$50,001 to \$75,000 annually, followed closely by the \$25,000-\$50,000-a-year range (23%). Eight respondents (7%) said they earned more than \$100,000 annually. The mean for income was 2.196 (Figure 1).

Sixty-three, or 56%, of the respondents identified themselves as alumni of Freed-Hardeman. Just over one-quarter said they were friends of the school, while 8% were parents of current students. Twelve respondents identified themselves in the “other” category (Table 1*).

Of those respondents who attended Freed-Hardeman, nearly half received degrees before they left the school; roughly one out of five left Freed-Hardeman before receiving a degree (Figure 1).

The 1980s was the decade most often indicated as when alumni left Freed-Hardeman. Five respondents left the school in 1980, the year most often mentioned. A total of 17 respondents left during the decade.

The 1970s also was mentioned frequently, with 14 alumni leaving the school during this time. The '60s and the '90s both were identified by 12 respondents as the decades they left the school. Four respondents said they left Freed-Hardeman in 1992.

Years ranged from 1930 to 1996 and were fairly evenly distributed throughout that range. The median year was 1973, which was not identified by any respondent as the year he or she left Freed-Hardeman (Table 2).

Thirty-one respondents (28%) said they were somewhat involved in extracurricular activities, such as clubs or athletics, while enrolled as students at Freed-Hardeman. A close second, one-quarter said they were very involved. Ten respondents (9%) were not involved in extracurricular activities (Table 3).

*All tables may be found in Appendix A.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: Does reader satisfaction with the magazine have any correlation with the act of giving money to Freed-Hardeman University?

The data gathered in this study did reveal a moderate correlation between satisfaction with the magazine and the act of giving money to the school. A Spearman Correlation Coefficient of .4042 ($p < .0001$) was the result when overall opinion and the recency of the respondent's monetary donation to the university were compared.

Eighteen respondents who indicated they had donated to Freed-Hardeman within the last six months rated the magazine overall as "very good." At the same time, 22 who rated it "very good" said they had not donated within the last six months. Twenty-four who rated the magazine "good" did not donate to Freed-Hardeman during the last six months, but only eight who rated it "good" had donated. Ten who rated it "average" had not donated, while four had. Generally, as the degree of satisfaction with the magazine became more favorable, the number of respondents who said they had donated to Freed-Hardeman within the last six months increased. Table 4 shows a comparison of overall opinion and the act of giving.

According to the editor of Seasons, the magazine's mission is "to inform alumni, donors, and parents of current students about the good things going on at Freed-Hardeman University to build a favorable public image and ultimately increase their support" (N.S. Bennett, personal communication, October 24, 1996). Since these findings indicate a connection between reader satisfaction and monetary donations, it appears Seasons is fulfilling its mission, keeping in mind there are other factors to consider when assessing donor habits.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: Does a relationship exist between time spent reading the magazine and the act of giving money to Freed-Hardeman University?

Findings indicated a moderate association between the amount of time

respondents spent reading Seasons and the act of giving money to the university. The Spearman Correlation Coefficient for this relationship was .4330 ($p < .0001$), suggesting that the more time a person spent reading the magazine the more likely he or she was to be a donor of money to the university.

Five respondents who said they had not donated to Freed-Hardeman within the last six months read the magazine for less than five minutes. Two who said they had donated read for this long. At the same time, only six who had not donated said they read the magazine for more than 25 minutes. The same held true for the six who had donated. Table 5 shows a comparison of time spent reading and act of giving.

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: Do alumni who received a degree from Freed-Hardeman spend more or less time reading the magazine than do alumni who left Freed-Hardeman prior to receiving a degree?

A moderate correlation (.5280, $p < .0001$) suggested that alumni who received a degree from Freed-Hardeman spent more time reading the magazine than did alumni who left the school prior to receiving a degree.

Ten individuals said they read Seasons for more than 25 minutes, and nine of those received degrees from Freed-Hardeman. Furthermore, nearly three-fourths of those reading the magazine from 16 to 25 minutes received degrees from Freed-Hardeman. Twenty-six respondents who received a degree from Freed-Hardeman said they read the magazine for at least 16 minutes, compared to seven who did not receive a degree from the institution.

The number of respondents who did not receive a degree and who read the magazine for less than five minutes outnumbered the ones who did receive a degree and read for less than five minutes by 2-to-1. Table 6 shows a comparison of time spent reading and degree status.

RESEARCH QUESTION #4: Do alumni who either were somewhat or very involved in extracurricular campus activities spend more time reading the magazine than do alumni who were not involved in extracurricular campus activities?

A Spearman Correlation Coefficient of .4213 ($p < .0001$) indicated a moderate association between the amount of time spent reading Seasons and the level of involvement of the respondent while a student at Freed-Hardeman. This suggested that the more involved respondents were while students at Freed-Hardeman the more time they were likely to spend reading the magazine.

Two respondents who considered themselves either somewhat or very involved in extracurricular activities spent less than five to 15 minutes reading the magazine; three who were not involved spent less than five minutes reading. No “not involved” respondent spent 16 to 25 minutes, and only one spent more than 25 minutes. On the contrary, a total of 22 who were somewhat or very involved spent 16 to 25 minutes, and a total of eight spent more than 25 minutes. Table 7 is a comparison of time spent reading and level of involvement.

RESEARCH QUESTION #5: What are the overall opinions of readers regarding the magazine’s writing?

As a whole, the quality of Seasons’ articles was viewed favorably by those responding to the survey.

To understand how respondents felt about the quality of Seasons’ articles and graphic elements, a six-part question was posed asking respondents to rate two antithetical adjectives on a semantic differential scale. The first part of this question asked respondents their opinion of Seasons’ articles, or content. The variables of “interesting/not interesting,” “uninformative/informative,” and “hard to understand/easy to understand” were combined into a variable labeled “content,” with a Cronbach’s alpha

of .8880. Value labels ranged from 1 = very poor (not interesting, uninformative, or hard to understand) to 5 = very good (interesting, informative, or easy to understand).

In a means comparison of these three sets of adjectives, the overall mean fell at 3.261, or between “average” and “good.” A total of 74 respondents, or 66%, rated the overall content above average, or above a 3.000. Five percent rated the articles as average (3.000) in regard to the three adjective sets, while 11% rated the content below average.

Regarding two of the three sets of adjectives (“hard to understand/easy to understand” and “uninformative/informative”), no responses were given on the negative end of the continuum. See Tables 8, 9, and 10 for respondent ratings of the individual pairs of adjectives.

RESEARCH QUESTION #6: What are the overall opinions of readers regarding the magazine’s design?

Overall respondent opinions of the magazine’s design also were favorable.

Respondents were asked to rate the magazine’s design using antithetical adjectives on a semantic differential scale. Again, the three adjective sets — “dull/eye-catching,” “uncluttered/cluttered,” and “appealing/unappealing” — were combined into one variable, “design,” with the following value label range: 1 = very poor (dull, cluttered, or unappealing) to 5 = very good (eye-catching, uncluttered, or appealing). A Cronbach’s alpha of .9805 suggested that each set of descriptors measured the same construct.

