

2.9 A 29-year review of changes in Canadian techniques and the readers-per-copy produced

I thought it might be interesting to present some findings from eleven studies done in Canada in the last 29 years. Taking four dual-audience magazines which were common to all these studies, the average readers-per-copy for all four are charted to gain an objective overview of the effects of changes in techniques.

The four magazines were *Maclean's Magazine* (a general monthly something like the *Saturday Evening Post*); *Reader's Digest* and *Time*, which we all know; and what was originally titled *Weekend Magazine* but is now called *Today*, a newspaper-distributed magazine. These four different types of magazine have been constant throughout.

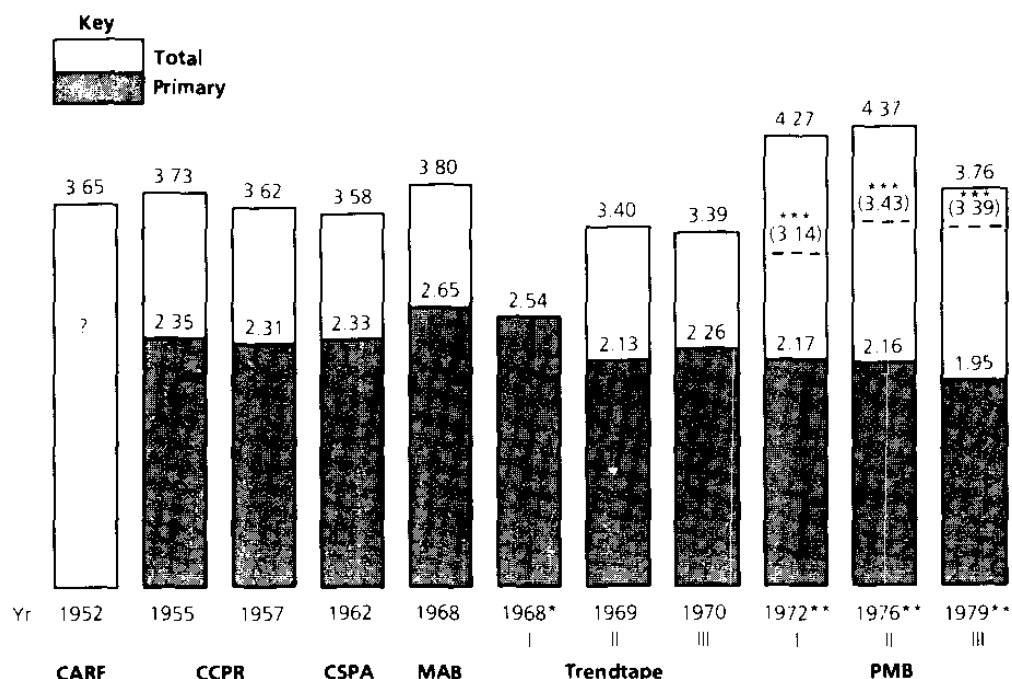
The 1952 CARF study was the first to measure general subscription and newspaper-distributed

magazines using a probability sample and a skeletonised through-the-book technique. It measured total RPC only, by the traditional method of projecting the percentage of respondents that read to the universe population and dividing by circulation: the four magazines averaged 3.65 readers per copy.

The 1955 CCPR study measured audiences aged 15 years and over (as had the CARF study) but added segmentation of primary readers for the first time in Canada, together with a cross-check of circulation to receipt of magazines by sample households, which gave an indication of how close we came to finding the number of copies expected for the circulation. There was virtually no difference in total readers per copy, but we now had primary readers per copy.

FIGURE 1

Readers per copy: average findings for four magazines that have been included in major group studies in the past 29 years (*Maclean's Magazine*, *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Weekend Magazine/Today*)



* Addition of 13-14 year age group increases universe by approximately 6% - only primary readers measured which were established by 'Cover recognition claim'.

** Addition of 12 year age group (to tie in with BBM measurement) increases universe by 3%.

*** Based on adjusted primary + 'found' secondary readers.

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In the succeeding few years two more studies done by the same man (CCPR 1957 and CSPA 1962) used basically the same techniques and produced amazing consistency for the four magazines.

In 1968, however, the Magazine Audience Bureau produced a study using a reader qualification system that had been discarded in the 1940s: this did not do a cross-check to circulation. So we saw obviously impossible primary readers per copy (more than there were persons per household) and the highest total RPC produced to date.

In the same year (1968) an independent study, Trendtape I, measured primary readers only, using a simple claimed readership based on cover recognition. This used a slightly larger universe, aged 13 and over, and showed 2.54 primary readers per copy, as compared with the MAB figure of 2.65 on a smaller universe. This study produced logical readers per copy found in the survey which were multiplied by known circulations to produce total numbers of readers.

For the two following studies (Trendtape II and Trendtape III) it was found that total readers per copy would have to be measured as well as primary, since publishers being what we are want the bigger figures. However, these studies were not universally accepted, and the researcher concerned decided to leave the scene.

At this point the Print Measurement Bureau was formed. In PMB I we continued to do what these previous studies had done, having corrected primary readers per copy found in the study. But we followed the traditional method of projecting to the universe whatever share of the sample qualified as readers, and then dividing by circulation for total readers per copy. The intermediate figure (in brackets) is what would have happened if we had taken corrected primary readers per copy (using actual primary readers per copy found in the sample multiplied by actual circulation to produce a corrected or weighted primary audience) and then counted sound secondary readers per copy. We would have been virtually in direct correlation with the previous two Trendtape studies.

The second PMB study followed the same techniques, and produced fairly consistent figures. And for PMB III, which Hans Vorster described in Session I, we have made some major changes and improvements, so that we have brought total readers per copy down to 3.76 and primary down to 1.95 – both of them looking closer to reality than ever before. But a lot of publishers do not believe that, want to use the largest possible numbers, and insist that the total audience be estimated by the traditional method which ignores the adjustment made for primary readers.