

ARF's RESEARCH INITIATIVE FOR MAGAZINE MEASUREMENT (RIMM)

Gabe Samuels, Advertising Research Foundation

Background

PRISM One, (Print Research Industry Stakeholders' Meeting) was convened in late June this year, as the third and most exciting part of an industry initiative first proposed at the ARF Magazine Research Council on November 15th, 1996. This paper will summarize the proceedings of this conference and the plan of action that has emerged at this ground breaking event.

RIMM – (Research Initiatives for Magazine Measurement) -- was the ARF's answer to mounting concern in the magazine industry about the credibility, utility and usage of currently available syndicated magazine research data in the United States.

The first initiative – to publish a book chronicling the complete history of magazine research -- is on the back burner due to the enormity of the task, coupled with increasing doubts as to the need for this work. The second initiative has been accomplished: a qualitative research among key people assessing and prioritizing the wants and needs of the users of magazine research data. This research was presented at PRISM and the highlights are included in the discussion below.

Magazine industry concerns were voiced in a number of well publicized articles in the national trade press and addressed by the Magazine Publishers Association (MPA) through their Research Task Force. Another forum where concerns were raised and proposed solutions were aired was the ARF Magazine Research Workshop, held in New York in January 22nd, this year.

In March, ARF staff held discussions with the three industry associations most closely related to magazine advertising issues: the MPA, the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) and the Association of National Advertisers (ANA). All three organizations agreed to support a limited - by invitation only -- conference in June to be called PRISM One. The expectations of the trade organizations was that this will provide a platform for airing differences and create a process, or processes, for resolving them.

Initial reactions of invitees to PRISM were not encouraging. Many felt that they have heard it all before and that sitting with and talking to our peers is not likely to accomplish much. Those early impressions were proven wrong. While clearly coming from different points of view, most participants (as evidenced by a secret electronic ballot) were "glad they came" . By very wide margins, too, they voted their support for the three initiatives that are listed below.

The Prism Proceedings

The overall, final impression at the close of two days intense of deliberations, is that participants at the meeting -- some 70 leaders in the US print industry -- agreed that the quality of the currently available syndicated readership studies is quite good. At the same time, there was no argument, however, that improvements and efforts to discourage misuse of the data would be welcomed by all.

They further acknowledged that these studies are not merely audience studies but are rather brand and product databases, something which is of great value to agencies. Some have suggested that the market would benefit from two types of studies: an audience ratings service and an omnibus/product usage study. The ratings service would be used for planning and buying, and will include basic demos, and category usage data. The omnibus service would be used for targeting and profiling and would include overall media usage (time spent, day parts, other media), lifestyles, attitudes, psychographics, category usage, and brand usage.

At the opening, Gabe Samuels, Senior Vice President for Research of the ARF, delivered some light-hearted opening remarks, stressing, never-the-less, the need to work together for the good of the industry.

J Kosanke, Director of Worldwide Media Operations of IBM, provided an Advertiser view of magazine audience research. His comments are summarized as follows:

1. There is an apparent trend for the "numbers" to be ignored by clients because, first, this is handled by their agency, but also because they are more interested in the creative process of media planning. This devalues the "currency" which is what magazine audience research has become to both buyers and sellers.
2. Clients need "new" and more useful information about magazines, going beyond audiences and demographics.

3. Education - agency planners need training. Research skills are often not up to the task.
4. The ultimate perception, though, is that the numbers are generally accurate.

Beth Uyenco, Vice President, Media Research Director of DDB Needham, provided an Agency point of view: -- Current syndicated research studies are used for buying, as well as planning. And, therefore, most – if not all – of the data is required.

Jane Bailey, Director of Advertising Research of Time Inc., thanked the ARF for their persistence in getting this meeting together and bringing all sides to the table. SMRB and MRI do pretty good jobs, she said. These studies, however, are not strictly “print” studies, they are product usage studies, as well.

Kathi Love, Vice President, Research of the MPA, and Susan Smollens, Vice President, Research & Marketing Services of Hachette Filipacchi Magazines, presented the current draft of the MPA task Force White Paper which provided the most comprehensive analysis of data, as well as recommendations to the industry.

