

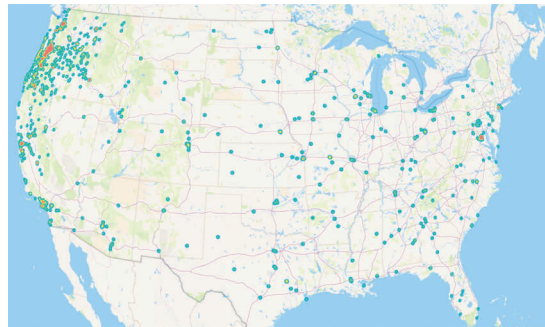
RESEARCH, READERS and REINVENTION

A look at what surveying our readers taught us about *Oregon's Agricultural Progress*

Oregon's *Agricultural Progress* (OAP) has a 66-year legacy of award-winning reporting on the research taking place in the College of Agricultural Sciences at Oregon State University. That research has led to breakthrough discoveries that have saved agricultural industries, improved policies that govern production, and unlocked new possibilities in health, sustainability and technology.

This past year, we put ourselves under the microscope.

In the fall of 2018, we launched a comprehensive research project to better understand our readers and what they want to see from us. This involved both an online survey and individual stakeholder interviews held in-person and over the phone. We also explored the reach of the magazine by conducting a data



A heat map of the distribution of OAP across the country.

analysis based on the zip codes where print copies get mailed.

This research came on the heels of our pivot to a digital-first (not digital-only) platform and a website redesign. These shifts gave us an opportunity to look at ourselves through fresh eyes, and reimagine our future.

One thing we knew would remain the same: OAP will always be a high-quality magazine dedicated to strong storytelling, compelling design and impactful photography. We expect OAP to stand on par with other leading research universities' agricultural sciences and natural resources magazines. More than that, we expect it to be one of the best.

So, what did we learn from 288 online survey respondents and more than 20 in-depth one-on-one interviews?

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS



A majority of readers place a high value on visual design and photography. When it comes to the stories themselves, people enjoy reading about subject areas that are close to them, or stories that feature their own research. Another common theme was the importance of being intentional about demonstrating the diversity of our agriculture and natural resource community.

Further, **student stories** carry special meaning. Our readers enjoy learning about research that involves students, and the impact our work has on student success.

We were surprised to see a number of readers interested in seeing OAP start to tackle more **controversial issues** — showing two sides to issues such as GMO's or wolf impacts. Another area of interest was directed more toward urban populations, helping people better understand where their food comes from.

The value of OAP is rooted for many in the value placed on OSU and the College of Agricultural Sciences in general. In fact, some even confessed that they got the magazine confused with Terra and other OSU publications, noting that they might not even notice it was missing if it didn't appear in their mailbox. Clearly, we have opportunities to further differentiate our content for these readers.

That said, a good number of respondents indicated that they typically read the entire magazine, cover to cover. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most readers (75%) remembered stories that featured their work or special interest. Others noted stories that stood out for the exact opposite reason — that it was something new and different, a new discovery in an area of research outside of their field.

In addition to reading the publication themselves, many readers said that they also derived value in sharing the magazine. Many indicated they would give the magazine as an informational piece to stakeholders or influencers, such as alumni, elected officials or industry leaders.

On the website, people want to see what they already value in the print — **high quality visuals**. Respondents also noted that digital provides more video opportunities and more multimedia generally, and they were interested in seeing this develop. Several respondents also emphasized the need for easy navigation. Some indicated they wanted to be sure all the stories were of substance, while others recognized the opportunity for shorter, less serious, snippets of information.

HIGHLIGHTS



44% strongly agreed with the statement that they like the **layout**.

60% stated the **photography** in OAP is great.

62% were very likely to read OAP articles as a **physical copy**.

61% described the quality of the magazine as very good.

75% identified the visual elements of the magazine as something they valued deeply.

Words that most appeal to readers when thinking of agriculture and natural resources in Oregon: **innovation** and **sustainability**

69% gave a rating of 5 out of 7 or higher with regard to whether they had **takeaway ideas** after reading the OAP articles.

The majority of respondents **“enjoy the articles”** – 48% strongly agree and 28% also gave this a 6 out of 7.

49% believe there should be **NO CHANGE** with how the magazine is delivered in print (twice annually).

Those that wanted change were most likely to want a slimmer magazine mailed **more frequently**.

THE FINAL PHASE

So, this is our final phase of research. And we need you to complete it.

In the process of conducting our survey and interviews, we discovered some confusion about the current name of the magazine. Some people referred to it as Oregon’s Agricultural Progress magazine, others as Oregon’s Agriculture Progress, still others just OAP.

Perhaps the most common concern we heard was: “Where’s natural resources?” Fisheries and wildlife does not necessarily see itself reflected in the word “agriculture,” for example. Yet, they are a huge part of the work we do and are regularly featured in the magazine, like the story on ocean acidification in this innovation-themed issue.

There’s been a lot of change this past year. A digital first model, new editorial leadership and a new dean. If ever there was a time to invest in change, it’s now.

We are considering three potential names for the magazine moving forward. Each name is also accompanied by a subtitle that communicates the scope and purpose of the magazine and the research it features.

Progress

Advancing agriculture and natural resources in Oregon

Contours

Shaping the future of Oregon’s agriculture and natural resources

OAP

Oregon | Agriculture and Natural Resources | Progress

We invite you to carefully consider these names in light of this research. **Please mail back the enclosed postcard** with your top choice. Thank you for continuing to be a part of the future of this magazine. | **OAP**