

Analysis of the Readership of The Dalhousie Gazette on Dalhousie Campus, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Envs/Sust 3502 Environmental Problem Solving



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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Methods	8
4. Results	11
5. Discussion	20
6. Conclusion	25
7. Appendix	
a. Survey	29
b. Ethics form	31

Executive Summary

Through our exploratory research on the *Dalhousie Gazette* we aimed to gauge the current readership numbers and identify the reasons why those who are not reading the newspaper choose to do so. After surveying a sample population of almost 400 students using non-probabilistic convenience sampling methods we found several recurring patterns regarding news access, which were supported by a wide body of literature. The sources state that the most popular source for accessing news are beginning to revolve around technology: mobile phones, social media, and the internet (Reuters, 2015). This parallels the results of our study. However, our findings also determined that a small percentage of the population has nostalgia for the paper version of the newspaper. We are not suggesting to completely cease this form of production. Instead, to increase the readership of the *Gazette*, our research suggests addressing awareness and accessibility issues by altering production and marketing strategies in order to reflect the ongoing transition from paper readers to online. These recommendations will ensure that the *Gazette* continues to exist as an important resource to benefit the Dalhousie community in the years to come.

Introduction

The *Dalhousie Gazette* is a student-run campus newspaper at Dalhousie University of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The *Dalhousie Gazette* was established in 1868, making it the longest running campus newspaper in North America (The Dalhousie Gazette, 2016). The newspaper is run by current and graduated students of Dalhousie University, Saint Mary's University, and the University of King's College, as well as several other local education institutions (Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, 2016). The content of the paper covers events on the Dalhousie campus, local universities and events in the Atlantic region (Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, 2016). The *Gazette* is distributed weekly to over 80 locations around Halifax (Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, 2016). Although mostly run by volunteers, the *Gazette* has several paid staff including their Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, Photo Manager and Art Director as well as four Section Editors (Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, 2015). In order to pay staff and production costs, the *Gazette* relies on a student levy and advertising revenue (Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, 2015). In 2015 a \$5.45 student levy from each student generated \$123 000 and advertising income generated approximately \$29 000 (Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, 2015).

The *Dalhousie Gazette* offers many benefits to the Dalhousie and Halifax community. The newspaper gives students from the region valuable publishing, editing and journalism experience, while readers learn about local and regional events, thereby improving and promoting community awareness.

Local newspapers in general have also been found to determine “hot-button” issues for community debates by influencing what the people deem as important (Abernathy, 2014). This is

especially true in the digital age, as readers often become overloaded with information and rely on trusted news sources (Abernathy, 2014). In addition, local newspapers have historically been a mode for regional advertising, as many small businesses rely on the local support that they gain through newspaper advertising (Abernathy, 2014). It has been proposed that even with decreasing print advertising revenues, community newspapers access a direct audience, which benefit small-town businesses more than competitive online advertising mediums (Abernathy, 2014). Finally, local and community newspapers play a very important role in fostering a sense of geographic community in their regions (Abernathy, 2014). A neighbourhood newspaper provides local economic, political and regional news coverage giving readers a better chance to understand how the people within their district are connected and affected by local events (Abernathy, 2014). The *Dalhousie Gazette* as a community newspaper can be assumed to also provide these type of benefits.

Over the past several decades there has been an unequivocal shift in how people access information regarding local and international events (Canada, G. O., 2014). The popularization of smartphones and computers have provided the general public with a wide spectrum of possible news sources, offering services that newsprint may not be able to compete with. As a result, publishers have observed a decline in the readership of newsprint in North America. From 2000-2012, demand in the North American newsprint industry fell by over 65%. Canada was not exempt from this trend, as the demand for Canadian newsprint fell by 58% (Canada, G. O., 2014).

Yet, despite the falling demand for newsprint, a study conducted by the Newspaper Audience Databank showed that the Canadian decline in print readership is being offset by growth in digital readership. The study also found that daily digital readership has tripled to 31% in the

past five years (Press Releases - Vividata, 2015). Considering declining newsprint readership and the increased use of online news outlets, certain universities and college-run newspapers have felt the pressure to stop production of their paper publications (The Gateway, 2016). An example of this is the *Gateway*, the campus newspaper for the University of Alberta. From 2011 to 2015, the *Gateway* saw a steady decline in print advertising revenue, dropping by 16% in 2015 (The Gateway, 2016). The estimated pickup numbers for *The Gateway* also declined from 7000 per week in 2012 to 2500 per week in 2015 (The Gateway, 2016). However, from 2011 to 2015, the number of online page views almost doubled to 242,000 views (The Gateway, 2016). These statistics led the newspaper production team to opt for an online version of their paper supplemented with a monthly feature magazine. The switch drastically decreased resource use and financial costs and increased the environmental and economic sustainability of the newspaper, all without sacrificing the benefits that the *Gateway* offers to students and the surrounding community (The Gateway, 2016).

As previously discussed, the *Dalhousie Gazette* provides many benefits for Dalhousie University and the Halifax community. Yet as we have seen in the case of *The Gateway*, university newspapers are not exempt from declining newsprint readership. It is for this reason that we conducted an exploratory research project examining the readership of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Prior to our research, it had come to our attention that the *Dalhousie Gazette* was already in the process of developing strategies to combat the declining trends in national and local readership. So we decided to gauge readership numbers, community opinion of selling features, barriers to readership and possible improvement techniques. By gauging these parameters we aimed to provide the *Dalhousie Gazette* team with supplementary information that will increase the

effectiveness of their attempt to boost readership through altering the current production and marketing strategies.

Multiple studies in the past have attempted to investigate the tendencies of university students and the media outlets they are choosing to use. A study by Henke (1985) aimed at gauging the attitudes of traditional and non-traditional news and media for college students. Henke suggests that college is a particularly important time for the development of news habits, and understanding how these daily tendencies play a role in future news access is key to accessing these readers. This study used a questionnaire that was distributed to students who read daily news through either traditional (newspapers, magazines) or non-traditional (television) news, and with this data determined the relative importance of each news source through the use of a Likert scale. This study found that non-traditional news sources were ranked as more important than traditional news sources by students. Additionally, the use of non-traditional news sources increased during college years, as students were exposed to different news sources throughout their college careers and subsequently incorporated news sources into their habits (Henke, 1985). A study by Burgoon and Burgoon (1977), investigated the predictors of newspaper readership. This study assessed the impact of community involvement on reader's attitude towards the newspaper and how this corresponded with more frequent use of newspapers. Similar to the above study, a questionnaire was used as the sampling tool. The study found that lack of time, preference for another news outlet, cost, and lack of interest were the major barriers to newspaper use, and that increased newspaper use is associated with increased community involvement.

These two studies provide valuable information that will be incorporated into supporting our exploratory research. These studies have both shown that questionnaire sampling can be an effective tool when gauging readership tendencies, and specifically, that questionnaires can be used to gauge both readership numbers and opinions relating to available news access techniques. The study by Henke provided information regarding the processes that can alter a student's news access tendencies, as well as the news access tendencies themselves. The study by Burgoon and Burgoon (1977) has provided several common reasons why individuals choose not to use newspapers, which we will use as a template for our own research.