Means were compared for each set of design-variable adjectives. This overall mean was 3.079, slightly lower than the overall content mean. Sixty-four (57%) rated the magazine’s design as above average (above 3.000). Eleven percent rated the design as average, while 14% rated it below average (below 3.000) overall.

Although rated positively overall, the magazine’s design received more average

and below average ratings than did the magazine's writing. Results in two of the three sets of adjectives ("uncluttered/cluttered" and "appealing/unappealing") contained answers in the negative. See Tables 11, 12, and 13 for respondent ratings of the individual pairs of adjectives.

RESEARCH QUESTION #7: Why do readers read the magazine?

One survey question involved multiple parts aimed at determining why readers read Seasons. A Likert-scale question, each of its nine possible reasons offered five potential responses, ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5.

According to the findings, the prevailing reason respondents read the magazine is to get information about physical changes to the campus. A comparison of means identified this as the variable with the highest overall mean (3.24) (Table 14).

On average, responses hovered between "neutral/unsure" and "agree" for the following variables: "to find out what my former classmates are doing;" "to get information about upcoming events at Freed-Hardeman;" "to get information about achievements of faculty;" and "to get information about physical changes to the campus."

Variables ranking close to "neutral/unsure" on the "disagree" side were "to get information about FHU's academic programs" and "to get information about achievements of current students." Variables whose means fell primarily in the "disagree" to "strongly disagree" range were "to get information about FHU's sports program," "to get information about FHU's fund-raising efforts," and "just to have something to read."

Thirty percent of the respondents were neutral/unsure about whether they read Seasons to learn about the school's fund-raising efforts. Slightly more than one-fourth disagreed with this statement to some extent.

More than one of every three respondents disagreed with the statement that they read Seasons just to have something to read, suggesting most respondents think the

magazine is worthwhile and serves a distinguishable purpose. Seventeen percent agreed with this statement, while approximately 14% strongly disagreed. Three strongly agreed.

The majority of respondents (75 or 67%) agreed to some extent that they read Seasons to get information about physical changes to the campus, such as building projects and renovations. Three disagreed in some manner. As stated earlier, the mean rating for this variable (3.24) indicated this was the No. 1 reason respondents read Seasons.

Overall, the most popular reasons for reading Seasons reportedly were to get information about the following: former classmates; academic programs; upcoming events; achievements of faculty and current students; and physical changes to the campus. Table 15 is a composite of all reasons and their corresponding frequencies.

An additional question asked respondents to indicate their level of interest in the topics currently featured in Seasons, with “not interested,” “somewhat interested,” and “very interested” as response choices. Value labels were 1 = not interested, 2 = somewhat interested, and 3 = very interested.

Respondents revealed they were “very interested” in the following topics and/or sections in the magazine: Alumni Feature (45%); Campus News (i.e., new academic programs, campus expansion projects, new faculty, etc.) (45%); and Alumni Update (48%). This data offered supporting evidence that news about alumni and physical changes to the campus were popular with many respondents.

Those sections receiving predominantly “somewhat interested” ratings were: calendar of upcoming events (42%); faculty/staff news (47%); fund-raising (42%); For Your Information (38%); In Memoriam (37%); Memorial Gifts (36%); News Briefs (52%); From the President’s Desk (40%); Sports (41%); and Student Life (53%).

Fifty percent of the respondents were “not interested” in articles having to do with estate planning issues. Table 16 is a composite of respondent interest levels per topic.

RESEARCH QUESTION #8: How long does the magazine remain in reader households?

Regarding the shelf life of Seasons, 37% revealed they kept the magazine in their homes for more than seven days. Approximately one out of every five kept it in the home from one to three days. “Less than one day” was chosen by 12 of the respondents (11%). Ten percent said they kept the magazine in their homes from four to seven days. The mean shelf life was 2.28, or approximately three or four days (Table 17).

Another question designed to yield some insight into Seasons’ shelf life asked how often respondents passed the magazine to others outside their household. An overwhelming majority — nearly two-thirds — said they never passed the magazine to others. One of five said they sometimes passed the magazine to others. Two respondents answered “frequently” and “unsure.” No respondent answered “always,” and the mean rating on this question was 1.182 (Table 18).

RESEARCH QUESTION #9: How many people per household read the magazine?

On average, only one person per household reads Seasons. Close to 50% chose this response. One out of three respondents said two people in their household read the magazine. The responses “3,” “4,” and “unsure” represented a combined total of 8%. The mean number of individuals per household reading Seasons was 1.35, or essentially one to two people (Table 19).

RESEARCH QUESTION #10: Where does the magazine rank with readers as a source of Freed-Hardeman University news?

A question designed specifically to measure this offered respondents four potential sources of news about the university, including an “other” option, and asked them to rank the sources from 5 to 1 according to the likelihood they would use each

source to get news about the university. Respondents were instructed to rank the source they would most likely use as a “5” and the source they would least likely use as a “1.” Table 20 is a comparison of means for each potential news source.

A value label of “3” was assigned to Seasons. Thirty respondents — more than one in four — identified the magazine as their chief source of news about the university, followed closely by 21 (19%) who ranked Seasons a “4” and 17% who ranked it a “3.” Six individuals assigned a “2” rating to Seasons, and six others said the magazine was their least likely source of information about Freed-Hardeman. The mean for the entire group of responses was 2.81.

Campus literature was assigned a value label of “1.” Eleven respondents identified this as the source they would most likely use to get information about Freed-Hardeman. Other responses were as follows: 4 = 15%; 3 = 23%; 2 = 18%; 1 = 5%. The mean rating was 2.24. Results indicated campus literature was not a strong primary source nor a necessarily weak primary source, falling predominantly in the mid-range.

Contact with Freed-Hardeman personnel was assigned a value of “2.” This source was ranked several times on both extremes. Just under 25% rated it as the source they would most likely use to get information about the school, while 16% said they would be least likely to use it as a news source. Contact occupied the mid-range with 17% of the respondents. Nearly 10% assigned a “4” rating to contact, while 8% ranked it as a “2.” The mean rating was 2.43.

Respondents were asked to rank their congregation (where they attend church) as a source of news about Freed-Hardeman. This source was given a value label of “4.” Twenty-five said this was their least-likely news source, while 24 gave it a ranking of “2.” Eight individuals identified this as their most likely news source, while 10 ranked it third and nine ranked it fourth. This mean rating was 1.63.

An “other” category was assigned a value label of “5.” This option was included

so that respondents could write in a news source not already mentioned. Of the small number that ranked this option, 14% ranked it as their least likely news source, and 10% ranked it as their most likely news source. Other rankings were: 2 = 5%; 3 = 2%; and 4 = 5%. This mean rating was 1.02.

Contact with Freed-Hardeman personnel and Seasons both were strong potential news sources for respondents. The average and above-average rankings (3-5) were assigned in larger quantities to Seasons than to any other potential news source, and 27% ranked the magazine as their most likely source of Freed-Hardeman news. The ranking of "5" was the most predominant ranking for Seasons. Table 21 is a composite of ratings for each potential news source.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this research was to obtain information on the attitudes of the readers of a small, church-related university's alumni magazine about that magazine and to use the information to assess how well the university is meeting the needs of its audience.

