

MN2000 RPI 5/27/64

**press
publications
radio
television
visual aids**

③ **Reaching People**
with information...



AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE • INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE • UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

④ May 27, 1964

We appreciate your comments on the changed format of last month's "Reaching People." We'd be glad to hear from more of you.

* Please read, check, and circulate *
* County Agricultural Agent *
* County Home Agent *
* County 4-H Agent *
* County Ass't Agent *
* Secretary for Filing *

**OFFSET PRINTING AND THE
CHANGING SMALL-TOWN NEWSPAPER**

Technology has its impact on the rural press as well as on other businesses. One important trend is toward production processes that reduce the need for an editor to be a printing expert, but put a premium on editorial and reporting skill. Such a trend may have sharp implications for communicators who are attempting to channel educational information through these newspapers.

When the Owatonna Photo News began publishing by photo-offset lithography in 1938 it was the first newspaper in Minnesota and one of the first in the nation to adopt a printing process now responsible for a revolution in newspaper production.

Two discoveries more than a century apart set the stage for the "offset revolution."

In 1776 Alois Senefelder discovered that he could print from the flat surface of a stone. Senefelder, a Bavarian actor and playwright who couldn't afford to make expensive engravings for printing his plays, was trying to learn the engraving art himself by practicing to write backwards. For practice he substituted a flat stone for engraver's copper because the stone could be more readily scraped and used again.

One day, with a laundress waiting and with neither paper nor ink at hand, he used a greasy substance he'd been working with to scrawl a laundry list on the stone. Later he noticed that when the stone was coated with water the greasy inscription accepted ink but repelled the water.

This basic principle, that greasy surfaces accept ink and reject water--and vice versa--is the basis for lithographic printing. It is also about the only aspect of commercial lithographic printing that hasn't changed since Senefelder's day.

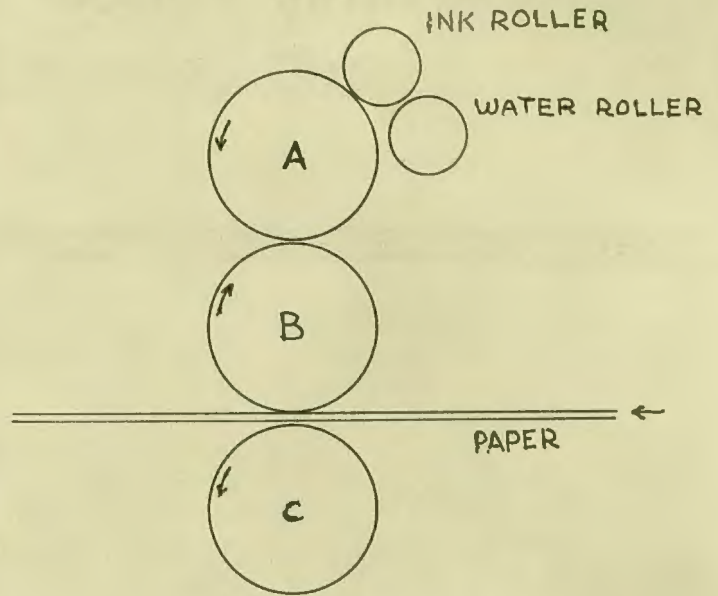
The process picked up its most common name, offset printing, through a second accidental discovery. Ira Rubel, a lithographer in New Jersey, was feeding paper into his lithographic press one day when he noticed that a remarkably precise image sometimes showed up on the back of a sheet. This happened when a sheet first failed to feed; the image was then transferred onto the impression cylinder and appeared clearly on the back of the next sheet.

Rubel incorporated the transfer--or offset--idea into a press he introduced around 1905. A special cylinder covered with a rubber blanket received the image from the plate and, in turn, "offset" the image onto paper.

Offset lithography became known as an excellent means for producing quality illustrations on even the roughest paper, including newsprint. The resilient rubber blanket which squeezed the image into rather than just onto the paper, made quality printing possible on nearly any surface.

About the time the offset method was added to lithographic presses, photography was adopted as a means of making lithographic plates. Putting the image on the press plate photographically was another giant stride forward. But offset was still slow to receive wide acceptance.

