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Reaching People with information...

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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE • INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE • UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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EVENTS: REPORTING, RELIVING, AND REINFORCEMENT

As nearly any editor or broadcaster would agree, one of the persons most likely to read, listen to, or view a mass media report about an event is one who was there when it happened. Citizens at last Tuesday night's council meeting are among the first to read the Thursday Gazette's report of that meeting--and let the editor know if the report doesn't seem accurate. The fan leaving the football stadium Saturday afternoon can hardly wait for the Sunday sports section to read about the game he just saw (especially if his team won). The youth club member searches the weekly paper for the report of the meeting where she gave a speech last Wednesday evening, and is dismayed if it doesn't appear on the front page. And hardly anyone reads a movie review more thoroughly than someone who saw the the film the evening before.

Some observers of mass media effects, seeking ways in which mass media can bring about changes in behavior, have taken what amounts to a pessimistic view of these patterns. The most common effect of mass media, the argument goes, is to reinforce existing attitudes and past behavior. Much mass media attention is directed toward things with which the person is already familiar, which he has already done, and with which he agrees.

Yet, these patterns may hold some real potential for mass media support of educational programs. And it would seem that this potential is rather frequently overlooked in mass media information campaigns.

The illustrations above reflect several psychological effects. For one thing, people do tend to seek a repetition and elaboration of their everyday experiences and familiar things. Reading about something one has already done allows him to mentally relive a familiar and, perhaps, pleasing experience. On the other hand, such reading may provide some reinforcement for having gone to the event--especially if the event itself was not pleasant in every regard.

Where a specific educational activity is concerned, there is often a tendency to fill the newspaper pages and the air waves with advance publicity, and to provide relatively little information after the event occurs. Furthermore, there are many cases where publicity for an event may have an entirely different function than merely increasing attendance.

Consider the case where a county agent is setting up a seminar for a rather restricted group of participants. The intent may be to invite 30 to 40 people in specific positions of business and civic leadership in the community. Many would argue, and rightly so, that mass media publicity alone will not convince these people to attend this event. Yet, the mass media used in conjunction with individual invitations may be especially effective. A mass media report may give an event a certain amount of social justification. It may frequently be the clincher in gaining the attendance of a person who has already been invited, but up to now hasn't been certain that the event has any social significance in the community. Such mass media reports of functions may even enhance the social status of the participants.

Similar arguments hold for publicizing events after they have taken place. The reason generally heard for postmeeting publicity is to report information to people who could not attend the event. That argument seems valid enough. Yet, again, a major function of these mass media reports may be to reinforce the people who attended and, in the process, solidify their status as potential participants for future events of this kind. One of the recognized challenges in maintaining rural development associations in communities is keeping people involved. One crucial aspect of this may be the way the mass media reports the meeting, what it says about decisive moves made by these committees, and the way the report reflects upon the people who attended.

Furthermore, a mass media report can give an event some social reality for people who attended, especially if there was anything ambiguous about that event. Seeing isn't always believing--or comprehending. The football fan who "wants to see the paper to see what happened" at the game may not be kidding. Neither is the person who heard the politician's speech but awaits the TV news report so he can get in mind what was said. And how about the person who heard the symphony but keeps mum until he reads what the critics say about it--so he can determine whether attending was enjoyable or not?

Community newspapers as a group insist that one of their main jobs is keeping the community aware of local events. This function often gets top priority, and reporting straight subject matter is likely to be secondary. If there's a choice between two stories, one on a local meeting and another unrelated to any local event, there's little doubt about which one finds its way into print. To the extent that mass media in a community behave this way, the implication may be for some fresh looks at how adult educators approach mass media. Most agree with the importance of reporting events and recognizing the value of public information for those who do not attend. But the importance of reporting after the event--and the role such reporting may play in maintaining clientele for educational programs--may not be properly appreciated.

Publications and Direct Mail

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Economics of Supplemental Irrigation in Central Minnesota. Sta. Bull. 475.

Roger B. Long and Philip M. Raup. Principal objectives of study were to:

1. Describe the nature of supplemental irrigation in a typical Minnesota area with respect to physical aspects of crops, soils, and water supplies.

2. Report investments, operating costs, and returns from supplemental irrigation in a manner that is useful to farm operators contemplating irrigation.

3. Study personal characteristics and motivations of farmers in the study area who adopted irrigation in order to derive a better basis for estimating potential future expansion in irrigation.

4. Survey existing irrigation practices in the study area in order to gain a better basis for estimating future demands for agricultural water in relation to Minnesota's total water supply.

32 pages. Available early February.

Family and Farm Defense Handbook.

Ext. Bull. 313. Clifton Halsey. A detailed guide for protecting family, farm crops, and livestock in event of nuclear attack. 24 pages. Available mid-February.

For Parents of Young Children. Ext.