In general, the respondents in this study held favorable opinions about the magazine. Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University is regarded by a majority of the respondents as a quality alumni magazine. Almost 70% of the respondents classified it as either a "very good" or "good" alumni magazine as a whole.

Relationships were identified between selected variables in this study. For example, findings indicated a moderate level of association between respondents' satisfaction with the magazine and the act of giving money to Freed-Hardeman. The secondary aim of this research was to determine if such a relationship existed. Results showed that as the degree of satisfaction became more favorable, the number of respondents who said they had donated money to Freed-Hardeman within the last six months increased.

Moderate associations also were revealed among the time respondents spent reading the magazine and certain audience characteristics. For instance, it was determined that the more time respondents spent reading the magazine, the more likely they were to be donors to the university. Alumni who received a degree from Freed-Hardeman were likely to spend more time reading the magazine than were alumni who left Freed-Hardeman prior to receiving their degree. Also, the more involved respondents

were in extracurricular activities (i.e., clubs, athletics, etc.) while students at Freed-Hardeman, the more time they were likely to spend reading Seasons.

Results showed the majority of respondents were pleased overall with the quality of Seasons' writing. Sixty-six percent rated the writing above average, while 11% rated it below average. Such was the case with Seasons' design. A total of 57% of the respondents rated the design above average, and 14% rated it below average.

The most popular reason to read Seasons is to get information about physical changes to the Freed-Hardeman campus. Comparing the mean scores for each potential reason offered by the researcher in the questionnaire, physical changes had the highest, at 3.24. Other reasons ranking high among respondents were reading to get information about upcoming events at the university, reading to get information about former classmates, reading to learn about the achievements of faculty and current students, and reading to learn more about the university's academic programs. Alumni- and campus-related news items were popular among many respondents. Nearly half the respondents said they were very interested in these items in the magazine.

The shelf life of Seasons was identified as being approximately three or four days. In addition, nearly two-thirds of the respondents said they never gave the magazine to anyone outside their household once they finished reading it. Roughly half of the respondents said only one person in their household usually read Seasons.

This publication ranked high among respondents as a source of news about Freed-Hardeman. The magazine received more high rankings as a Freed-Hardeman news source than any other potential news source offered by the researcher in the questionnaire. The highest ranking (5) was the most predominant for Seasons, and more than one-in-four said it was their chief source of news about the university.

POST-HOC ANALYSIS

Open-ended comments

The number of open-ended comments made by respondents to various items in the questionnaire totaled 107. Participants were given the opportunity to write in comments regarding the following areas: respondents' reading behavior in relation to Seasons; reasons respondents read Seasons; sources used by respondents to get news about Freed-Hardeman; items needing more or less coverage in Seasons; how respondents classify themselves according to Seasons' audience profile; and additional comments about Seasons. All comments can be found in Appendix F.

Among the recurring themes in these comments was interest in alumni news. When asked what they would like to see given more coverage in Seasons, respondents offered comments such as "alumni issues...", "success of alumni," "what people are doing after graduation...", "...always turn to alumni news first...", "alumni profiles," "more alumni news, i.e., alumni accomplishments...", and "alumni — their location and what they are doing." Comments mentioning alumni also were offered frequently when respondents were asked why they read Seasons.

Another prevailing theme in the comments had to do with respondents' feelings about the magazine in general. To a question asking for additional comments about Seasons, participants responded with such answers as "much more impressive than the old newspaper," "more enjoyable than prior alumni publication," "serves a very good purpose in getting out information to interested individuals," "...thoroughly enjoy reading Seasons...actually wish it were more frequent...", "very good and informative," "good improvement — more readable than previous publications...I always look forward to getting it...", "well done!" and "good magazine — I enjoy it."

Reading patterns

A characteristic of readership that also was studied was reading patterns. To measure this, respondents were asked to complete a sentence with the response that best described their reading habits regarding Seasons.

Almost 40% of the respondents revealed they read some of the articles in Seasons from beginning to end. The response “read only portions of the magazine” was a close second (just under 34%). More respondents (8%) never read Seasons than respondents who read it from cover to cover (7%). Both numbers are low (9 and 8 respondents respectively), which can be interpreted either positively or negatively — a small number of respondents never read the magazine or only a small number of respondents read the magazine from cover to cover. Three respondents chose “other” and wrote in their own comments.

The mean rating for responses to this question was 1.827, falling just under “read some of the articles from beginning to end.” Values assigned were as follows: 1 = read only portions of the magazine; 2 = read some of the articles from beginning to end; 3 = read the magazine from cover to cover; 4 = never read it; and 5 = other.

Reading time

Concerning the length of time respondents read the magazine, 38% said they took from five to 15 minutes to read the magazine. More than one-quarter spent between 16 and 25 minutes reading Seasons, and 13% spent more than 25 minutes. Seven chose the response “less than five minutes.” Values assigned included 1 = less than five minutes, 2 = five to 15 minutes, 3 = 16 to 25 minutes, and 4 = more than 25 minutes. The mean for this question was 2.200, indicating the majority of respondents spends between five and 15 minutes reading the magazine.

Overall opinion

More than one out of three respondents offered their overall opinion of Seasons as “very good.” Just under one-third rated the magazine as “good,” and 13% gave it a rating of “average.” No respondent characterized Seasons as “poor” or “very poor.” This also helped answer the research questions regarding the overall opinions of respondents toward the magazine’s content and design.

As mentioned earlier, some respondents’ open-ended comments indicated their overall opinion of the magazine. Some described Seasons as a substantial improvement over Freed-Hardeman’s previous alumni publications, another indication to the researcher that respondents were pleased with Seasons’ quality.

Overall opinion and gift amounts

A trend was detected when comparing respondents’ overall opinion of the magazine and the amount of their most recent donations to the university.

Respondents whose opinions of the magazine were at least “good” were more likely to have donated larger sums of money to the university in their most recent donation. No respondent who rated the magazine as “average” overall gave more than \$500 as a most recent gift, and only one of those respondents indicated he or she gave from \$101 to \$500.

As overall opinion of the magazine increased, so did the numbers of respondents in the giving categories. One respondent who rated the magazine “good” gave between \$1,001 and \$5,000. The number of respondents who rated the magazine as “very good” and who donated at least \$100 was nearly double that of the number of respondents who rated the magazine as “good” and donated at least \$100. Six times as many respondents who rated the magazine “very good” gave at least \$100 than did respondents who rated the magazine as “average.”

This information provides interesting insight into the influence Seasons has on the monetary gifts Freed-Hardeman receives.

Giving per audience classification

The three principal audience groups were analyzed regarding the amount of their most recent monetary donation to Freed-Hardeman. Alumni comprised the majority of the audience, with friends constituting the second-largest group. The most recent gift amounts of alumni were confined to the \$1-\$500 range, as were the gift amounts of parents of current students. Friends were represented in all but one giving category (more than \$5,000). Inclusively, the \$1-\$50 range was the most popular response.

Uses and gratifications applied

This research applied the uses and gratifications approach to learn how selected readers of Freed-Hardeman University's alumni magazine used that publication and what needs such use served.

