



# *LPC Members' Perceptions of Design Ethics: An Analysis*

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# *Background*

The field of print and electronic publishing is consistently evolving with the development of new technology.

In the wake of this technological growth, no recent research has been conducted to determine Livestock Publications Council members' perceptions of the ethical issues surrounding changes in the industry.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perspective of LPC members on current ethical issues in print and electronic communications.

# Methods

LPC provided a database of 577 names and email addresses of individuals employed by an LPC publication member.

A 65-question electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics. Individuals in database (N=577) received an email invitation to participate in study survey.

The survey was accessible from June 21 through July 19, 2012. Non-respondents received weekly follow-up emails.

One-hundred-eighty-nine (n=189) LPC members responded to the survey for a response rate of 32.8%.

# *Characteristics of LPC members*

Sex:

45% Male

55% Female

Years in the livestock  
publications industry

16.4 years (average)

Average age:

44 years

Years in current position

9.7 years (average)

# Characteristics of LPC members

## Highest Degree Earned

- 2% High School
- 4% Associate's degree  
*Business Economics, General Agriculture, Sociology, Early Education*
- 70% Bachelor's degree  
*Majors: Agricultural Communications, Journalism, Mass Communications, Animal Sciences, Agricultural Economics/Business*  
*Minors: Agricultural Communications Journalism, Mass Communications, Business, History, Political Science*
- 20% Master's degree  
*Journalism, Agricultural Communications, Agricultural Education, Animal Science, Business*
- 4% Doctoral degree (Ph.D. or Ed.D.)  
*Agricultural Education, Animal Science*

# Organizations

## Organization Type

- 51% Magazine or other print pub.
- 24% Marketing and advertising
- 23% Other (*Education, trade associations, freelance*)
- 14% Breed organization
- 14% Public relations
- 10% Graphic design

## Number of staff members

Average 60 employees

# Organizations

## Media platforms companies use

93%	Print publication
90%	Website
84%	New media
33%	Radio
31%	Television
13%	Other (E-newsletters, video, print newsletter)

## Responsibilities in current position

73%	Writing
70%	Editing
59%	Photography
32%	Graphic Design
29%	Advertisement sales
24%	Other (Management, social media, sales, publishing)
21%	Web design

# Results (General)

**Presenting all sides of an issue and remaining objective is the job of the news media, not specific breed or species publications (n=189)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
18	9.52%	32	16.93%	22	11.64%	7	3.70%	28	14.81%	42	22.22%	40	21.16%

**The livestock publications industry has clear standards of performance. (n=189)\***

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
6	3.17%	16	8.47%	22	11.64%	42	22.22%	32	16.93%	55	29.10%	16	8.47%

**The Livestock Publications Council has a clear code of ethics. (n=189)\***

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
5	2.65%	10	5.29%	10	5.29%	38	20.11%	34	17.99%	73	38.62%	19	10.05%

\*statistically significant on age.



# Results (General)

**An ethically responsible livestock publication is more credible with the public than one that is not. (n=186)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.54%	5	2.70%	1	0.54%	6	3.24%	11	5.95%	68	36.76%	93	50.27%

**Management of a livestock publication should act ethically responsible regardless of how those actions affect profit. (n=186)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.54%	2	1.08%	0	0.00%	1	0.54%	12	6.45%	64	34.41%	106	56.99%

**Any personal opinions reported in a livestock publication should be labeled as such to avoid connection with the publication as a whole. (n=186)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.54%	3	1.61%	2	1.08%	6	3.23%	14	7.53%	62	33.33%	98	52.69%

# Results (General)

**Livestock publications should avoid publishing editorial content based on the wishes or benefits of advertisers. (n=186)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.54%	5	2.69%	13	6.99%	15	8.06%	39	20.97%	59	31.72%	54	29.03%

**A responsible livestock publication should present several sides of an issue and provide objective reporting when disseminating information. (n=185)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.54%	1	0.54%	3	1.62%	8	4.32%	30	16.22%	81	43.78%	61	32.97%