Bull. 321-1. Sue Fisher, Ron Pitzer, Caroline Fredrickson, and Celia Sudia handle this combination newsletter-bulletin. Reason it carries a bulletin number is that we will stock it for an indeterminate period. Will be issued quarterly; succeeding issues will be number 321-2, 321-3, etc.

Beef Feedlot Layouts. M-137. Dennis

Ryan. Discussed factors that must be considered in constructing an efficient beef feedlot that will allow room for future expansion. 12 pages. Available now.

Free Stall Housing for Dairy Cattle.

M-138. D. W. Bates. Well-illustrated discussion of free stall housing. Available.

Beef Futures Trading. Ag. Econ. Fact Sheet No. 3. Dale C. Dahl and Kenneth E. Egertson. Background information on what futures marketing involves and how it applies to the marketing of cattle. Reprinted from current edition of Minnesota Feed Service. Available.

Objectives and Role of Mass Media in Adult Education. Comm. Bull. 24. Harold Swanson and Willie Strain. Discusses present role and future potential of the communications media in the field of adult education. 4 pages. Available mid-February.

REVISED PUBLICATIONS

Freezing Foods for Home Use. Ext. Bull. 244. Shirley T. Munson, James D. Winter, Milo H. Swanson, and Woodrow J. Aunan. From selecting to reheating, this bulletin contains what you'll need to know for freezing foods--meat, fish, poultry, fruits, vegetables, ready-to-eat foods, and dairy products. 56 pages. Available late January.

1964 Minnesota Hybrid Corn Performance Trials. Misc. Rpt. 28. R. H. Peterson and J. C. Sentz. Annual revision. Expect delivery first week in February; Do not order until you receive notification copies.

Ventilation of Hog-finishing Units with a High Concentration of Hogs. M-134. Dennis M. Ryan.

Paving Barnyards with Blacktop. Ag. Eng. Fact Sheet No. 10. D. W. Bates. Slight revision cautions against using blacktop for hoglots.

Fruits for Minnesota, 1965. Horticulture Fact Sheet No. 3. Prepared by the Department of Horticultural Science, University of Minnesota, and the Fruit List Committee, Minnesota State Horticultural Society. Lists fruit varieties recommended on the basis of suitability for the four fruit growing districts in Minnesota. Now available.

1964 Minnesota Potato Variety Demonstrations. Horticulture Fact Sheet No. 4. Orrin C. Turnquist. Reports on new and old varieties that were tested at eight locations in 1964. Available mid-February.

REPRINTED PUBLICATIONS

Popular Ways to Serve Vegetables. Ext. Bull. 294. Grace Brill.

How to Choose, How to Cook Beef. Ext. Bull. 297. Verna Mikesh.

Income Tax Management for Farmers. Ext. Bull. 298.

Minnesota Farm and Home Science-- Current issue contains the following: Botulism in Wildfowl, Limited Feeding of Market Hogs, Sweetclover Resistance to Weevil Attack, Early Calfhood Disease, Deterioration in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Minnesota Farmers' Attitudes Toward Farm Programs, Fertilizer Placement Critical Where Herbicide Residues are Present, and New Threats From Stem Rust of Oats.

Are your publication supplies up to date?

Please check your stocks of the following to make sure that you stock only the issues listed; chemical recommendations in other printings may be out of date:

Insecticides, Ext. Bull. 263. 1964 revision only.

Commercial Fruit Pest Control Guide, S. R. 6. Only 1964 revision.

Commercial Vegetable Pest Control Guide, S. R. 5. 1964 only.

Fly Control for Livestock, Ext. Folder 192. 1964 revision only.

Dutch Elm Disease, Ext. Folder 211, December 1963 revision only.

Recognition and Control of Scale Insects. Ext. Folder 207. 1964 revision only.

Home Fruit Spray Guide, Ext. Pamphlet 184. 1964 revision only.

Fleas, Ext. Folder 81. March 1958 revision only.

How to Control Ants, Ext. Folder 54. Discard. Has been replaced with F. S. Ent. 19 What to do About Ants.

Sweetclover Weevil, Ext. Folder 180. Is out of date - Discard.

Corn Borer and Corn Earworm Control in Sweet Corn, F. S. Ent. 1. 1963 revision only.

Insect Control on Forage Crops, F. S. Ent. 4. 1964 revision only.

Chemical Control of Soil Insect Pests of Corn, F. S. Ent. 7. March 1964 revision only.

Controlling Insects in the Home Vegetable Garden, F. S. Ent. 11. July 1964 revision only.

Controlling Corn Rootworms, F. S. Ent. 14. December 1963 revision only.

Insect Pests of Poultry, F. S. Ent. 17. March 1964 revision only.

Bulletins, folders, pamphlets, and special reports are generally dated on the cover. Dates of Fact Sheet printings are listed at the end of the indicia statement; this generally is at the bottom of the back of the sheet.

--Harlan Stoehr
Shelly Elliott