Results of this study showed many respondents used the magazine as a source of news relating to Freed-Hardeman. Almost 50% of the respondents ranked the magazine as either their first or second choice when seeking news about the university, and Seasons received the highest ranking (5) more times than any other source.

Referring again to the research of Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973), it can be said respondents use Seasons to satisfy cognitive needs (information and knowledge-acquisition) primarily, but additional needs also could be met through use of the magazine.

Seeking news about physical changes to the university's campus makes many respondents turn to the pages of Seasons. Physical-changes news was rated the most popular among selected reasons why respondents read Seasons. The cognitive need to

find out about the latest renovation or the newest campus building can be satisfied by consulting the magazine.

Another reason for which respondents said they often turned to Seasons was news about fellow alumni. The need to learn the latest on former classmates potentially could span three of Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas' (1973) five needs categories. First, respondents seek to satisfy cognitive needs by going to the magazine for such news as alumni addresses, jobs, births/deaths, etc. Second, fond remembrances of college days may conjure affective, or emotional, needs and drive respondents to consult the magazine. Finally, social integrative needs, or those needs to strengthen familial or friendship ties, may cause readers to turn to Seasons for alumni news.

In summary, most respondents -- spurred by their cognitive needs -- use Seasons to get information about Freed-Hardeman-related news. The gratification they receive as a result of that use is satisfaction of the need to gain more information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Seasons fared well overall in this study, it seems the magazine is achieving its mission of informing its audience about what is going on at the university. Opportunities to further that mission do exist, however. Although respondent feedback as a whole revealed no significant dissatisfaction with the magazine, the researcher suggests a few actions the editor may want to consider taking to enhance the magazine's current successes.

More news about campus

The most popular reason respondents said they read Seasons was to find out what physical changes were taking place on Freed-Hardeman's campus. News about short- and long-term building projects, renovations, and landscaping improvements, for example,

has proven to be highly sought-after in the past, and Seasons' staff should concentrate on offering as much of this type of news as it can in the magazine.

More alumni news

Not surprisingly, sections having to do with alumni were very popular with most of the respondents. In fact, 40% who offered suggestions on topics they'd like to see given more coverage in the magazine wanted more alumni-related news.

A section titled "Focus on Alumni" is a fairly recent addition to the magazine. This section features news about various Freed-Hardeman alumni chapters, activities being coordinated by the alumni relations office, and announcements of upcoming alumni-related events. This section, currently occupying one page, could be expanded to a spread. An alumni photo spread also could be included.

As mentioned in the results, about 56% of the respondents were Freed-Hardeman alumni. Whatever the editor could add to the magazine in this area that her budget would allow likely would appeal to the majority of the magazine's readers — the alumni.

Broaden the scope

To reiterate Nelson (1987), a magazine's success can be attributed in part to its staying power — it tends to remain on the respondent's bookshelf or coffee table longer than a newspaper or other periodical. The average shelf life for Seasons per respondent home is from three to four days, which, in the researcher's opinion, does not exemplify significant staying power. Furthermore, no respondent reported "always" passing the magazine to individuals outside his or her household, and only two respondents answered they did so "frequently." Sixty-one percent said they never passed it on.

Adding features to the magazine that may appeal to a larger number of potential readers could lengthen the magazine's shelf life, thus increasing the school's exposure.

Encouraging readers to share with others the magazine and news about the “good things going on at Freed-Hardeman” would boost exposure among those who may not be familiar with the school. This, in turn, could increase monetary support of the school, as a relationship was determined to exist between satisfaction with the magazine and the act of donating money. If more people read the magazine and liked what they saw, they may be likely to become donors.

Further study

Future readership surveys. The importance of comprehensive, ongoing readership studies already has been addressed. The staff of Seasons could supplement this study with a more comprehensive one of its own, examining a larger sample of the population.

Audience research. Leslie and Ramey (1988) discussed how crucial it is for church-related colleges and universities to increase their understanding of their most important donor groups. A closer look at audience characteristics could provide information useful in the development of future issues of Seasons.

For example, non-donors could be examined to find out why they are non-donors. As reported earlier in this study, the likelihood of the occurrence of a donation increased as the opinion of the magazine became more favorable. Also, the dollar amount of the donation was more likely to increase as the opinion of the magazine grew more favorable. More knowledge of non-donor characteristics may help the public relations office develop strategies for the magazine to make it more appealing to these readers. This study has pointed out the influence Seasons has on giving; if Seasons could be more appealing to non-donors, their donor status might change.

Another segment of the Seasons audience worthy of study is university friends. Although not the largest audience subgroup, friends did tend to donate larger amounts of

money to the university than the other subgroups. As reported earlier, friends were represented in all but one giving category, whereas the gifts of alumni all fell into the \$1-\$500 range. Further research into friends' likes and dislikes related to the magazine ultimately could yield an increase in gifts to the university.

Characteristics of income groups into which respondents fell also could be studied. Only one of the eight respondents earning more than \$100,000 indicated he or she had donated money to Freed-Hardeman within the last six months; that donation was in the \$101-\$500 range. It would be interesting to learn more about the remaining seven — do they ever donate money to Freed-Hardeman? If not, why? This income group would be more likely to have enough disposable income to be regular, generous donors to the university. It would be helpful to know if there was anything that could be done with Seasons to spark their interest in giving.

In relation to this, it may prove beneficial for the university if the characteristics of the one substantial donor were studied. This donor said his or her most recent gift was between \$1,001 and \$5,000. It would be interesting to know what opinions the donor held about the magazine and to assess whether those opinions regulated his or her giving.

It may be useful to examine more closely the characteristics of those respondents who received a degree from Freed-Hardeman and those who were involved in extracurricular activities. This research found these groups spent more time reading Seasons than did those who did not receive a Freed-Hardeman degree or who were not involved in extracurricular functions. Gaining knowledge of these groups' needs and motivations for reading the magazine would give the editor an idea of how to use the magazine to better meet those needs.

Mailing list. The Seasons mailing list should be refined before another study of this nature is undertaken.

It is an ongoing challenge to keep such a list current, and the editor of this publication had an off-site group update the list in 1996. But, still, many people apparently are not receiving the magazine because of expired forwarding orders or simply inaccurate addresses. From the 300 surveys mailed in this study, more than 20 were returned to the researcher unforwardable. Some of the surveys that were mailed to forwarding addresses were returned a second time with another new address. If for every 300 names on the list there were approximately 20 undeliverable magazines, the potential for a substantial loss on postage would be great.

Steps could be taken to reduce the number of magazines that either never reach the home of someone who looks forward to receiving them or those that arrive in the mailboxes of people who wish they were not on the mailing list. A first-class mailing with a postcard asking for address verification could help update the mailing list.

Eight percent of those polled said they never read Seasons. Efforts should be made either to win the support of these individuals or to remove them from the mailing list to save essentially wasted postage and printing.

Comparative studies. A comparative study between Seasons and its sister universities' publications also could prove beneficial, not only for Seasons but for the other schools involved.