Social sustainability is defined as “formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships that actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities” (McKenzie, 2004). The ultimate goal of our research is to improve campus social sustainability by preserving the *Dalhousie Gazette* and all it has to offer to the community.

Methods

Our exploratory research aimed to gauge readership of the *Dalhousie Gazette* and community opinions towards the publication, with an aim of increasing readership and overall resilience. To accomplish this a combination of archival data acquired from the *Dalhousie Gazette*, case studies from other universities, literature reviews, and an eight question survey were used. The survey was a total of eight questions, enough to fit on one page, composed of a variety of open-ended and close-ended questions (Appendix A). Our survey constant was that the respondents are community members and were present at various sample areas. The questions in the survey asked whether the subject read the *Dalhousie Gazette* and how often, and if not why. The

questions also asked whether the subject reads primarily the online or paper versions of the *Dalhousie Gazette* and why. We also asked for information regarding how readership would change in certain situations: including increased social media presence, strictly online presence or strictly paper version.

Sampling locations were chosen based on high traffic areas of Studley campus in Halifax. Sampling occurred in groups of two, for moral support and greater noticeability than sampling alone, which was based on evidence gathered from a pilot study. The locations sampled included: the Killam Library, the Student Union Building, the Life Sciences Centre, the Rowe Building, the Computer Science Building, the Dalplex, the Law Library, the Wallace McCain Building, and the Marion McCain Arts and Sciences building.

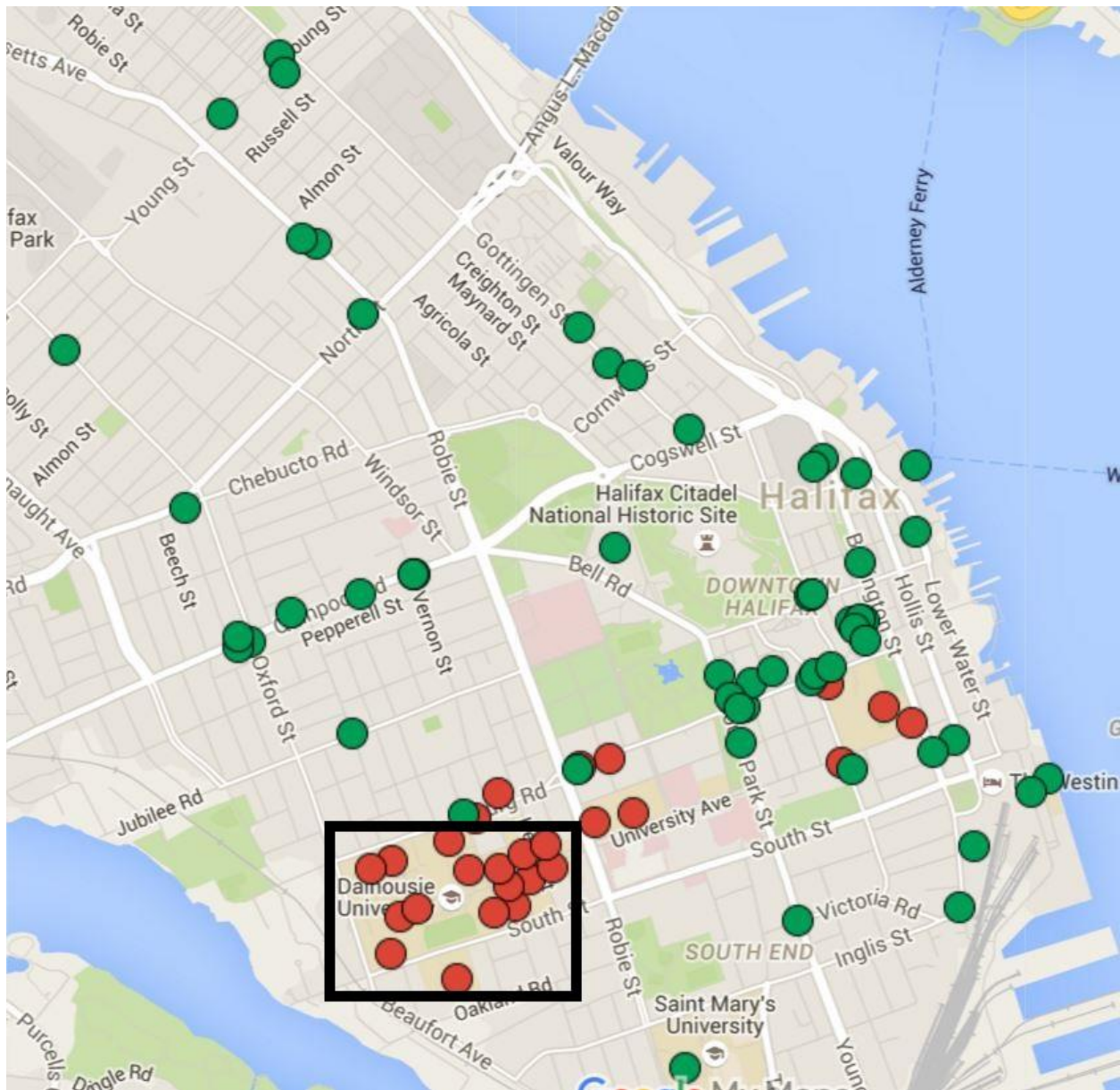


Figure 1. *Dalhousie Gazette* distribution locations and our sample area created in Google Maps. Red dots represent regular dispensing spots. Black box represents the sampling area covered.

The sampling was carried out using convenience non-probabilistic methods, which involved approaching subjects and asking them if they would have the time to complete a survey. Pencil-and-paper questionnaire was a relatively easy way to gather our data. Questionnaire sampling in similar studies had also proven to be an effective method (Henke, 1985) (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1977). Paper is cheap and it is easy to transport, and thus was the easiest way to amass large

amounts of data very quickly (Palys & Atchison, 2013). This was important as sampling time was limited. The information from opinion based questions required an ethical review prior to sampling (Appendix A). Respondents were not forced to complete the survey, and all questions pertaining to the research were explained to ensure understanding. We ensured that survey participants remained anonymous by not collecting any identifying information. By not discriminating against any participants, we ensured all three principles of research ethics were maintained throughout all sampling activities.

Procedure for analysis

The readership of the *Dalhousie Gazette* was determined by calculating how many respondents replied ‘yes’ to reading either the online or paper version, and determining the percentage of those individuals out of the total sample size. The reasons why people did not read the *Gazette* were determined using coding, as previously discussed. The totals for each coded response were then tallied and the relative proportion of each was determined and used for suggestions. For the several count-based data calculation: the readership, primary version, frequency of readership, likelihood of increased or decreased readership, the counts were calculated and displayed using bar charts produced in Excel. For the proportional information: news access trends breakdown, reasons for not reading the *Dalhousie Gazette*, respondents whose readership would increase with increased social media presence, and the explanations for why these respondents readership would increase or decrease with strictly online or paper publications, these categories were determined and assembled into pie charts.

