

Public shows little trust in opinion polls

By LES MANN
Of the Emerald

Ninety per cent of the individuals questioned in a recent telephone survey of Eugene and Springfield said they didn't trust public opinion polls.

Nevertheless, in this election year the public will be barraged with hundreds of survey results. And as in past years, many of these surveys will contradict each other.

Informed readers, who have seen these contradictions, have become cynical and realize that a clever pollster can get the public to say almost anything he wants.

"They (polls) are so open to manipulation I usually take them with a grain of salt," said one person in the phone poll.

Since the 1948 presidential election, when the nation was told there was no way Truman would defeat Dewey, Americans have been skeptical of polls.

However, pollsters are quick to defend their reliability.

"We get an awful lot of people who say they don't believe our polls," said Wendy Rozychi, a manager at Bardsley and Haslacher Inc., a Portland research firm that conducts opinion polls in Oregon.

"When people question us, we try to explain the process we use and get them to understand our role," said Rozychi. "We know we are reliable. We know the scientific process we use will give us an accurate picture."

Both pollsters and their critics agree that the reliability of a survey depends on the process used to gather the data.

"Every voter has an equal chance of being interviewed," said Rozychi about area sampling. She said her firm uses area sampling and the personal interview technique almost exclusively.

"Because of the way we select people (area sampling), we are sure of getting a true cross-section of the voting public and this enables us to conduct a relatively small number of interviews," said Rozychi.

James Lemert, head of communications research at the University's journalism school said, "The only good method for obtaining data is the personal interview."

"Mail surveys are no good," said Lemert. "They tend to be biased because people who return questionnaires are different from those who don't."

He points out that interviewer bias is possible in the "man on the street" type of interview and in quota sampling because the interviewer selects the respondents he wants to question.

Lemert criticizes polls done by and for private candidates or groups. He said no one is going to have a poll done and then release it if it looks bad for him. Polls conveniently "leaked" to the press by private candidates should be questioned, says Lemert.

While Lemert is critical of some of the methods used by pollsters, he agrees that area sampling is good and provides an accurate picture.

But all polls, according to Lemert, have a percentage of error no matter how well they are done. A very accurate poll can have an error of up to three per cent, he says.

In an election campaign, for example, a poll might indicate that one candidate has 52 per cent of the vote and his opponent has 48 per cent.

All too often, says Lemert, the candidate who is ahead by a small margin in a poll is declared the leader

when in fact the election could go either way.

George Gallup, who established the first national polling firm in 1935, agrees with many of Lemert's criticisms of polling.

He says polls taken by telephone, mail questionnaires and polls conducted or financed by individual candidates, parties or interest groups, should be questioned.

He agrees the most important tenet of reliable survey practices is the wording of the questions.

Rozychi said her organization also finds this to be a problem. "We will spend weeks just trying to get the right wording on a question."

Even though poll results may seem valid, critics call for pollsters to provide all the information concerning each poll and enable readers to judge its validity.

"Pollsters should give the methodology they used to get the data, how the data was obtained and how the sample was drawn," said Lemert.

Gallup agrees that pollsters should provide a complete description of their procedures, including the size of the sample, the exact questions asked and the method used to reach the sample.

Lemert thinks more information is required to lend validity to the polls. The number of persons polled and the percentage of responses obtained should be given, he said.

In addition, Lemert said the name of the pollster and the person who paid for the poll should be given, as well as the method used: telephone, personal interview or some other method.

Lemert believes that polls can serve a useful purpose if the public is given enough information to assess each poll's validity.

Preview welcomes prospective freshmen

Approximately 1,000 high-school students and their parents will converge on the University campus Saturday for "U of O Preview '76."

Prospective undergraduate students and their parents will have the opportunity to explore academic fields as well as programs during the day-long activities.

Participants will begin the day with registration, followed by an optional tour of the campus, including the Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History. A campus slide show and film of athletic highlights will also be available for viewing.

Later, participants may attend two academic interest sessions from the fields represented by the College of Liberal Arts and various professional schools.

Special interest sessions will highlight the afternoon. This year, some of the activities and programs will be offered at an Activity Fair, held in the Erb Memorial Union. Other activities will be offered conference-style at separate sessions.

The admissions office has arranged for bus service to pick up students at various points along Interstate-5.

Democrats plan convention

By RICK BELLA
Of the Emerald

Gearing up for the May primaries, the Lane County Democratic Party Platform Convention will be held Saturday following a visit by U.S. Sen. Frank Church Friday night.

The convention, designed to bring together county Democrats for the purpose of hammering out campaign platform planks, will be held in Harris Hall in the county building complex Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Church will speak at a dinner party held at the Rodeway Inn in Springfield from 8 p.m. to 12 p.m. Friday.

"The convention is open to any registered Democrat," says Susan Delay, county vice-chairer,

"so that we can get input from all people. Anyone is free to participate."

Church's appearance at the dinner is part of a fund-raising effort to support the campaigns of local Democrats. He will be introduced by U.S. Rep. Jim Weaver around 9 p.m. The agenda for the evening includes an auction, no-host cocktails, movies and a band. Admission is \$5.

Local Democrats hope to get down to business Saturday. The agenda calls for registered Democrats to decide what particular stances to take on issues of importance to Lane County voters. According to Delay, the issues are divided into ten major planks: election reforms, human rights, local, state and federal af-

airs, natural resources, foreign policy, education, health and welfare, revenue and taxation, energy, and consumer affairs.

In addition, delegates will be selected to represent Lane County in the state Democratic convention to be held in early April. In accordance with the new party guidelines, Lane County will send approximately 75 delegates to the convention. Multnomah county will have approximately 180. According to Delay, while the number of delegates for the more-populated counties may seem unworkable, the changes were made to allow the less-populated counties adequate representation.

Admission to the party platform convention is \$1.

Italic writing (Continued from Page 1)

around the state teach the italic script. But Lehman says many other districts have expressed interest and are thinking of adopting the program.

Mae Jackson, associate professor of curriculum and instruction, says education students in language arts will be introduced to the italic style. She says her office plans to make the Pentalic manual available in either classes or special workshops.

The resurgence of interest in calligraphy is seen as both a rebellion against standardization and an acceptance of handwriting as an entertaining hobby.

"If someone is just casting around for a craft, nothing is more practical or rewarding," says Lou Strick, president of Pentalic, in last June's issue of *Harper's*. Pentalic is the nation's only firm dealing exclusively with calligraphic supplies.

Pentalic's sales have doubled over the last few years and as the italic program catches on around the state, Oregon may become Pentalic's most lucrative sales area.

David McClelland, writing in *Harper's*, concurs. He foresees the day "when everyone in Oregon writes like a Renaissance scribe."

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