A preliminary analysis of two comparable magazines was conducted by the researcher in conjunction with this study, but no full-scale observation took place. A formal study could address each publication's strengths and weaknesses as well as their effectiveness in communicating to their particular audiences. Such a study could provide opportunities for idea-sharing and could help each school learn more from its peers about communicating with its publics.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

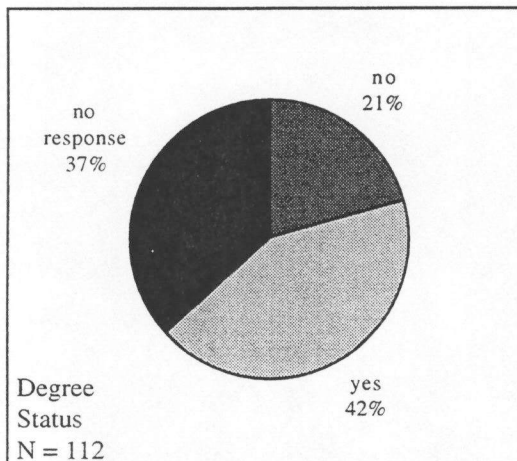
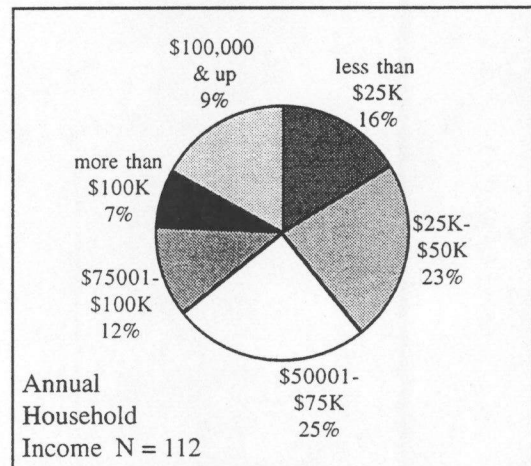
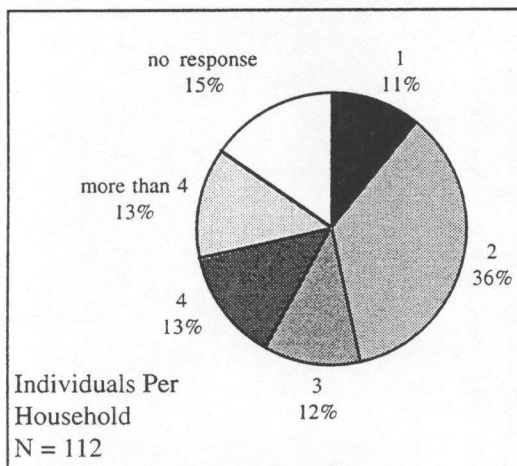
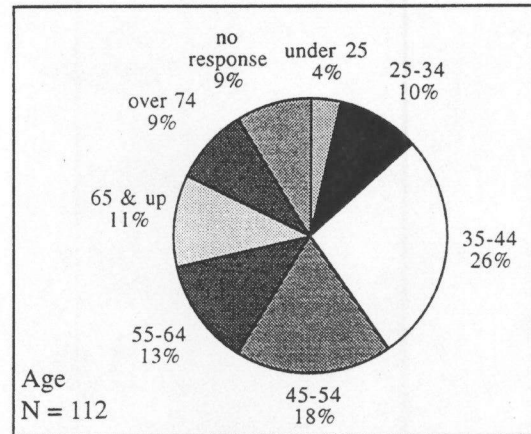
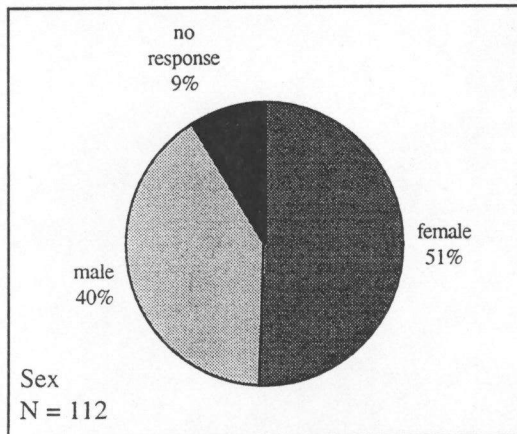


FIGURE 1
RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

TABLE 1
AUDIENCE COMPOSITION

Value	Alumni	Parent of current student	Friend	Other
No (0)	42	90.2	72.3	87.5
Yes (1)	56.3	8	25.9	10.7
No response	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8

Note: Respondents were asked to identify into which audience category(ies) they would fall. They were instructed to identify all that applied. Results are given as percentages.

TABLE 2
DECADE OF RESPONDENT DEPARTURE FROM FHU

Decade	Frequency	Percent
1930s	2	1.8
1940s	5	4.5
1950s	6	5.4
1960s	12	10.8
1970s	14	12.6
1980s	17	15.3
1990s	12	10.8
No response	44	39.3

TABLE 3

LEVEL OF RESPONDENT INVOLVEMENT WHILE A STUDENT

Value	Frequency	Percent
Not involved (1)	10	8.9
Somewhat involved (2)	31	27.7
Very involved (3)	28	25
No response	43	38.4

TABLE 4

**A COMPARISON OF OVERALL OPINION OF SEASONS
AND ACT OF DONATING MONEY TO FREED-HARDEMAN**

Overall Opinion	Gift in last six months	
	No	Yes
Average	10	4
Good	24	8
Very good	22	18

Note: Spearman Correlation = .4042 ($p < .0001$). No respondent characterized the magazine as "poor" or "very poor."

TABLE 5**A COMPARISON OF TIME SPENT READING SEASONS
AND ACT OF DONATING MONEY TO FREED-HARDEMAN**

Time spent reading	Gift in last six months	
	No	Yes
Less than 5 minutes	5	2
5-15 minutes	29	12
16-25 minutes	17	12
More than 25 minutes	6	6

Note: Spearman Correlation = .4330 ($p < .0001$)

TABLE 6**A COMPARISON OF TIME SPENT READING SEASONS
AND DEGREE STATUS**

Time spent reading	Freed-Hardeman degree status	
	No	Yes
Less than 5 minutes	3	2
5-15 minutes	11	19
16-25 minutes	6	17
More than 25 minutes	1	9

Note: Spearman Correlation = .5280 ($p < .0001$)

TABLE 7

**A COMPARISON OF TIME SPENT READING SEASONS
AND LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT WHILE A STUDENT**

Time spent reading	Level of involvement		
	Not	Somewhat	Very
Less than 5 minutes	3	2	
5-15 minutes	6	11	13
16-25 minutes		12	10
More than 25 minutes	1	3	5

Note: Spearman Correlation = .4213 ($p < .0001$)

TABLE 8**RATINGS OF SEASONS' WRITING:
"INTERESTING VS. NOT INTERESTING"**

Value	Frequency	Percent
1 (very good or very interesting)	34	30.4
2 (good or interesting)	34	30.4
3 (average)	17	15.2
4 (poor or not interesting)	5	4.5
5 (very poor or very not interesting)	0	0
No response	22	19.7

