

A STUDY OF THE SECTIONS IN FIVE FLORIDA NEWSPAPERS INTENDED
FOR ADOLESCENT READERS

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	vii
 CHAPTERS	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Teen Readership Interest.....	1
Method of Study.....	2
Research Questions.....	4
Applications of Research Findings.....	5
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Decline in Newspaper Readership.....	7
Newspaper Readership Among Adolescents.....	8
The Newspaper Reading Interests of Teenagers.....	9
Characteristics of Teenage Newspaper Readers.....	10
The Acquisition of the Newspaper Reading Habit.....	11
Possible Reasons for the Decline in Readership Among Teens.....	12
Introducing Newspaper Reading to the Young in School.....	17
The Teenage Market.....	20
The Five Newspapers and Their Teen Sections.....	21
3 <u>THE TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT</u>	23
Why the Newspaper Started a Section for Teenagers.	23
The Proposed Concept for the Teen Section.....	25
Acceptance of Proposal.....	27
Format of "Teen Democrat" and Placement in the Newspaper.....	28
Frequency of Publication.....	29
Elements of "Teen Democrat".....	29
The Consultants.....	30
The Participating High Schools.....	31
The Process of Working with the Teenagers.....	32
The Number of Students Involved in Teen Democrat..	33
The Type of Journalism Training the Teens Receive.	34
The Teens' Performance and Reactions to Suggestions.....	35
The Final Stages of Writing.....	36

	Teen Democrat's Graphics and Student Contributions to Design.....	37
	How Teen Volunteers Feel About "Teen Democrat"....	37
	Advertising in "Teen Democrat".....	39
	Reaction to "Teen Democrat".....	39
4	<u>THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION</u>	41
	Why the Newspaper Started a Section for Teenagers..	41
	The Decision to Create a Spadea Wrap.....	46
	"Teen Wrap" Prototype and Focus Groups.....	46
	Format of "Teen Wrap" and Placement in the Newspaper.....	48
	Frequency of Publication	49
	Elements of "Teen Wrap".....	49
	The Process of Working with the Teenagers.....	52
	How Teen Volunteers Feel About "Teen Wrap".....	54
	Advertising in "Teen Wrap".....	55
	Reaction to "Teen Wrap".....	56
5	<u>THE ORLANDO SENTINEL</u>	58
	Efforts at the Newspaper to Reach Teenage Readers..	58
	Why the Newspaper Initiated "Teen Movie Critics"..	58
	Format of "Teen Movie Critics" and Placement in the Newspaper	59
	Frequency of Publication and Acquisition of Teen Writers	60
	The Process of Working with the Teenagers.....	61
	Why the Newspaper Started "Rave".....	62
	Format of "Rave" and Placement in the Newspaper...	65
	Frequency of Publication.....	65
	Elements of "Rave".....	66
	Ravers: The Participating Teenagers.....	69
	The Process of Working with the Teenagers.....	70
	The Teens' Performance.....	71
	Rave's Graphics.....	72
	How Teen Writers Feel About "Rave".....	73
	Advertising in "Rave".....	74
	Marketing for "Rave".....	74
	Reaction to "Rave".....	76
6	<u>THE PALM BEACH POST</u>	79
	Background of Page.....	79
	How the Section Began.....	79
	The Process of Working with Students.....	81
	The Students' Essays.....	82
	Target for Teen Section.....	83
	The Topics Chosen and Reaction to the Page.....	84

7	<u>THE FT. LAUDERDALE SUN-SENTINEL</u>	86
	Efforts at the Newspaper to Reach Teen Readers....	86
	Why the Newspaper Started a Section for Teenagers.	88
	Format of "High Schools" and Placement in the Newspaper.....	91
	Frequency of Publication.....	92
	Elements of "High Schools".....	92
	The Process of Working with the Teenagers.....	93
	The Number of Students Involved with "High Schools".....	95
	The Type of Journalism Training the Teens Receive.	95
	Graphics for "High Schools" and Student Contributions to Design.....	96
	How Teen Volunteers Feel About "High Schools".....	97
	Advertising in "High Schools".....	99
	Reaction to "High Schools".....	100
	Why the Newspaper Initiated "Teentime".....	100
	Format of "Teentime" and Placement in the Newspaper.....	101
	Frequency of Publication and Acquisition of Teen Writers.....	103
	The Process of Working with the Teenagers.....	103
	Reaction to "Teentime".....	104
8	CONCLUSION.....	105
	Overview of Teen Sections.....	105
	The Role of the Coordinator.....	105
	The Content of the Written Material.....	111
	The Length of the Items.....	112
	The Placement of the Teen Section in the Newspaper.....	113
	The Design of the Teen Sections.....	113
	The Scope of Teen Contributions.....	114
	Adult Readership of the Sections.....	115
	The Interests of Teen Contributors.....	115
	The Initiation of the Teen Sections.....	116
	The Promotion of the Teen Sections.....	117
	Absence of Readership Studies.....	118
	Looking Ahead: The Need for Quantitative Research.....	118
APPENDICES		
A	<u>THE TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT</u>	121
B	<u>THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION</u>	125
C	<u>THE ORLANDO SENTINEL</u>	129
D	<u>THE PALM BEACH POST</u>	135
E	<u>THE FT. LAUDERDALE SUN-SENTINEL</u>	138

REFERENCES.....	143
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	146

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The general decline in newspaper readership has caused alarm for many in the newspaper industry, and the decline in newspaper readership among adolescents has proven particularly disturbing. Some newspapers in the United States have, in an attempt to combat this problem, developed sections written specifically for teenagers. Since the beginning of the 1990s several newspapers in Florida have initiated sections intended for the adolescent audience.

This thesis narrowed its focus to five newspapers in Florida, all of which, as of March 1993, had 100,000 or more daily subscribers. The five newspapers chosen for study were The Tallahassee Democrat, The Florida Times-Union, The Orlando Sentinel, The Palm Beach Post, and The Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel.

The methodology used to study the five newspapers was through personal interviews with coordinators for the

sections, editors, publishers, design workers, advertising and marketing directors, and teen contributors to the sections. The interviews provided information about the format of the five different teen sections, the content and design of the sections, the process of working with teen contributors, and the reaction from readers of the sections. The purpose of the study of the five teen sections was to examine the efforts made at the newspapers to appeal to teenagers.

Each newspaper's teen section differed substantially in all the above aspects. The researcher concludes that (a) the role of the coordinator of the section is crucial to the success of the teen section, (b) the content of the sections should strike a balance between serious and lighthearted material, (c) the teen sections should include both short news items as well as longer feature articles, (d) the placement of the teen section in the newspaper should be prominent, (e) the design of the teen section should be flashy, using a great amount of color to attract the attention of the teenage audience, (f) the newspaper should develop a prototype and should organize groups of teenagers to generate their ideas for the section, (g) once the section has been released, the newspaper needs to undertake extensive promotion for the section, and (h) the newspapers need to conduct quantitative readership surveys of teenagers to determine if adolescents are reading the sections and, if so, what they think about them.