Ted Dunn, Technical Research Director of the ARF, presented USERS TALK BAOUT MAGAZINE AUDIENCE RESEARCH, the One-on-One Qualitative Study that he conducted in May and June as the second part of the RIMM initiative. According to the study, users at a high level in their organizations identify the following needs as priorities:

- Produce Standards for Subscriber and Other Publisher Studies
- Conduct Studies to Improve Magazine Audience Research on:

Title Confusion, Stability and Validity

- Provide Appropriate Education for Advertiser Users and Inexperienced Media Planners and Researchers
- Improve General Audience Magazine Research by:
 - Smaller Surveys by Categories
 - Continuous Studies
 - Timeliness
 - Passive Electronic Measures
 - Modeling
 - Subscriber Vs. Readers
- Develop a Uniform Qualitative Study

Jim Spaeth, President of the ARF, discussed the two days’ agenda starting with this stated objective:

To build on the efforts started by the MPA Task Force, to achieve a broad consensus on the issues among all segments of the industry and to propose concrete, actionable strategies towards solutions.

Jim then went on to assign the following tasks to participants who were assigned to five separate groups:

Identify and prioritize magazine business issues which could be positively impacted by magazine audience research:
[these issues must be...]

- achievable
- in everyone’s common interest
- list them first, qualify them second
- prepare to present your list with rationale
in one hour & 40 minutes (until 5:30)

A lively discussion ensued, following which some balloting took place with participants assigning scores of 1 to 5 to various issues that were proposed from the floor. Here are the (un-retouched) results of the initial votes:

	<u>MEAN IMPORTANCE SCORE</u>
• Training	3.9
• Minimum reporting standards	3.5
• Credibility	4.4
• Scope of syndicated research	3.9
• Positioning research in business decisions	3.2
• Targeting & profiling	3.5
• Ad selection & placement	3.5
• Ad effectiveness	3.1
• Volatility	3.8
• Timeliness	3.0
• Identify business issues	3.8

- Data needs vs. Data quality 4.3
- Measurement tool 3.6
- Who pays and why 3.4
- How many titles 3.0

Based on the above results, the five highest rated tasks were assigned to each of the five groups as follows:

- A. Credibility
- B. Business Issues
- C. Data Needs Vs Quality
- D. Measurement Process
- E. Scope of Research

Thursday's schedule adhered to the original proposed agenda with breakout sessions followed by plenary sessions.

Finally, here's the proposed, written in committee, and never released "Communique" from PRISM One Talks:

The leaders of the print readership research community met for three days, June 25-27 in Rye Brook, New York, to seek opportunities to improve the quality and business usefulness of print/syndicated audience research in the near and long term. The meeting, named the Print Research Industry Stakeholders Meeting, was sponsored by the 4A's, ANA, ARF and MPA. They concluded that –

- While the current research services provide quality data, there are differing and evolving needs among industry segments and limitations to current sources.
- There are opportunities to improve the practices and understanding of the usage of these data
- They hold great optimism for the future evolution of research methods and practices

To realize these opportunities they have agreed to pursue the following initiatives –

- Seek a broad consensus concerning the evolving needs of those industry segments currently using these data.
- Institute a training and education program.
- Establish a mechanism to examine alternatives to current approaches to address future needs.

Proposed ARF Initiatives

1. Business Issues Committee

Jon Swallen, Chair

OBJECTIVES:

To issue a White Paper designed to leverage and extend the consensus achieved at PRISM One. The paper will identify the root cause(s) of current and future problems and include the needs and wants of the various and disparate interested constituencies who have a stake in the print industry. It will then be widely disseminated for comments and additional initiatives.

Following is a paper by the Committee Chair, Jon Swallen with an initial outline of this white paper.

2. Standards and Training Committee

Mitch Lurin, Chair

OBJECTIVES:

To propose industry wide guidelines for appropriate and productive utilization of syndicated magazine research services. To create training programs – including printed materials, training facility and publicity -- promoting the use of the guidelines. Guidelines and training will recognize the varying needs and levels of knowledge among the end users and their managements.

3. PrintLab

Kathi Love	MPA
Charlene Trentham	Business Week
J Kosanke	IBM
Linda Thomas Brooks	GM Mediaworks
Jon Swallen	Ogilvy
Beth Uyenco	DDB Needham

OBJECTIVES:

To establish an independent facility to help identify opportunities for improving magazine audience research, to undertake original research in support of the industry and to look for new solutions (to old and new problems) inherent in new technologies.