TABLE 9

**RATINGS OF SEASONS' WRITING:
"HARD TO UNDERSTAND VS. EASY TO UNDERSTAND"**

Value	Frequency	Percent
5 (very good or very easy to understand)	50	44.6
4 (good or easy to understand)	23	20.5
3 (average)	7	6.3
2 (poor or hard to understand)	0	0
1 (very poor or very hard to understand)	0	0
No response	32	28.6

TABLE 10

RATINGS OF SEASONS' WRITING:
"UNINFORMATIVE VS. INFORMATIVE"

Value	Frequency	Percent
5 (very good or very informative)	40	35.7
4 (good)	29	25.9
3 (average)	10	8.9
2 (poor or uninformative)	0	0
1 (very poor or very uninformative)	0	0
No response	33	29.5

TABLE 11
RATINGS OF SEASONS' DESIGN:
"DULL VS. EYE-CATCHING"

Value	Frequency	Percent
5 (very good or very eye-catching)	34	30.4
4 (good or eye-catching)	30	26.8
3 (average)	20	17.9
2 (poor or dull)	0	0
1 (very poor or very dull)	0	0
No response	28	25

TABLE 12

**RATINGS OF SEASONS' DESIGN:
"UNCLUTTERED VS. CLUTTERED"**

Value	Frequency	Percent
1 (very good or very uncluttered)	28	25
2 (good or uncluttered)	19	17
3 (average)	25	22.3
4 (poor or cluttered)	6	5.4
5 (very poor or very cluttered)	2	1.8
No response	32	28.6

TABLE 13**RATINGS OF SEASONS' DESIGN:
"APPEALING VS. UNAPPEALING"**

Value	Frequency	Percent
1 (very good or very appealing)	40	35.7
2 (good or appealing)	26	23.2
3 (average)	16	14.3
4 (poor or unappealing)	4	3.6
5 (very poor or very unappealing)	1	.9
No response	25	23.2

TABLE 14
MEAN RATINGS FOR REASONS TO READ

Reason	Mean rating
to get information about physical changes to campus	3.24
to get information about faculty achievements	3.09
to get information about upcoming events	3.06
to find out what my former classmates are doing	3.00
to get information about academics	2.94
to get information about student achievements	2.86
to get information about sports	2.36
to get information about fund-raising	2.35
just to have something to read	2.00

TABLE 15
REASONS TO READ (FREQUENCIES)

Reason	SD	D	N/U	A	SA	NR
former classmates	8	6.3	10.7	30.4	24.1	20.6
sports	11.6	17	27.7	17	7.1	19.7
academics	1.8	10.7	17.9	42.9	8	18.8
fund-raising	11.6	15.2	29.5	24.1	.9	18.8
to have something to read	14.3	35.7	9.8	17	2.7	20.6
upcoming events	4.5	4.5	11.6	50.9	9.8	18.8
faculty achievements	2.7	5.4	13.4	53.6	7.1	17.9
student achievements	4.5	8.9	15.2	45.5	6.3	19.7
physical changes	.9	1.8	11.6	56.3	10.7	18.8

TABLE 16

LEVEL OF INTEREST IN SEASONS TOPICS (FREQUENCIES)

Topic	Not interested (1)	Somewhat interested (2)	Very interested (3)
Student Life	9.8	52.7	19.6
Alumni Feature	5.4	32.1	44.6
Fund-raising	33.9	42	3.6
Estate Planning	50	28.6	2.7
Sports	28.6	41.1	12.5
Faculty/Staff News	4.5	47.3	31.3
Campus News	4.5	32.1	44.6
From the President's Desk	14.3	40.2	27.7
Alumni Update	3.6	30.4	48.2
News Briefs	4.5	51.8	24.1
In Memoriam	13.4	36.6	32.1
Memorial Gifts	27.7	35.7	17.9
Calendar of Upcoming Events	11.6	42	28.6
For Your Information	12.5	38.4	28.6

Note(s): No-response percentages for each topic are as follows: Student Life, 17.9; Alumni Feature, 17.9; Fund-raising, 20.6; Estate Planning, 18.8; Sports, 17.9; Faculty/Staff News, 17; Campus News, 18.8; From the President's Desk, 17.9; Alumni Update, 17.9; News Briefs, 19.7; In Memoriam, 17.9; Memorial Gifts, 18.8; Calendar of Upcoming Events, 17.9; For Your Information, 20.6.

TABLE 17
SHELF LIFE

Value	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 day (1)	12	10.7
1-3 days (2)	21	18.8
4-7 days (3)	11	9.8
More than 7 days (4)	41	36.6
Unsure (5)	9	8
No response	18	16.1

TABLE 18
SEASONS AS A PASS-ALONG PUBLICATION

Value	Frequency	Percent
Never (1)	68	60.7
Sometimes (2)	23	20.5
Frequently (3)	2	1.8
Always (4)	0	0
Unsure (5)	2	1.8
No response	17	15.2

Note: Respondents were asked to identify how often they gave Seasons to someone outside their household once they finished reading it.

TABLE 19
READERS PER HOUSEHOLD

Value	Frequency	Percent
1 (1)	48	42.9
2 (2)	37	33
3 (3)	5	4.5
4 (4)	2	1.8
Unsure (5)	2	1.8
No response	18	16.1

TABLE 20

MEANS COMPARISON OF POTENTIAL NEWS SOURCES

News source	Mean
<u>Seasons</u>	2.81
Contact with FHU personnel	2.43
Campus literature	2.24
Congregation	1.63
Other	1.02

TABLE 21

RANKINGS FOR NEWS SOURCES (FREQUENCIES)

Source	Values					
	5	4	3	2	1	No Response
<u>Seasons</u>	26.8	18.8	17	5.4	5.4	26.8
Campus literature	9.8	15.2	23.2	17.9	4.5	29.5
Contact with personnel	23.2	9.8	17	8	16.1	25.9
Congregation	7.1	8	8.9	21.4	22.3	32.2
Other	9.8	5.4	1.8	4.5	14.3	64.3

Note: Respondents were asked to rank the likelihood they would use the above sources as sources of Freed-Hardeman news, with "5" being the source they would most likely use and "1" being the source they would least likely use.

APPENDIX B

Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University
Readership Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer all of the following questions to the best of your ability. When you have completed this questionnaire, please put it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope and return it. Thank you for your help.

1. How would you complete the following sentence?

When I receive an issue of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University, I: (circle one response)

- a. read only portions of the magazine
- b. read some of the articles from beginning to end
- c. read the magazine from cover to cover
- d. never read it (*If you chose this response, please skip to question #16.*)
- e. other (please specify): _____

2. On average, how many minutes do you spend reading Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University? (circle one number)

- a. less than 5 minutes
- b. 5 to 15 minutes
- c. 16 to 25 minutes
- d. more than 25 minutes

1

Please go to the next page.

3. Below are some reasons why readers might read Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University. Under each reason, please circle the letter of the response that most closely describes your feelings about each statement.

I read Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University to:
find out what my former classmates are doing.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about FHU's sports program.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about FHU's academic programs.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about FHU's fund-raising efforts.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

just to have something to read.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about upcoming events at Freed-Hardeman.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about achievements of faculty.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about achievements of current students.