Results

Figure 2 below indicates that a majority (82%) of surveyed individuals access their preferred news sources via platforms that utilize the internet (31% social media, 29% online news website, 22% mobile application), while paper and television sources made up respectively 9% and 8% of the surveyed population. Other was composed of alternative ways of accessing news not represented in our choices i.e. radio, and via conversations.

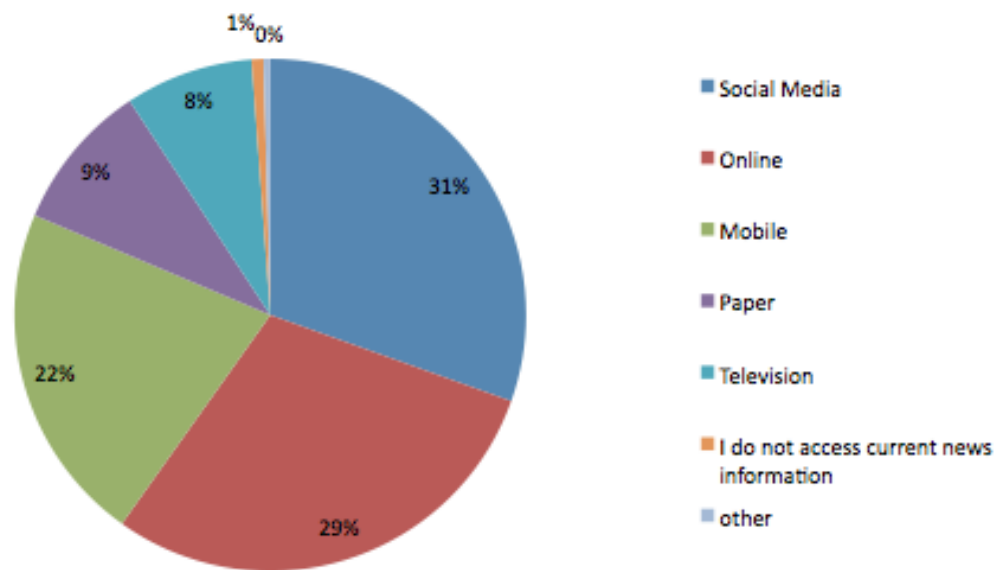


Figure 2. Composition of news sources utilized by surveyed individuals on Dalhousie's Studley campus. Those that did not fall under the categories were labelled as others, giving responses such as TV, Radio or word of mouth. Halifax, NS 2016.

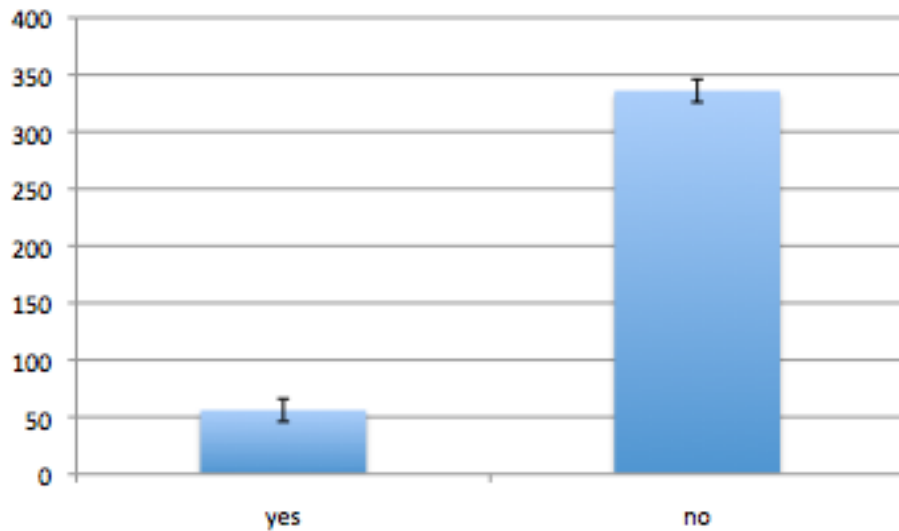


Figure 3. Proportion of people sampled on the basis of if they read or do not read the *Dalhousie Gazette* on Studley campus. Halifax, NS 2016.

The data collected and expressed as Figure 3 above shows that a significant population, ~86% do not read the *Dalhousie Gazette* while ~14% do. Using inductive, open coding, we were able to separate responses to give explanations why respondents did not read the *Gazette* into six major themes. The coding themes can be seen in Table 1. The theme “other” refers to responses that were not viable, reliable answers or represented opinions not transferable to our coding scheme.

Table 1

Coding scheme used for analysis of respondents explanations for not reading the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Halifax, NS 2016.

#	Code
1	Not Interested
2	Accessibility
3	No Time/ Too Busy
4	Not Aware
5	Do not appreciate writing style

6	Other
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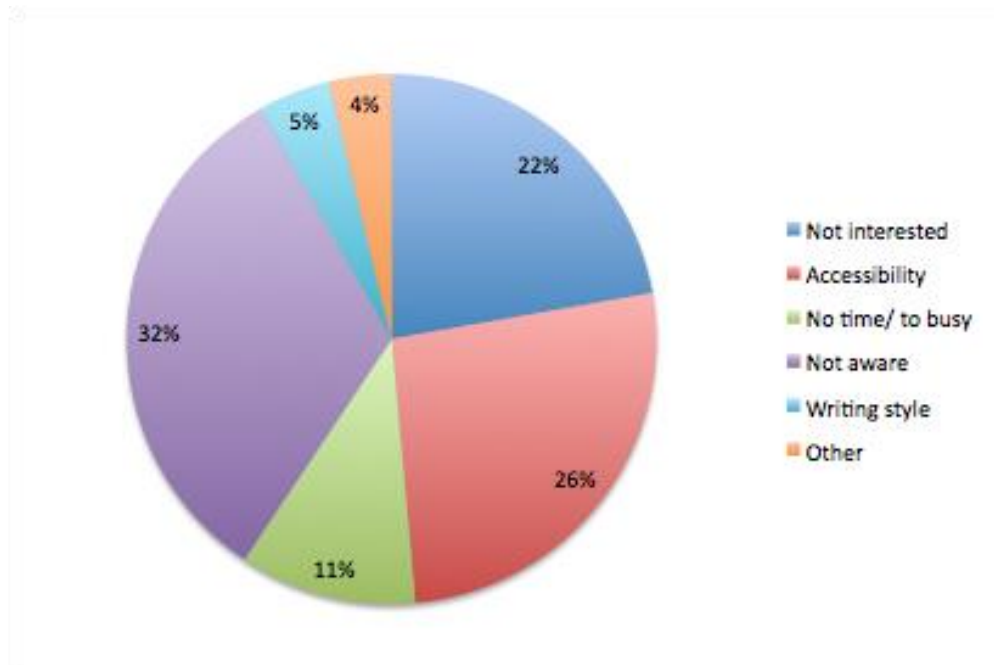


Figure 4. The population of surveyors that do not read the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Divided into proportions of sampled responses based on our Inductive Coding. For responses that did not fall under the defined categories there is little focus given because the responses did not help attain the goal of the research question. Halifax, NS 2016.