**Livestock publications should consider the potential impacts on privacy and rights of all persons before publishing material. (n=184)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.54%	2	1.09%	1	0.54%	6	3.26%	15	8.15%	70	38.04%	89	48.37%

# Results (General)

**Livestock publications should not publish any details that serve no useful purpose or may harm individuals. (n=185)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 1.08%	7 3.78%	3 1.62%	12 6.49%	13 7.03%	62 33.51%	86 46.49%

**If harmful material is reported, a livestock publication should seek and publish responses from those individuals involved. (n=184)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 0.54%	5 2.72%	0 0.00%	14 7.61%	19 10.33%	73 39.67%	72 39.13%

# Results (General)

The main goal of livestock publications professionals is to serve as communications representatives for the livestock industry and provide information to members of the industry. (n=177)

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
2	1.13%	1	0.56%	3	1.69%	4	2.26%	21	11.86%	83	46.89%	63	35.59%

Livestock publications professionals should work to ensure the accuracy of content and promptly correct errors when called to attention. (n=177)

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.56%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.56%	0	0.00%	35	19.77%	140	79.10%

# Results (General)

The credibility of a livestock publication can be damaged if professionals accept gifts or favors that could potentially be viewed by readers as compromising the responsibilities of the publication. (n=176)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 1.14%	2 1.14%	6 3.41%	15 8.52%	24 13.64%	67 38.07%	60 34.09%

Livestock publications professionals should accurately represent the circulation of the publication to advertisers, agents or representatives. (n=177)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 0.56%	1 0.56%	1 0.56%	1 0.56%	6 3.39%	56 31.64%	111 62.71%

# Results (General)

**Livestock publications professionals should work to ensure organizational secrecy is not used to hide organizational misconduct. (n=175)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
2	1.14%	1	0.57%	1	0.57%	4	2.29%	3	1.71%	58	33.14%	106	60.57%

**Livestock publications professionals should act as the consciences of their publications. (n=176)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
3	1.70%	0	0.00%	1	0.57%	8	4.55%	14	7.95%	77	43.75%	73	41.48%

**Livestock publications professionals should avoid putting organizational obedience ahead of personal conscience. (n=177)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.56%	2	1.13%	3	1.69%	26	14.69%	20	11.30%	78	44.07%	47	26.55%

# Results (General)

**Individuals can have separate ethical standards in their private and business affairs. (n=177)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
20	11.30%	34	19.21%	18	10.17%	10	5.65%	30	16.95%	44	24.86%	21	11.86%

**Any content posted using new media should follow the same ethical standards as material printed in a livestock publication. (n=174)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.57%	1	0.57%	3	1.72%	1	0.57%	19	10.92%	63	36.21%	86	49.43%

**Any content posted using new media that has been sponsored by an advertiser should be labeled as such. (n=174)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.57%	0	0.00%	1	0.57%	1	0.57%	9	5.17%	73	41.95%	89	51.15%

# Results (New Media)

**Any content posted using new media should follow the same ethical standards as material printed in a livestock publication. (n=174)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 0.57%	1 0.57%	3 1.72%	1 0.57%	19 10.92%	63 36.21%	86 49.43%

**Any content posted using new media that has been sponsored by an advertiser should be labeled as such. (n=174)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 0.57%	0 0.00%	1 0.57%	1 0.57%	9 5.17%	73 41.95%	89 51.15%



# Results (New Media)

**Livestock publications professionals should maintain the same level of objectivity for new media content as for editorial content in the publication. (n=173)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.58%	1	0.58%	3	1.73%	3	1.73%	13	7.51%	69	39.88%	83	47.98%

**A livestock publication should have a written code of ethics to aid in making decisions related to new media content. (n=174)**

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	0.57%	4	2.30%	1	0.57%	21	12.07%	27	15.52%	61	35.06%	59	33.91%

# Results (New Media)

## New media publications use

99%	Facebook
75%	Twitter
70%	YouTube
46%	LinkedIn
43%	Blogging
25%	Flickr
9%	Other <i>(Pinterest, constant contact)</i>
3%	StumbleUpon
2%	Digg.com
1%	Squidoo