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

get information about physical changes to the campus (i.e., new buildings, renovations, etc.).

a	b	c	d	e
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/unsure	agree	strongly agree

Please specify any reason(s) you read Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University that is/are not included in the above statements. _____

4. People receive news about Freed-Hardeman University from a variety of sources. Please rank the following sources of news about Freed-Hardeman according to how you personally would use them to get news about the school. *Rank from 5 to 1, with 5 being the source you would most likely use and 1 being the source you would least likely use.*

- ☐ campus literature (for example: brochures, pamphlets, catalogs, etc.)
- ☐ contact with FHU personnel (for example: phone calls, campus visits, letters, personal contact, etc.)
- ☐ Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University
- ☐ your congregation
- ☐ other (please specify): _____

5. How many people live in your household? *If you are a parent of a college student who currently is away at college, please include the student.* (circle one response)

- a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. more than 4

6. On average, how many people in your household read Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University? (circle one response)

- a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. unsure

7. About how long do you keep Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University in your home once you finish reading it? (circle one response)

- a. less than 1 day
b. 1-3 days
c. 4-7 days
d. more than 7 days
e. unsure

8. When you finish reading an issue of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University, how often do you pass it on to others outside your household? (circle one response)

- a. never b. sometimes c. frequently d. always e. unsure

9. Please rate the quality of the writing and design in Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University by circling one number closest to the word that best describes your feelings.

Overall, the articles in Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University are:

interesting	1	2	3	4	5	not interesting
hard to understand	1	2	3	4	5	easy to understand
uninformative	1	2	3	4	5	informative

Overall, the design of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University is:

dull	1	2	3	4	5	eye-catching
uncluttered	1	2	3	4	5	cluttered
appealing	1	2	3	4	5	unappealing

10. Listed below are some topics featured in most issues of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University. Please indicate your level of interest in each topic by circling one number to the right of each topic.

1 = not interested 2 = somewhat interested 3 = very interested

Student life	1	2	3
Alumni feature	1	2	3
Fund-raising	1	2	3
Estate planning	1	2	3
Sports	1	2	3
Faculty/staff news	1	2	3
Campus news (i.e., new programs, campus expansion projects, new faculty, etc.)	1	2	3
From the President's Desk	1	2	3
Alumni Update	1	2	3
News Briefs	1	2	3
In Memoriam	1	2	3
Memorial Gifts	1	2	3
Calendar of upcoming events	1	2	3
For Your Information (i.e., articles about helping your children with their grades; interpersonal communication; youth ministry; etc.)	1	2	3

11. Are there any topics you would like to see given more coverage than they currently receive in Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University? (circle one response)

- a. no b. yes

If yes, please specify: _____

12. Are there any topics you would like to see given less coverage than they currently receive in Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University? (circle one response)

- a. no b. yes

If yes, please specify: _____

13. What is your overall opinion of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University as an alumni magazine? (circle one response)

- a. very poor
b. poor
c. average
d. good
e. very good
f. unsure

14. The audience of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University includes Freed-Hardeman alumni, parents of current students and friends of the university. In which of these categories would you classify yourself? (circle all that apply)

- a. alumni
b. parent of current student
c. friend
d. other (please specify): _____

15. In the space below, please provide any additional comments about Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University. _____

16. Please indicate your age. (circle one response)

- a. Under 25
- b. 25 - 34
- c. 35 - 44
- d. 45 - 54
- e. 55 - 64
- f. 65 - 74
- g. Over 74

17. Please indicate your sex.

- a. Male
- b. Female

18. Please indicate your annual household income. (circle one response)

- a. Less than \$25,000
- b. \$25,000 - \$50,000
- c. \$50,001 - \$75,000
- d. \$75,001 - \$100,000
- e. More than \$100,000

19. Excluding any tuition, loan payments or paid admission to university functions, have you donated money to Freed-Hardeman University within the last six months?
(circle one response)

- a. no
- b. yes
- c. unsure

If "no," please skip the following question.

6

Please go to the next page.

20. Excluding any tuition, loan payments or paid admission to university functions, please estimate the amount of your last monetary gift to Freed-Hardeman University by indicating the range into which your gift would fall.

- a. \$1 - \$50
- b. \$51 - \$100
- c. \$101 - \$500
- d. \$501 - \$1,000
- e. \$1,001 - \$5,000
- f. more than \$5,000
- g. unsure

If you are a former Freed-Hardeman student, please answer the remaining questions. If you did not attend Freed-Hardeman, you may stop here. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

21. Did you receive a degree from Freed-Hardeman? (circle one response)

- a. no
- b. yes

22. In what year did you leave Freed-Hardeman? (fill in blank) _____

23. Please complete the following sentence by circling one response.

As a student at Freed-Hardeman, I:

- a. was not involved in extra-curricular activities (i.e., clubs, athletics, etc.)
- b. was somewhat involved in extra-curricular activities (i.e., clubs, athletics, etc.)
- c. was very involved in extra-curricular activities (i.e., clubs, athletics, etc.)

Again, thank you for your help.

APPENDIX C

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE



COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATIONS

School of Journalism
330 Communications Building
Knoxville, TN 37996-0330
(423) 974-5155
FAX (423) 974-3896

February 1, 1997

Dear Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University recipient,

In conjunction with the School of Journalism, University of Tennessee, I am conducting a readership survey to learn your opinions of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University, the university's magazine. This project is the culmination of two years of graduate study and is the topic of my master's thesis.

This study is being conducted to learn how Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University can better serve your needs. As a member of the Seasons audience, your input regarding the magazine is priceless. Therefore, your honest answers are very important to the success of this project. The results of this study will be shared with the magazine's editor in aggregate; in other words, your individual responses will not be singled out.

Your name has been chosen randomly from a list of individuals who receive the magazine. All information you provide will be held in strictest confidence. A three-digit code number has been assigned to each survey for the purpose of tracking when completed surveys are returned. That number, however, will in no way be used to match you with your answers. It simply is a way for me to carry out this project more efficiently. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation without penalty.

Return of the completed survey constitutes your consent to participate in this project. Completing the survey should take you about 10 minutes. You may use either pen or pencil, and it is requested you do not sign the form. If the survey is addressed to more than one individual in your household, I ask that only one of those individuals complete the survey.

When you have finished, please return the form by Feb. 28, 1997. A stamped, addressed, return envelope has been provided for your convenience.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Respectfully,

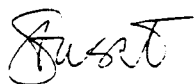
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stuart D. Hames".

Stuart D. Hames
FHU Class of '91

APPENDIX D

Several days ago you should have received a questionnaire designed to measure your opinions of Seasons of Freed-Hardeman University. If you have not completed and returned your survey, please take a few minutes now to do that. Your opinions of the magazine are important; please take a moment to share those opinions now with me.

If you already have completed and returned your survey, thank you for your participation, and please disregard this reminder.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stuart Hames".