Analysis of the responses indicate that the two biggest reasons individuals did not read the *Gazette* were: lack of awareness (32%) and lack of accessibility (26%) (Fig 4). This represents 58% of what responders indicated as why they do not read the paper.

Out of the individuals who noted that they read the *Gazette* in both online and paper form, a greater number of respondents (23) stated that they preferred the paper version over the digital version, while 15 of them expressed their preference for the digital version, and a very small portion, (3) said that they enjoyed both publications equally — as seen in Figure 5 below.

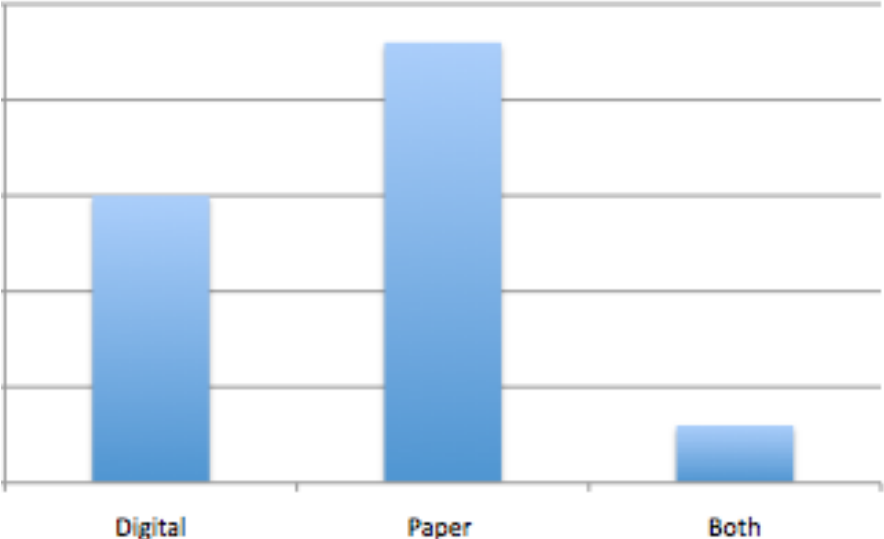


Figure 5. Proportion of individuals who read both forms of the *Dalhousie Gazette* and their preferred publication, if there was one. Halifax, NS 2016.

When asked how frequently they read the *Dalhousie Gazette*, the greatest number of respondents (20 for online and 21 for paper) indicated that they read the *Dalhousie Gazette* less than once a month. Online readership surpassed paper readership for “bi-weekly”, and “once a month”, however, paper readership greatly surpassed online for “Every Publication”, with one respondent for the online version and seven respondents for the paper version (Fig 6).

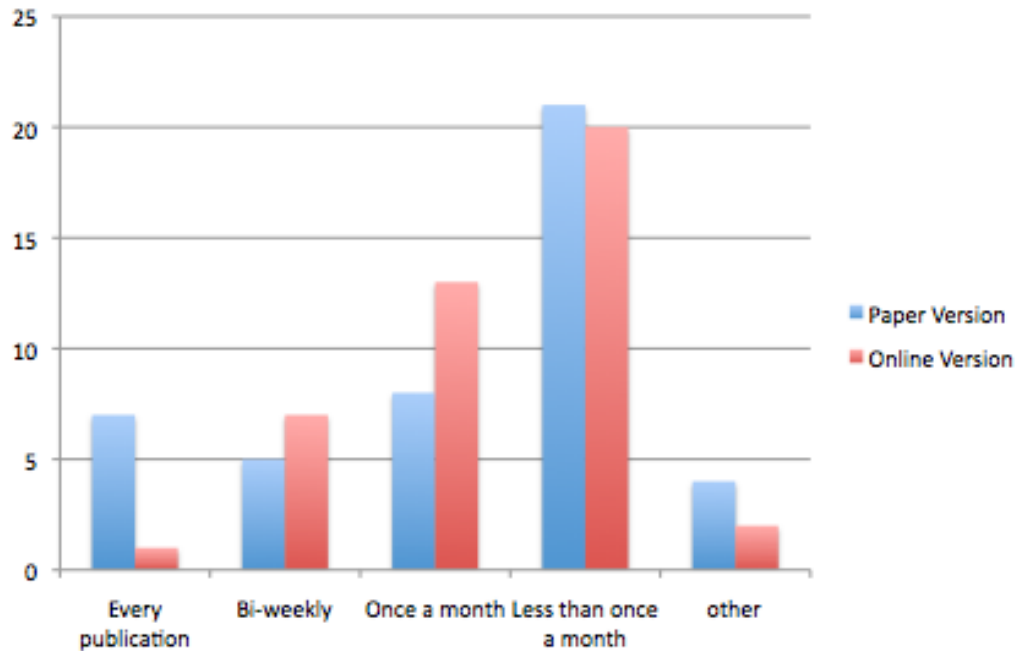


Figure 6. A measure of the readership frequencies comparing between paper and online versions of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Halifax, NS 2016.

When asked if an increased presence of the *Dalhousie Gazette* on social media would affect readership, a significant portion of the surveyed population (77%) said that it would increase readership to differing degrees, with 27% indicating that it would greatly increase readership and 50% indicating that it would somewhat increase readership numbers (Fig 7).