## Frequency of new media use

42%	More than once/day
15%	Once a day
19%	More than once /week
12%	Once a week
4%	More than once/month
3%	Once a month

# Photo Manipulation (Editorial)

	Very Unacceptable		Unacceptable		Somewhat Unacceptable		Neither Acceptable nor Unacceptable		Somewhat Acceptable		Acceptable		Very Acceptable	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dodging (n=161)	2	1.24	7	4.35	4	2.48	46	28.57	18	11.18	57	35.40	27	16.77
Burning (n=160)	2	1.25	7	4.38	4	2.50	44	27.50	20	12.50	57	35.63	26	16.25
Color enhancement (brightness, contrast, saturation, color balance) (n=163)	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.61	5	3.07	18	11.04	87	53.37	52	31.90
Removing blemishes (e.g., scratches, dirt) (n=161)	0	0.00	2	1.24	6	3.73	7	4.35	36	22.36	67	41.61	43	26.71
Adding object or people to a photo (162)	35	21.60	45	27.78	20	12.35	19	11.73	24	14.81	13	8.02	6	3.70
Removing objects or people from a photo (n=164)	23	14.02	27	16.46	16	9.76	22	13.41	44	26.83	24	14.63	8	4.88
Blending multiple photos (n=162)	20	12.35	34	20.99	18	11.11	28	17.28	22	13.58	32	19.75	8	4.94
Extensive cropping (n=162)	7	4.32	1	0.62	10	6.17	23	14.20	37	22.84	61	37.65	23	14.20
Horizontally or vertically flipping (n=163)	7	4.29	11	6.75	12	7.36	20	12.27	21	12.88	63	38.65	29	17.79

# Photo Manipulation (Advertisements)

	Very Unacceptable		Unacceptable		Somewhat Unacceptable		Neither Acceptable nor Unacceptable		Somewhat Acceptable		Acceptable		Very Acceptable	
	f	%	f		f		f		f		f		f	
Dodging (n=156)	2	1.28	4	2.56	4	2.56	30	19.23	17	10.90	61	39.10	38	24.36
Burning (n=156)	2	1.28	5	3.21	2	1.28	31	19.87	17	10.90	61	39.10	38	24.36
Color enhancement (brightness, contrast, saturation, color balance) (n=157)	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	1.27	4	2.55	16	10.19	76	48.41	59	37.58
Removing blemishes (e.g., scratches, dirt) (n=158)	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	2.53	3	1.90	20	12.66	78	49.37	53	33.54
Adding object or people to a photo (n=157)	10	6.37	16	10.19	12	7.64	16	10.19	29	18.47	45	28.66	29	18.47
Removing objects or people from a photo (n=158)	6	3.80	8	5.06	9	5.70	16	10.13	35	22.15	55	34.81	29	18.35
Blending multiple photos (n=158)	7	4.43	12	7.59	15	9.49	15	9.49	29	18.35	50	31.65	30	18.99
Extensive cropping (n=158)	4	2.53	1	0.63	2	1.27	11	6.96	24	15.19	76	48.10	40	25.32
Horizontally or vertically flipping (n=157)	3	1.91	4	2.55	7	4.46	8	5.10	20	12.74	76	48.41	39	24.84

# *Results (Digital Photo Manipulation)*

Internal consistency of the following results did not meet academic research reliability standards.

Responses on the following questions serve as information only.

# Results (Digital Photo Manipulation)

The recent developments in digital imaging technology make it more acceptable to alter photos for publication. (n=168)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27 16.07%	38 22.62%	15 8.93%	21 12.50%	33 19.64%	24 14.29%	10 5.95%

Any photo that has been altered should be identified as a photo illustration. (n=168)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 0.60%	16 9.52%	18 10.71%	34 20.24%	33 19.64%	35 20.83%	31 18.45%

Altering photos in any way that may change the meaning of the image is unacceptable. (n=168)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 1.19%	3 1.79%	6 3.57%	12 7.14%	18 10.71%	40 23.81%	87 51.79%

# Results (Digital Photo Manipulation)

**News-related images have different manipulation standards than images to be used in advertisements. (n=167)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9 5.39%	19 11.38%	5 2.99%	15 8.98%	27 16.17%	56 33.53%	36 21.56%