Introduction of "cold typesetting" methods following World War II gave offset printing its most recent boost toward popularity. Called cold typesetting because they avoid the necessity of casting type from hot metal, these methods often rely on photography or use a typewriter or typewriter-like device. Its advantages include comparatively low initial equipment cost, less operating skill required, no need for a machinist for repairs (as opposed to a Linotype), less time to get type set and copy ready for press, and avoidance of long apprentice training needed in letterpress.



Principle of offset printing. Press cylinder (A) rotates, is coated with water in the nonimage area and with greasy ink in the image area. The ink image is transferred to the rubber blanket on cylinder (B) and then to the paper as it passes between the blanket and the impression cylinder (C).

In offset printing, type and headlines are pasted in place on heavy paper stock "ready for camera." This can be done by relatively unskilled help (compared to handling lead type for letterpress printing), often by high-school students working part time. Photographs are screened separately and stripped in on the final negatives by the platemaker or printer. The image from the negative is "burnt in" on a metal (or sometimes paper) plate that goes on the press. The plate is charged with both ink and water and impresses the image to the rubber-blanketed offset press roll which, in turn, transfers the image to paper.

In the past decade the "offset revolution" has been turning the printing world upside-down. Few newsmen are unaware of the revolution.

For nearly two decades the Owatonna Photo News was Minnesota's only offset newspaper. In the late 1950's alert country weeklies in the state began to study in earnest the advantages of offset, and the Gopher State's switch to offset was underway. The Plainview News and the Spring Valley Tribune were among early adopters. Still, in 1960 our office list of offset papers that needed photographs instead of mats, numbered only about half a dozen.

The Tilton string of metropolitan weeklies, St. Paul Suburban Newspapers, Inc., and Minneapolis Suburban Newspapers, Inc., switched to offset printing in 1961, and today publishes 20 offset newspapers. Most have separate editorial offices, but all are published in a single plant. Today 41 of Minnesota's 414 legal newspapers have adopted offset printing; some, such as the Plainview News, have installed their own press equipment, others, such as the Canby News, Madelia Times, Messenger, and Mazeppa Journal, concern themselves only with the production and business aspects of the paper and turn to a commercial plant for printing.

Weeklies across the United States show a similar swing to offset. In 1949 there were 50 weekly offset papers. By 1954 there were 300. In July 1961 there were more than 600. And by September 1963 the number stood at around 1,700.

To the newspaper editor offset means economy and quality. By its nature it makes possible the use of an additional color and liberal use of photographs at little additional expense compared to the fairly costly engravings for letterpress printing. But the real significance is that it is now possible for small newspapers to be controlled from the front office instead of the back shop.

Lloyd Plederer, Morton, Illinois, publisher of five weeklies and contract printer of several others, figures that anyone with about \$1,000 capital, some training in journalism, and a desire to succeed, can have his paper printed by a commercial printer and publish a good newspaper. The simplest form of the present-day formula for an enterprising newsman is to buy or lease a first-rate electric typewriter and a headline printing machine, rent an office, contract for the printing, and get to work.

Compare this with newspaper development in small towns as we have known it. It was common for the town printer to publish the town newspaper. He was trained as a printer and, in most cases, was a good one. But writing, reporting, and editing require considerably different skills than printing. And since most small towns couldn't support both a printer and a journalist, it was logical for a printer to run the newspaper; the town wanted one and he had the facilities. In most cases he could make a good living because he had a virtual monopoly on printing and handled advertising for the merchants. But his trade was printing, not journalism.

With the advent of offset and the comparative ease of pasting up a newspaper ready for reproduction at a commercial plant, it is no longer necessary for a small-town newspaper editor to be a printer. He can instead fully exercise the editorial and management phases of a newspaper for which he is qualified. And the small-town newspaper can fulfill its particular role in society as a NEWSpaper, not a news-PAPER. More and more home-town newspapers are serving their readers with the skilled reporting and interpretation of news characteristic of the most effective metropolitan dailies.

IMPLICATIONS

What are some implications of these modern production techniques for purposive communicators--such as county agents, vocational agriculture teachers, school administrators and others--who attempt to place educational material in newspapers? The implications are for a vastly changed relationship between these persons and their editors. But the result may be positive or negative for the communicator's educational program, depending upon how he reacts to the trends. Judging from experience already gained with such techniques, at least two implications may be suggested:

1. More of the content of such papers will be staff-written. With small newspaper staffs filled more by trained journalists (and more of them) there will be more staff time to write news and editorials. Material submitted by any source is less likely to be placed in the paper without modification or complete rewriting. In the late 1950's, less than a tenth of county agent stories in Minnesota weeklies received editorial modification of any kind. But as newspaper staffs become more concerned with content and less with printing, the editor and his reporters may be expected to play a more central role in preparing news copy.