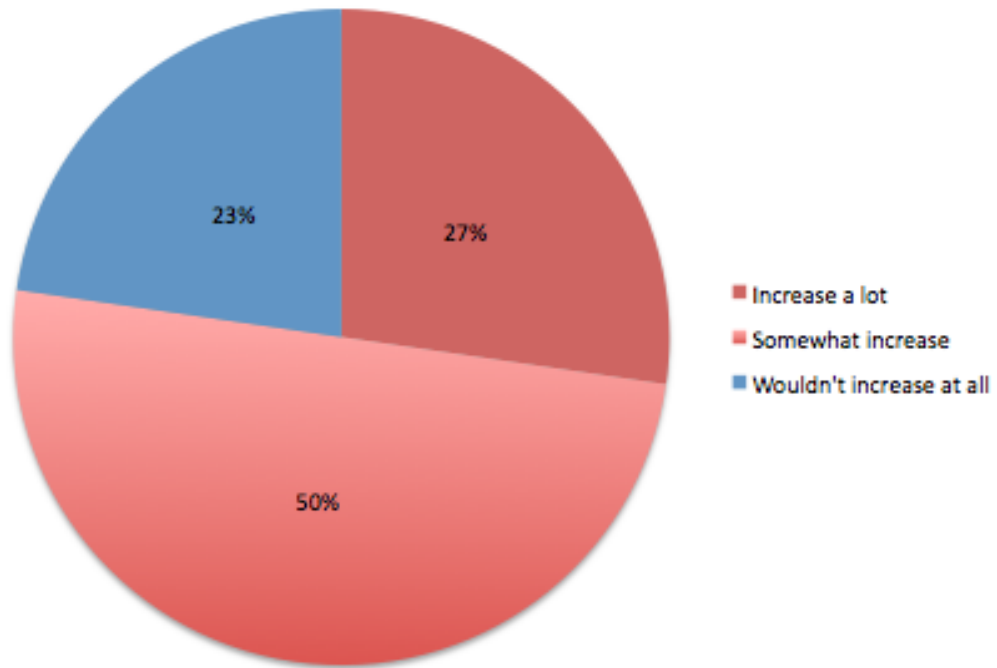


Figure 7. Surveyed responses based on whether or not increased social media presence would affect readership of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Halifax, NS 2016.

As seen in Figure 8, when respondents were asked the likelihood that their readership would increase if the Gazette was only online, the responses showed a mode of “Likely”.

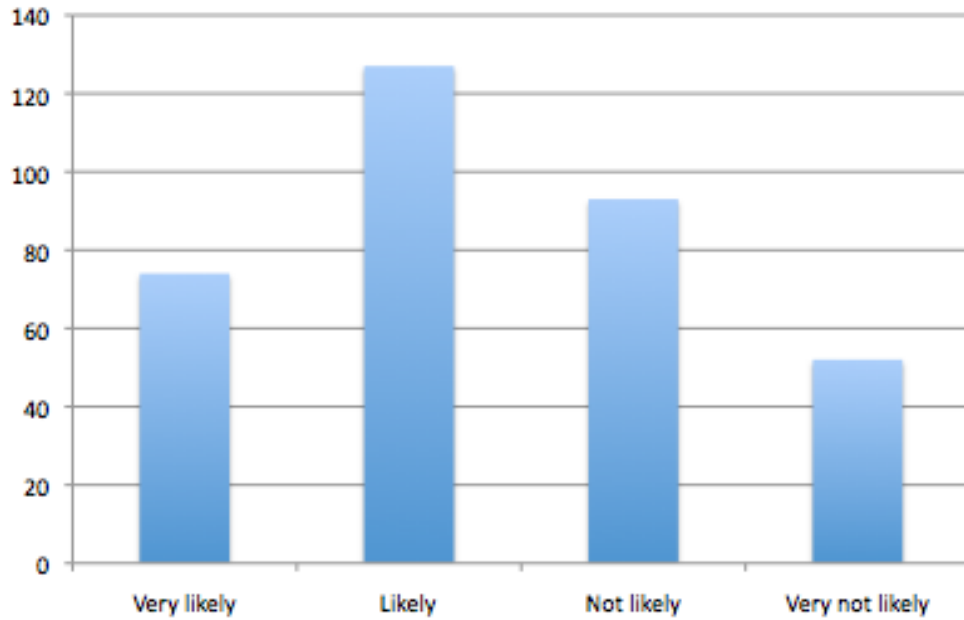


Figure 8. Projected likelihood of readership if the *Dalhousie Gazette* were to switch to only an online version. Halifax, NS 2016.

The explanations for the responses present in Figure 8 can be seen in Figure 9. From this graph it is apparent that the 46% indicated that the convenience of online was reason for their response, while a significant proportion (26%) indicated that they do not read it currently. Explanations such as preferring online (12%) and already an online reader (10%) were also given.

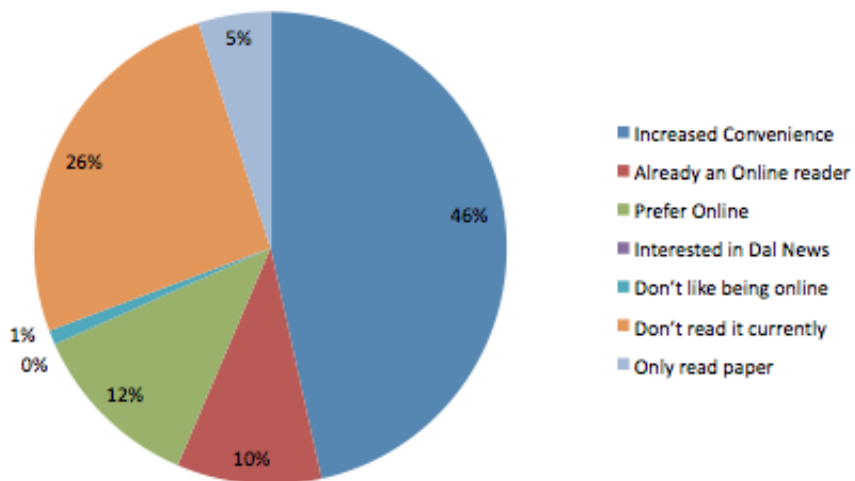


Figure 9. Coded reasons and their proportions for why a transition to an online version only of the *Dalhousie Gazette* may or may not affect readership. Halifax, NS 2016.

Similarly to Figure 8, when respondents were asked the likelihood that their readership would increase if the *Gazette* was only on paper, the responses showed a mode of “Very Not Likely”(Figure 10).

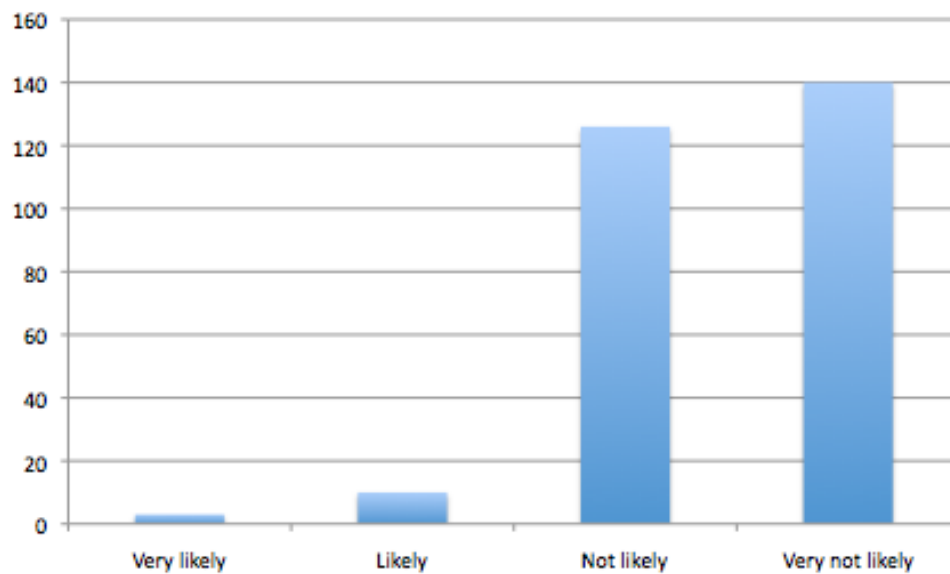


Figure 10. Projected likelihood of readership if the *Dalhousie Gazette* were to switch to only a paper version. Halifax, NS 2016.