Stuart Hames
FHU Class of '91

APPENDIX E



Feb. 19, 1996

Seasons Readers

SEASONS MAGAZINE SURVEY

Several days ago you should have received a survey regarding *Seasons* of Freed-Hardeman University. Your quick response to this survey will be much appreciated. It will not only help Stuart complete his master's thesis, but it will also help us to improve the magazine. Those of us on the staff want to produce a magazine that will keep you informed about Freed-Hardeman and increase your pride in your alma mater.

Stuart is an alumnus of Freed-Hardeman and a former member of the *Seasons* staff. He is seeking to help us while he does the necessary work for his degree--the proverbial two birds with one stone. I am personally grateful he is conducting this research.

Enclosed you will find a second copy of the survey for your convenience. Please take a few minutes to complete it and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by March 7. You will help him and help us to give you a better magazine. If you already have returned your survey, thank you for your help, and please disregard this reminder.

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

Nancy Bennett

Nancy Bennett, Director
Office of Public Relations

NB:llc

APPENDIX F

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Question #1 - Reading patterns

I only check alumni news for 1939-'40.

Sometimes look through it.

Skim the entire magazine and read points of interest, especially the section on alumni.

I do not remember getting the magazine.

Scan it.

My name was put on mailing list some years back when I made a donation at a lectureship. I have no particular interest in school's affairs.

Question #3 - Other reasons to read the magazine

I do read articles about the faculty that go beyond their achievements, such as things they do off campus, how their family is, how they got where they are, etc.

I especially enjoy reading the writings of Nancy Bennett.

Above is a good coverage.

We now have a child at FHU, so we are even more interested in events, etc.

Overall news about the university.

Alumni news.

Curiosity — I am inquisitive by nature — I am familiar with university magazines and saw this as a 'new look' for FHU.

To be posted in general on directions the school is going.

Have relations working with college.

To generally keep abreast of what is happening on campuses of our Christian schools.

My sister used to work for the university and my brother-in-law teaches there.

I didn't attend FHU campus, I attended an extension in St. Louis.

I am a 1930 graduate and I am so interested in all the changes made since I graduated.

Since I never was a student at FHU the first statement for me is false. I did, however, have a sister attend FHC and I know several people who went. I like to check on their whereabouts, new addresses, etc.

I am not a graduate but I am interested in Christian education.

Learn about anything THEATRE is doing!

To ascertain levels of modernish (sic ?) in our schools and churches.

Question #4 - Other sources of news about Freed-Hardeman

Parents (they attend lectureship and other activities).

Alumni, current students.

Contact with one or two friends that I still have from those days.

Visiting or talking with schoolmates.

Parents — they attend lectureship and other events.

Students tell us.

Shared information by other ministers and church leaders.

Trips to FHU Lectureships.

FHU Associates meeting.

Alumni office, Home Ec. (Mrs. Taylor)

My sons.

In-laws that live there.

Alumni I am still in contact with.

Friends, family.

Contact with somebody associated with Freed. Ex. (friend from church that has gone to FHU).

School — Madison Academy — Christian school.

Letters from alumni.

TV news.

TV or radio.

Child who is a student.

Current students.

Daily contact.

Old friends.

Past and present graduates.

Friends.

Students at my home congregation and alumni.

Question #11 - Topics that should receive more coverage

Alumni issues, generally. There are many disgruntled alums out there — many — ever wonder why?

Update department's (e.g. psychology) news.

Success of alumni.

What people are doing after graduation, i.e., charts, pie graphs with percentages of people working in their major, or stories like 'Where are they now' pinpointing alumni that have done interesting, unusual things.

New faculty to acquaint alumni with them.

About the young men who will be preachers and courses offered to them.

Alumni.

Section for prospective students mailed at least in the fall to churches to give to their juniors and seniors.

Scholarship programs and how to obtain them.

Alumni profiles.

More alumni news, i.e., alumni accomplishments, experiences, etc.

Student life/activities.

Sports, mostly women's teams.

Success of alumni.

More coverage of Bible department.

More specific sports news, i.e., players' names, specific game summaries, etc.

Theatre, all the arts!

I find some articles very interesting and others of no interest. But I believe that will always be the case no matter what the make-up of articles.

Alumni — their location and what they are doing.

Historical vs. modern approach to Biblical language and usage.

Question #12 - Topics that should receive less coverage

Fund-raising is of no interest whatsoever to me. Bag it. (although I realize it is a necessary evil of any institution)

In memoriam.

The photos of students and personnel in productions, etc., where they appear to be clownish or immodest are always distracting. I realize they promote productions, etc., but

some are so grotesque that they distract and reflect poorly on the school.

In memoriam.

Coverage of some of the events, such as 'Makin' Music' and such like, that 'smack' of compromising with the world — which of course puts us at enmity with God. Hopefully the fear of God Almighty is still being taught at FHU.

Sports.

Even though I'm not interested in some topics, I'm sure others are.

Just an added theme or themes to reassure a weak and ignorant brotherhood.

Question #14 - Audience classification

Elder, encouraging young people to select it as their school.

A willing expatriate, perhaps? *g*

My brother-in-law teaches at the university ... my husband and I are graduates of Harding University.

Attended extension in St. Louis.

Life member of the Associates.

Former professor.

Parent of past and future student.

Former student; did not graduate from Freed.

Teacher at FHU.

Parent of former students.

Parent of past student.

Parent of former student.

Contributor.

Advisory Board.

Parent of former students.

Question #15 - Additional comments about the magazine

Good improvement. More 'read-able' than previous pubs.

Always look forward to getting it. Maybe have a section like in Readers Digest entitled 'Campus Life' that gives us a better glimpse of campus, maybe humorous stories.

Well done!

No matter where I move — it seems to find me.

I made my comment in #12. But let me say this — I have a son who is a sophomore in high school. FHU is being considered, but if we think his attendance there would influence him to 'change' like some of the congregations of the church around here — we will in no wise send him there. I know this is not the information you requested. But I said that to say this — I don't want to see Seasons endorse these types of activities. It influences young souls to compromise the truth.

I don't feel I should rate this magazine as I am only a friend to Christian education.

I always turn to former alumni news first. I love to read about who has had a baby or gotten married from my former classmates.

Much more impressive than the old newspaper.

Would like to see a form to send in alumni updates/information on how to send updates (i.e., addresses, attention: ?, etc.).

I would like to hear more from the Bible department. I would also like to see upcoming Christian trips announced as Holy Lands, cruises, trips more alumni are able to sign up for.

More pictures!

More enjoyable than prior alumni publication.

Serves a very good purpose in getting out information to interested individuals.

I thoroughly enjoy reading Seasons. I actually wish it were more frequent. It would also be nice to see more student writings in it.

Very good and informative.

Good magazine — I enjoy it.

VITA

Stuart Davidson Hames was born January 27, 1969, in Tucker, Georgia. He attended elementary and junior high schools in Henderson, Chester County, Tennessee, and graduated from Chester County High School in 1987. He enrolled in Freed-Hardeman University in the fall of 1987, where he received a bachelor of science in communication with an emphasis in public relations in May 1991. After working in the public relations field three years, he entered the graduate program of the College of Communications at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he earned a master of science in communications with an emphasis in journalism in August 1997.

He is married to the former Wendy Lee Werkheiser of Shiremanstown, Pennsylvania.