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HOW ARE WE DOING?

There are several changes since New Orleans and Montreal that I would like to comment on but, more importantly, in the earlier conferences there was considerably less emphasis on qualitative readership information. This time there are many more papers on quality of reading, and that is important: I think work has to continue in that area.

From my point of view the advertiser does not want to know how many readers he is getting, but rather wants to know the *return* he is getting - the economic return for his dollar invested. And we unfortunately have not known how to measure what that return is directly, so we use surrogate measures. These surrogate measures include audience measurement, reading days, ad page exposures, time spent reading and all kinds of other qualitative measures, but all basically as surrogates.

We see much, much more use of the telephone as a means of collecting data, and this may prove in the long run to be a very efficient means of data collection because we are able to have much better control over the contractor effects, or interviewer effects. But it does require more sophisticated sampling, especially when we are using the telephone for yesterday recall, because there is a relationship between being at home and reading. Therefore we need to have probability weights in the sampling procedure for yesterday, and I am not sure that whether most of the papers here used that kind of sampling procedure. One should check with the work that Audits & Surveys have done with the MPX, or go back to the original Politz work which was based on yesterday and the need for probability sampling.

I have a few comments on the organisation of the Symposium. I for one find it very difficult to listen to papers and then have two minutes discussion on each paper: there is just not enough time. And as we do not receive the papers in advance we cannot study them. So what I would like to suggest for the future is that consideration be given to the notion of smaller working groups, using on-line data - in other words, that as we have access to computers we can play with the data, objectively. People analyse their own data from one point of view: it would be highly desirable at least for me to have Wally's data bank since I find following him to be a little difficult, especially when we use different terminology to talk about the same thing. It would be desirable to spend two days with Wally's data in working groups with access to it, and maybe even two days with JICNARS data, so that we could get into the data and could understand and pose hypotheses with the data.

I do look forward to the notion put up by Per Langhoff of some kind of consistent data collection, some kind of procedure which uses a uniform questioning procedure, or observation procedure, or whatever, but uniform across countries, so that we can really understand what is being done. The emphasis in Montreal was that little changes in questionnaires, in collection procedures, in tabulating procedures, make a lot of changes in audiences. I think the theme that I have been getting here is that lots of changes have little effect. With the EML the whole thing was turned upside down, but I gather (because I have no access to the data) that very little change occurred between the earlier research and the EML findings, so I am a bit confused about that.

I do look forward, one day before I leave this world, to solve the audience problem, whatever that might be: I still refuse to tell my children what I do for a living. But at some point in time we have got to solve that problem and get onto the bigger one, which is ... 'What's the economic return?' 'What works and what doesn't in the market-place?' 'What's the pay out?'