The explanations for the responses present in Figure 10 can be seen in Figure 11. From this graph it is apparent that the 36% indicated that the reason their readership would decrease as they currently do not read the paper version, while a significant proportion (26%) indicated that they do not like being online, so their readership may increase. Explanations such as prefer online (9%) and already and online reader (13%) were also given as reasons why readership would decrease.

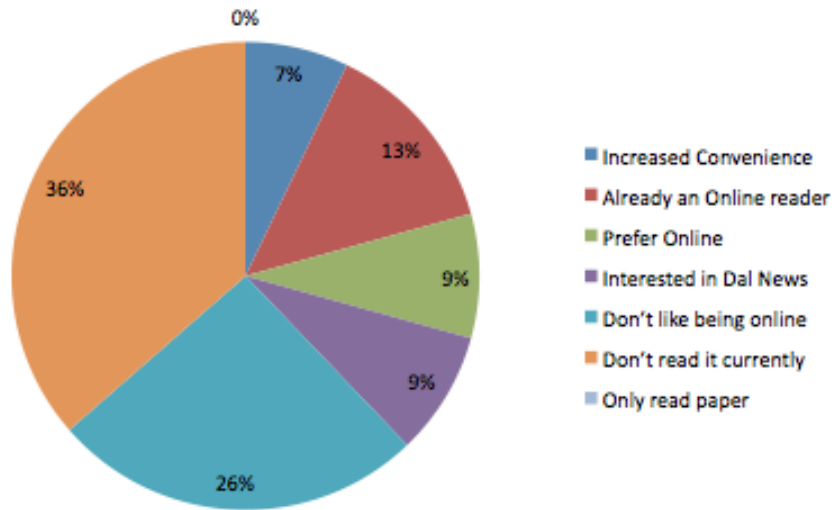


Figure 11. Coded responses why a transition to a paper version only of the *Dalhousie Gazette* may or may not affect readership. Halifax, NS 2016.

Discussion

Current readership

Our research study shows that 85.7% of the 392 people sampled do not read the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Of the 14.3% who do read, they tend to read less than once a month. These results indicate low overall readership of the *Gazette* (Fig 3). Of the population who indicated that they read both the paper and the online version of the newspaper, the majority stated that they primarily read the paper version (Fig 6). Survey responses also show clear interest in both paper and online versions of the newspaper, and there was a sizeable group that preferred reading paper copies to online versions. It is therefore safe to assume that the *Gazette* will benefit from continuing to provide paper copies of the newspaper. However, given reader habits, there is significant room for growth in online readership. Although paper is an important part of the publication, the market for paper is limited by a small paper reader community.

Current news access trends

The results of our study show that a large majority of individuals access their current events through pathways such as social media, online websites and mobile applications. Our study found that getting news through technology was much more common in our sample population than through paper; 73% of respondents listed social media, 70% listed online and 50% listed mobile phone applications, while only 22% listed paper as a news source (Fig 2). This indicates that social media may be the preferred source of news for the sample population. There was a much smaller percentage who indicated that paper or television techniques were their source for accessing the news. Our findings are consistent with the current nationally observed news trends identified by the Government of Canada and NADbank, which as previously discussed, illustrate the falling demand in paper newsprint use and increased use of online news access methods such

as social media and online news websites (Fig 2). Additionally, we discovered that an overwhelming amount of individuals did access the news in some form highlighting that low readership was not strictly due to participants not accessing news but rather due to specific issues with the *Gazette* — such as accessibility and lack of awareness. Our findings are also consistent with the findings from Henke (1985) that state the use of non-traditional news sources increases throughout the college career. Although we did not assess the change of readership access types throughout the college career, we did observe a large number of individuals using social media and online news sources. Finally, our results are consistent with the results found by the Reuters institute (2015), which for the United States found that social media and online websites are the most popular online news access techniques (Reuters, 2015). Our results aligned with this data, but were slightly different as we found a much larger number of individuals who use mobile application than the Reuters study (Reuters, 2015). Our data could differ to these studies due to the large student population present in our sample population.

In regards to our findings, we concluded that the majority of the news readers in our study now use online and technology based systems to access news, providing great incentives for the *Dalhousie Gazette* to increase and enlarge its presence in these areas.

Barriers to Access

Using an a posteriori coding scheme, we divided the variety of reasons provided for not reading the *Gazette* into six major categories (Table 1). The two most frequently cited codes for not reading fell into the category of “Unaware of the *Dalhousie Gazette*” and “Low Accessibility.”

Quite simply, a number of respondents cited that they did not know where to find the *Gazette* and or had not heard of it. The greatest barrier that we observed to the *Dalhousie Gazette's* readership is therefore visibility; there is widespread ignorance that a Dalhousie student newspaper exists. However, a significant portion of individuals indicated lack of interest and lack of time for their reasons for not reading the *Dalhousie Gazette*, and a minute portion indicated that they either did not like the writing style or other, with other being people's opinions that did not fall into our coding scheme. The answers were mostly unrecognizable or were of an unrelated matter to the question asked. These findings are similar to the ones found by: Burgoon and Burgoon (1977), where they found that accessibility, lack of time, lack of interest, and preference for another news media were the main reasons individuals used to indicate why they did not use newspapers as a news source. They did not come across any individuals who used "not aware" to explain their lack of readership, yet this is expected as a very small amount of people have never heard a newspaper in a general term while the *Dalhousie Gazette* refers to a specific newspaper. Our findings suggest that to improve readership, the main areas of focus should be increasing community knowledge of the *Dalhousie Gazette* as well as facilitating the easier access to the online and newsprint version. With people indicating accessibility as a major hindrance to them not reading the *Dalhousie Gazette*, even if it is available around their location, educating people of its locations would seem to benefit the paper and the readers.

Potential for Future Readers

Several of our findings indicated the potential for increased future readership by increasing online based publications. It was found that 77% of respondents stated that their readership would increase if the *Dalhousie Gazette* had a stronger online social media presence (question 6

data). This is coherent with our results previously discussed where we found that social media was the largest form of news access used. Our study also found that readers would likely (Fig 7) read the *The Dalhousie Gazette* if it was only available online, while readers would not very likely (Fig 8) read *The Dalhousie Gazette* if it was only available in print. The largest portion of explanations for the affinity for the online version were due to the increased convenience of the online version (Fig 8). The largest proportion of explanations for the disdain of the paper version were that the respondents do not currently read the *Gazette* and would not likely read it in the future (Fig 10). Although our team had no intention of discontinuing either the paper or the online publication, these results show that there is a general affinity towards the online version among respondents. This may be due to the preference for online based news sources.