**Images to be used in advertisements may be altered freely. (n=167)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
34 20.36%	30 17.96%	32 19.16%	15 8.98%	30 17.96%	23 13.77%	3 1.80%

**The livestock publications industry should have set standards for manipulation of digital images. (n=166)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 0.60%	4 2.41%	3 1.81%	23 13.86%	25 15.06%	61 36.75%	49 29.52%

# Results (Digital Photo Manipulation)

**Digital manipulation has caused a shift in the credibility of livestock publications as perceived by readers. (n=168)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4 2.38%	18 10.71%	17 10.12%	55 32.74%	23 13.69%	33 19.64%	18 10.71%

**A livestock publication should have a written code of ethics to be referred to when making decisions about altering images. (n=166)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
0 0.00%	2 1.20%	5 3.01%	22 13.25%	21 12.65%	70 42.17%	46 27.71%

**A responsible livestock publications professional follows personal ethics for digital manipulation. (n=168)**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 1.19%	8 4.76%	4 2.38%	20 11.90%	23 13.69%	68 40.48%	43 25.60%



# Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, a “typical” LPC member is ...

- A 44-year-old female who has earned a bachelor’s degree in a communications discipline, has worked in the livestock publications industry for about 16 years, and has served in her current position for nearly 10 years;
- Responsible for writing, editing, and photography
- Employed for an organization that produces a print publication, maintains a website, and participates in “new media.”

# *Conclusions*

Although LPC members at least somewhat agree LPC has a clear code of ethics and standards of performance, nearly a quarter of respondents aren't sure about either.

# *Conclusions*

LPC members perceive the following about livestock publications ...

- Management should act ethically responsible regardless of how those actions affect profit.
- Personal opinions should be labeled as such.
- Publishing editorial content based on the wishes and benefits of advertisers should be avoided.

# Conclusions

LPC members perceive the following about livestock publications ...

- Livestock publication professionals should work the content accuracy and promptly correct errors.
- Gifts and favors can compromise the credibility of the publication.
- Organizational secrecy should not hide organizational misconduct.
- Publication professionals follow personal conscience before organizational obedience and act as the conscience of the publication.

# *Conclusions*

Livestock publications collectively use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Blogs and Flickr at least once per day.

Social media content should follow the same ethical standards as printed editorial content.

# *Conclusions*

LPC members perceive the following about new media ...

- Content sponsored by advertisers posted through new media channels should be labeled as such.
- New media content should be objective.
- Professional should have a written code of ethics for new media should be available.

# *Conclusions*

Responsible professionals follow personal ethics concerning digital manipulation.

Images used for editorial purposes have different manipulation standards than images used in advertisements.

LPC members do not agree on the acceptability on digitally altering photos using various techniques.

# *Conclusions*

Dodging, burning, color enhancement and blemish removal is acceptable for images used for editorial and advertisement purposes.

Adding an object or people to an editorial photo is unacceptable, while adding an object or people to an advertising photo is somewhat acceptable.

Removing objects or people from advertising images is acceptable; however, professionals do not agree on the acceptability of removing objects or people from editorial images.



# *Conclusions*

Blending photos for advertisements is acceptable; however, the acceptability of using this technique in editorial photos is undetermined.

Extensive cropping and flipping are more acceptable in advertisement photos than in editorial photos.

# *Conclusions*

LPC members somewhat agree

- altered photos should be identified as photo illustrations; however, one-fifth of responses had no opinion.
- images for advertisements should not be altered freely.

# *Conclusions*

Using photo alternations to change the meaning of a photo is unacceptable.

The industry should have set standards and a written code of ethics for digital images manipulation/alteration.

Digital manipulation has not necessarily have caused a shift in the credibility of a publication.

# *Recommendations*

LPC should ...

- Revise its code of ethics to include guidelines on publishing content through new media and digital photo manipulation.
- Increase efforts to promote its code of ethics with members.

Once LPC has revised its code of ethics, member publications and associations should develop or update their respective codes of ethics for their employees to provide consistency across the livestock publications industry.