



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%.

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

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.