Both the high proportion of readers who indicated social media would increase readership and the findings related to the affinity for online version further suggest a possibility for increased readership through greater expansion of the online publication. The biggest concern for the paper learned from our study is that people do not know how to access the paper and in some cases people have not even heard of the publication. These issues should be addressed and a future study could be designed around how best to address these concerns.

Issues With Our Research

Due to limitations on sample locations our sample populations may not have reflected the overall distribution of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. As seen in Figure 1 in our methods section, our sample area comprised a very small area of the geographic availability of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. So our results could be biased towards the opinions of mostly Dalhousie students, and could not actually be reflective of the overall distribution of readers of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. A future study could

incorporate a sampling distribution that better reflects the distribution of the *Dalhousie Gazette* and includes a more diverse sample. Additionally, a future study could look into the best methods for increasing readership based on concerns addressed from our findings. With major reasons for not reading the *Gazette* being focused on awareness and accessibility, the study could look at best addressing these issues.

Conclusion

This research project used feedback from individuals across Dalhousie's Studley Campus in order to further the goals set out by the *Dalhousie Gazette* to increase readership. The intended goal of this project was to learn more about how the oldest campus newspaper in North America could better meet the needs of modern readers. Our aim was to benefit the *Dalhousie Gazette* by gathering information that would inform future strategies for connecting with students.

We gathered data in order to learn how students access current events, and to assess student reading habits. We surveyed a representative portion of the Dalhousie community population in order to determine the number of students who currently read the *Gazette*, and which platforms have proven most successful in attracting readers.

Over the course of the survey, it became apparent that the greatest barrier to readership is visibility: respondents either had not heard of the *Dalhousie Gazette* or did not know where to find it. Our findings indicate that students value access to paper newspapers; the responses indicate that students want to be able to access the *Gazette* both in paper and online. However, respondents showed significant interest in seeing the *Gazette* better represented online.

Moving forward, our team suggests that the *Gazette's* growth strategy would benefit from increased social media presence, which would allow students to share articles among their

friends and increase name-recognition. The *Gazette* currently has a limited Instagram which follows very few students, and rarely posts updates and articles on their Facebook or Twitter pages. The *Gazette* must work to forge a greater connection with students, as many survey respondents reported low awareness of the *Gazette* or their endeavours.

It is our hope that these recommendations will be useful to the *Dalhousie Gazette* as they move forward.

We would like to thank all those who participated in our surveys and focus groups. The information and help which Gabe Flaherty provided us from the *Dalhousie Gazette* was invaluable. We would also like to acknowledge the guidance and support of our professor, Tara Wright, whose mentorship was invaluable throughout this process. We also extend our thanks to Eliza Jackson, whose patience and enthusiasm encouraged us and guided our efforts all the way though.

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Appendix A

Survey

1. How do you access current news information (check all that apply)?
 - Social Media (Facebook, Twitter etc.)
 - Online
 - Mobile
 - Paper
 - Television
 - I do not access current news information
 - Other (please indicate): _____
2. Do you read the *Dalhousie Gazette*?
 - Yes No
3. If **no**, briefly explain why?

4. If **yes**, how frequently do you read the *Dalhousie Gazette*?

Online Version	Paper Version
<input type="checkbox"/> Every publication	<input type="checkbox"/> Every publication
<input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly
<input type="checkbox"/> Once a month	<input type="checkbox"/> Once a month
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a month	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a month
Other (please explain): _____	Other (please explain): _____
5. If you read both, which version do you **primarily** use?
 - Paper Version
 - Online Version
 - Read Both Equally
6. To what degree would a stronger presence of the *Dalhousie Gazette* on social media increase your readership?
Increases a lot Somewhat increase Wouldn't increase at all
7. How likely would you read the *Dalhousie Gazette* if it was **ONLY** available online?
 - Very Likely
 - Likely
 - Not Likely
 - Very Not Likely
 - Please Explain _____
8. How Likely would you read the *Dalhousie Gazette* if it was **ONLY** available in print?
 - Very Likely
 - Likely
 - Not Likely

Very Not Likely
Please Explain _____

Ethics Application

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES
FACULTY OF SCIENCE
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
UNDERGRADUATE THESES AND IN NON-THESIS COURSE PROJECTS

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Title of Project: Multi-Component Analysis of the Dalhousie Gazette

2. Faculty Supervisor(s) Dr. Tarah Wright Department: Environmental Science
TA Eliza Jackson
e-mail: tarah.wright@dal.ca
e-mail: eliza.jackson@dal.ca

3. Student Investigator(s) Department e-mail: Local Telephone
Number:
Billy Rae Rattray Environmental Science billy.rae.rattray@dal.ca 902-240-3945
Sarah Sutton Environmental Science sarah.sutton@dal.ca 902-818-9704
Caitrin Pilkington Sustainability caitrin.pilkington@gmail.com 902-449-0176
Michael Martino Biology martino.michael99@gmail.com 514-996-7310
Kevin Duffin Environmental Science Kevin.duffin95@gmail.com 902-412-2870

4. Level of Project:
Non-thesis Course Project [x] Undergraduate [] Graduate Specify course and number:
_ENVS 3502_____

5. a. Indicate the anticipated commencement date for this project: __March 04,
2016_____

- b. Indicate the anticipated completion date for this project: __April 12,
2016_____

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. Purpose and Rationale for Proposed Research

Briefly describe the purpose (objectives) and rationale of the proposed project and include any hypothesis (es)/research questions to be investigated.

While media was predominantly circulated through magazines and newspapers in the past, readership in these traditional media sources have been declining steadily with the continued growth of the internet and popularity of online media and their apps (Palys & Atchison, p. 119, 2014). Paper issues of newspapers incur a significantly greater amount of costs, use up a greater amount of energy and resources, and can be made just as easily accessed by an online issue. The focus of our study is to analyze the validity of the paper issue of the Dal Gazette. We want to measure the costs and benefits of the paper issue, to analyze how people feel about it, and how many people actually read it. With our overall goal aimed at reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the newspaper, based on recommendations we make from our research data.

2. Methodology/Procedures

a. *Which of the following procedures will be used? Provide a copy of all materials to be used in this study..*

- Survey(s) or questionnaire(s) (mail-back)
- Survey(s) or questionnaire(s) (in person)
- Computer-administered task(s) or survey(s)
- Interview(s) (in person)
- Interview(s) (by telephone)
- Focus group(s)
- Audio taping
- Videotaping
- Analysis of secondary data (no involvement with human participants)
- Unobtrusive observations
- Other, specify _____

b. *Provide a brief, sequential description of the procedures to be used in this study. For studies involving multiple procedures or sessions, the use of a flow chart is recommended.*

3. Participants Involved in the Study

a. *Indicate who will be recruited as potential participants in this study.*

- Dalhousie Participants: Undergraduate students
 Graduate students

- Non-Dal Participants: Faculty and/or staff
 Children
 Adolescents
 Adults
 Seniors
 Persons in Institutional Settings (e.g. Nursing Homes, Correctional Facilities)
 Other (specify) _____

b. Describe the potential participants in this study including group affiliation, gender, age range and any other special characteristics. If only one gender is to be recruited, provide a justification for this.

