

Project Spotlight: Audience Feedback

Background

Timeline: Four months

Products: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)

Publisher: National Academy of Sciences

Subject: Multidisciplinary scientific research

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)

regularly seeks feedback from both its authors and readers to ensure continuous improvement of the journal and to shape the development of new initiatives. In 2013, PNAS launched an initiative to expand their website as well as the front section of the journal in an effort to establish a general level of discussion, rather than focusing solely on research articles.

Overview

PNAS partnered with PCG in the fall of 2013 to better connect with readers and recent authors. Through a combination of online surveys and in-person focus groups, these efforts aimed to further understand the audience for the new PNAS Front Matter section, and to solicit feedback from authors who had previously submitted content to the journal. In addition, PCG explored new publishing initiatives under consideration by PNAS.

Research Components

Reader survey

PCG contacted 750 respondents to gather information about the level of interest in and perception of the recently created PNAS Front Matter section. The online survey provided insight into both the type of readers accessing the content (including age range and occupation) and the areas of the new section that could benefit from further development. Results guided recommendations for a variety of possible actions, including a more prominent placement of the Front Matter portal on the PNAS homepage.

Author survey

A second online survey targeted authors of recent article submissions to PNAS in hopes of better understanding their level of satisfaction with the peer review process, as well as their overall experience with its publication. The survey's 1,100 responses provided clear feedback on areas such as the transparency of the article review process, the clarity of the manuscript submission requirements, and the journal's online presence. PCG compared these results with similar surveys conducted for PNAS in the past, and provided actionable recommendations for future development.

About PCG

Established in 1990, PCG (Publishers Communication Group) is an internationally recognized sales and marketing consulting firm providing a range of services designed to support and drive your sales strategy. With local staff in the US and Europe, as well as in growth markets such as India, China and Latin America, PCG combines a breadth of over 20 years of sales, marketing and research experience with a depth of knowledge in scholarly publishing and the global library community. PCG is a division of Publishing Technology plc.

Contact Us

If Publishers Communication Group can be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. All inquiries can also be emailed to inquire@pcgplus.com.

Researcher focus group

PCG held a focus group in Washington, DC, with science professors and researchers from the local area. This experience provided further insight into the statistical evidence that was uncovered through our online surveys, and also allowed us to explore new initiatives for consideration in PNAS. Participants discussed their perception of the journal, how they felt it compared with competitor titles, what they viewed as a positive user experience for an online journal, and their experiences with other formats of scholarly publications.

Results

PCG provided PNAS with actionable recommendations based on extensive feedback. PCG suggested methods of attracting authors to the new Front Matter section, as well as creating useful tools for educators who may be interested in a general level of scientific discussion. The focus groups gave PNAS insight into the needs of readers and authors, which allowed for a much deeper understanding of both demographics in this context. PCG provided PNAS with comprehensive reports summarizing all of the findings and detailed information on the recommendations so that it may further improve the reader and author experience.

About PNAS

PNAS is one of the world's most-cited multidisciplinary scientific serials. Since its establishment in 1914, it continues to publish cutting-edge research reports, commentaries, reviews, perspectives, colloquium papers, and actions of the Academy. PNAS is published weekly in print, and daily online in PNAS Early Edition. Coverage in PNAS broadly spans the biological, physical, and social sciences.

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