2. Purposive communicators may function more as news sources and less as writers. While written material from agent, vo-ag teacher, or others may be more subject to rewriting, these communicators may nevertheless continue to be significant news and feature sources. But as sources, their function would be more as suppliers of various kinds of information, often in much more detail than may ultimately be printed. Material submitted to editors may often be background material, which newspaper writers can use. In such a case, success from the purposive communicator's point of view would seem to depend more upon his ability to gain the confidence of the newspaper staff as a reliable and competent source of information and less upon his journalistic writing skill.

Such changes will not come overnight, but communicators who can anticipate them and respond accordingly may be better able to take advantage of such trends.

.....Harlan Stoehr

Publications and Direct Mail

NEW PUBLICATIONS

In Search of Opportunity: A Study of Post High School Migration in Minnesota. Tech. Bull. 247. Marvin J. Taves and Richard W. Collier. Concerns the migration and vocational choices of recent high school graduates from two areas in north-eastern and one in southwestern Minnesota. A theory of mobility was explored and several of its tenets tested. 36 pages. Available early June.

Mustard and Rape Oilseed Crops for Minnesota. Ext. Bull. 311. R. G. Robinson. Discusses the potential markets, yields and varieties, and cultural practices of mustard, rape, and oilseed crops in the mustard family. 12 pages. Available early June.

Fungicides, Bactericides, and Nematocides. Ext. Bull. 312 and NCR Extension Pub. 17. Herbert G. Johnson and Earl K. Wade (U of Wis.). A simplified, comprehensive source of information useful to retail store operators, extension personnel, and other specialists in agriculture who must supply specific information on fungicides. Now in press, approximately 20 pages 8½ x 11. Available early June; don't order till you receive notification copy.

Losses From Weeds. Special Report 13. R. S. Dunham with H. J. Otto, R. Behrens, and R. N. Andersen. Comprehensive data on reduction in crop yields and lowered quality of harvested crops due to weeds. 48 pages. In press, supply limited. Don't order till you receive notification copy.

Minnesota Ticks and Their Control. Entomology Fact Sheet 27. L. K. Cutkomp. Describes the ticks that can be of considerable annoyance to man in Minnesota and lists various control measures. Available.

REVISED PUBLICATIONS

Publication List of the Agricultural Extension Service and Agricultural Ex-

periment Station. Many changes; discard the old yellow and brown copies when you receive these red and white ones.

Landscaping Your Home. Ext. Bull. 282. C. Gustav Hard. Gives instructions for placement of shrubbery and trees, and care of lawn and plantings. 16 pages. Don't order till you receive notification copy.

REPRINTED PUBLICATIONS

Forage Mixtures. Ext. F. 182. Departments of Agronomy and Plant Genetics and Soil Science, and Soil Conservation Service. 8-page railroad fold. Now available.

Harvesting and Storing Garden Vegetables. Ext. F. 172. Orrin C. Turnquist. 8-page railroad fold. Now available.

Minnesota Farmers and Social Security. Sta. Bull. 467. Marvin J. Taves and Gary D. Hansen. 44 pages. Available.

REGIONAL RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Livestock Marketing, North Central Region, III Auction Markets. NCR Research Pub. 149. Richard R. Newberg (Ohio) 60 pages. Single copies.

IV Livestock Dealers and Local Markets. NCR Research Pub. 150. Richard R. Newberg and Stanley P. Hart (Ohio). 48 pages. Single copies.

MINNESOTA FEED SERVICE

Out about June 1. Contents include: Should a Dairyman Feed Thyroprotein?, Vitamin A in Cattle Feeding, Beefsteaks from Fertilizer, Variations in Nutrient Value of Feeds, and Pasture in Minnesota Dairy Feeding.

MINNESOTA FARM AND HOME SCIENCE

Out shortly after June 1. Covers one topic: water. Titles include: Conservation and Development of Minnesota's Water Resources, Evapotranspiration Studies in Minnesota, Minnesota's Water Resources, Water Quality on Minnesota Farms, and several others.

--Harlan Stoehr and Shelly Elliott