Faculty, staff or student at Dalhousie University. The participants will encompass only those who physically go to classes or work on campus in Halifax. The Truro campus will be excluded. No gender or special considerations will be needed. Likely participants will mostly be students due to sheer volume.

c. How many participants are expected to be involved in this study? _____377_____

4. Recruitment Process and Study Location

a. From what source(s) will the potential participants be recruited?

- Dalhousie University undergraduate and/or graduate classes
 Other Dalhousie sources (specify) ___Inside buildings i.e. killam._____
 Local School Boards
 Halifax Community
 Agencies
 Businesses, Industries, Professions
 Health care settings, nursing homes, correctional facilities, etc.
 Other, specify (e.g. mailing lists) _____

b. Identify who will recruit potential participants and describe the recruitment process.

Provide a copy of any materials to be used for recruitment (e.g. posters(s), flyers, advertisement(s), letter(s), telephone and other verbal scripts).

Participants will be recruited by Kevin, Billy Rae, Michael, Sarah, and Caitrin. We will have copies of the questionnaire available for each respondent (see appendix for questionnaire). We will have a table with a sign set up advertising our survey about readership of the Dal Gazette and the offer of a free cookie for completion. We may also canvass students walking by asking if they will complete our questionnaire. Verbal communication will be needed to bring attention to our booth and will not discriminate based on any age or set criteria as we are not looking at this in our research.

5. Compensation of Participants

Will participants receive compensation (financial or otherwise) for participation? Yes
 No

If **Yes**, provide details:

Upon completion of our short questionnaire participants may take a free desert (most likely a cookie). Notice will be issued on the subject of nut allergies etc. Proper safety will be ensured.

6. Feedback to Participants

Briefly describe the plans for provision of feedback and attach a copy of the feedback letter to be used. Wherever possible, written feedback should be provided to study participants including a statement of appreciation, details about the purpose and predictions of the study, contact information for the researchers, and the ethics review and clearance statement.

Note: When available, a copy of an executive summary of the study outcomes also should be provided to participants.

Participants personal information will not be taken. A small slip of paper outlining why we are doing the sampling will be available with the cookie.

Thank you for participating in our survey. The data we collect will be used to do an analysis on readership of the Dal Gazette. We are aiming at decreasing the environmental footprint of the campus newspaper. This information will aid us in our overall analysis. Please enjoy a cookie for your time!

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FROM THE STUDY

1. Identify and describe any known or anticipated direct benefits to the participants from their involvement in the project.

By participating they will receive a delicious cookie if they so desire. But, they will also contribute to better understanding the readership of the Dal Gazette to allow us to make recommendations on the best course of action to reduce waste and be more sustainable.

2. Identify and describe any known or anticipated benefits to society from this study.

This study aims to improve upon the sustainability of the campus newspaper. By completing this study we will be able to make recommendations on the best course of action for achieving this. Forms of improvement could entail less paper waste. Improvement upon the type of paper used. Or even recommendations to improve on online presence to reduce upon the paper issue. Our study doesn't aim to harm the Dal Gazette, but, to actually improve upon readership while also making it have a smaller ecological footprint.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM THE STUDY

1. For each procedure used in this study, provide a description of any known or anticipated risks/stressors to the participants. Consider physiological, psychological, emotional, social, economic, legal, etc. risks/stressors

No known or anticipated risks
Explain why no risks are anticipated:

Minimal risk
Description of risks:

Greater than minimal risk
Description of risks:

2. Describe the procedures or safeguards in place to protect the physical and psychological health of the participants in light of the risks/stresses identified in Question 1.

Cookies will be advertised to not be guaranteed to be nut free. We will make sure participants eat the cookies at their own risk!

CONSENT PROCESS

Refer to: <http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/section2.cfm>

1. What process will be used to inform the potential participants about the study details and to obtain their consent for participation?

- Information letter with written consent form; provide a copy
 Information letter with verbal consent; provide a copy
 Information/cover letter; provide a copy
 Other (specify) _Written on questionnaire if needed. _____

2. If written consent cannot be obtained from the potential participants, provide a justification.

They will be giving us consent in the sense that by actually coming over to our booth to complete the survey they acknowledge their consent. If needed a paragraph at the bottom or top of the questionnaire could state they are giving consent for us to use the information for our study with a box to check to say they do.

ANONYMITY OF PARTICIPANTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

1. Explain the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and confidentiality of data both during the research and in the release of the findings.

No names will be asked or gathered.

2. Describe the procedures for securing written records, questionnaires, video/audio tapes and electronic data, etc.

We will get people passing by our table to fill them out and we will compile the data from these sheets. We may instead ask the people the questions ourselves and fill out the forms if we determine this is a more efficient method of data gathering.

3. Indicate how long the data will be securely stored, the storage location, and the method to be used for final disposition of the data.

Paper Records

Confidential shredding after _____ years

Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location

Data will be retained until completion of specific course.

Audio/Video Recordings

Erasing of audio/video tapes after _____ years

Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location

Data will be retained until completion of specific course.

Electronic Data

Erasing of electronic data after _____ years

Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location

Data will be retained until completion of specific course.

Other _____

(Provide details on type, retention period and final disposition, if applicable)

Specify storage location: ___On Researchers listed personal computers and in files with said researchers at their home address._____

ATTACHMENTS

Please **check** below all appendices that are attached as part of your application package:

Recruitment Materials: A copy of any poster(s), flyer(s), advertisement(s), letter(s), telephone or other verbal script(s) used to recruit/gain access to participants.

Information Letter and Consent Form(s). Used in studies involving interaction with participants (e.g. interviews, testing, etc.)

Information/Cover Letter(s). Used in studies involving surveys or questionnaires.

Parent Information Letter and Permission Form for studies involving minors.

[x] **Materials:** A copy of all survey(s), questionnaire(s), interview questions, interview themes/sample questions for open-ended interviews, focus group questions, or any standardized tests used to collect data.

SIGNATURES OF RESEARCHERS

____ Sarah Sutton _____
Signature of Student Investigator(s)

____ March 2nd 2016 _____
Date

____ Caitrin Pilkington _____
Signature of Student Investigator(s)

____ March 2nd 2016 _____
Date

____ Kevin Duffin _____
Signature of Student Investigator(s)

____ March 2nd 2016 _____
Date

Signature of Student Investigator(s)

Date

____ Billy Rae Rattray _____
Signature of Student Investigator(s)

____ March 3, 2016 _____
Date

____ Michael Martino _____
3,2016 _____
Signature of Student Investigator(s)

____ March _____
Date

Signature of Student Investigator(s)

Date

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES USE ONLY:

Ethics proposal been checked for eligibility according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

Signature

Date