

# Reaching People

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISM

April 1980

## Ag Newspapers Offer Useful Outlet For Extension Information

Is there an agricultural newspaper serving your county? If so, it can be a uniquely useful vehicle for getting extension information out to rural readers.

This is one of the conclusions reached by Ruth Klossner, Sibley County extension agent, after studying such newspapers for an agricultural journalism class she took. Her survey of the 14 agricultural newspapers and their editors in Minnesota and adjoining states showed that such newspapers aren't really new, but are instead the offspring of farm magazines and farm supplements to community newspapers.

Four such agricultural newspapers serve Minnesota:

- *Agri-Business*—Once a weekly, free newspaper with a circulation of 8,500, this has now become a weekly supplement to the *New Ulm Journal*.
- *Agri News*—Published by the *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, this weekly has a circulation of 32,000 in eight southeastern Minnesota counties, making it the largest ag newspaper in Klossner's survey.
- *The Back Forty*—Billed as "The voice of agriculture in the Red River Valley,"

this monthly newspaper goes to 4,000 paid subscribers in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

- *The Land*—Operating out of Mankato, *The Land* is a bi-weekly going free to rural residents in all or part of 12 counties in south central Minnesota. Its circulation is 28,400.

In her mail survey and personal interviews with editors of the newspapers, Klossner found that most view extension agents as helpful information sources and story tipsters. Many of the papers carry regular columns by extension personnel in the counties they serve.

She noted, however, that agents can improve their service to the agricultural papers. "Editors generally felt that extension agents have a hard time identifying things as being newsworthy. Agents need to become more news oriented and to tip the papers off about possible stories."

Deadline problems seemed to be another hindrance to ideal relationships between extension staff and the editors. She concluded, "Agents should work on improving their timing and get their information in earlier."

### IN THIS ISSUE

Variety characterizes this fourth issue of *Reaching People* which marks the end of a year in the new format. Where do we go from here? We aren't sure. There were no, we repeat, no, responses to our request in the January issue that you let us know what you liked, didn't like, or would like to read here. If we are not reaching you, our audience, perhaps we need to reevaluate this newsletter's whole purpose.

April includes:

- Ag newspapers
- Videodiscs (seeing while hearing)
- Trademarks
- Thinking ahead
- Visuals, overheads with a smile

Don Wells  
Program Director  
Communication and Educational Aids

Dave Hansen



Is there a danger that the growth of ag newspapers will prompt extension agents to abandon local dailies and weeklies in favor of the ag outlets? Klossner doesn't think so. "In practice, the opposite seems to be occurring. (Several) papers surveyed complained that extension people favor the local papers and radio. We in extension need to strike a balance between our various outlets."

She predicts further growth for agricultural newspapers. "All in all, ag papers are serving the purposes they're designed for—rural information and advertising. . . . Extension can be an important factor in providing up-to-date information through these papers. Extension, the papers, and the public will all benefit from good working relations between agents and the staffs of these newspapers." ■

—Deedee Nagy

# Radio/TV

## VIDEOISCS' POTENTIAL CAN BOGGLE THE MIND

Remember when the yearly thrill was a visit to the cities to ride the escalator (or maybe you're of the elevator era)? In February the videodisc playback unit appeared in Twin Cities stores (Donaldsons, Daytons, Schaak, and authorized Magnavox dealers). The Twin Cities is one of only eight cities presently marketing the playback unit to consumers.

I saw the first videodisc demonstration in Washington, D.C. in April 1977 (while on study leave). In February I realized that in three short years, technology had pushed a video miracle into our everyday life. Magnavox sells its consumer version of the Magnavision for \$775. In 1977, the lease cost for the industrial unit was \$27,000 per year for three years. A glimpse into the future says that Radio Corporation of America (RCA) will market a unit in 1981 for \$450; however, there will be some differences. In the Magnavox, the laser optical playback gives an excellent picture and the Motion Picture Corporation of America (MCA) disc, which is nearly indestructible, receives no wear. The RCA will use a diamond needle on a stereo type record so there will be wear from the stylus. The disc is 1/2 hour on each side, 54,000 frames, and the material is coded digitally for access to a specific frame. The digital sequences can appear on the upper left corner of the screen.

There are 240 titles available for home units. These range from new movies "The Jerk" to old movies "Going My Way" . . . to instructional tapes on tennis, golf, and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). The instructional discs cost \$5.95 and new movies, \$24.97. Your taste can range from J. Paul Getty's art collection and

classical ballet to a bilingual Columbo and full stereo Elton John. The playback unit connects to your home television set. For stereo sound, another connection can be made to your home stereo. Since there are two sound tracks, the possibilities for language instruction (or other features) are tremendous. You can listen to Peter Falk in English or Japanese during a Columbo episode. Educationally the two tracks could contain a simple or more complex explanation of the video demonstration (like automobile maintenance).

### Educational Uses

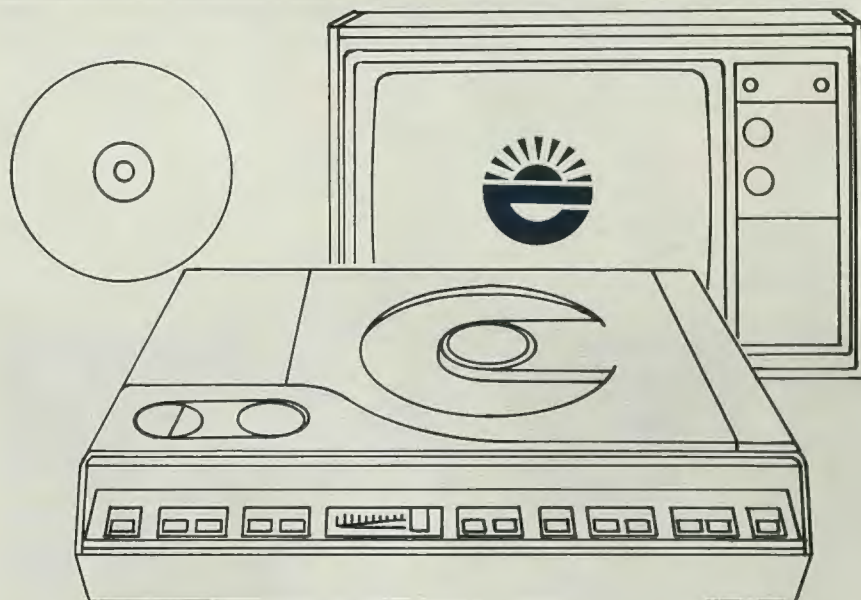
3M will master and replicate videodisc programs developed by the University of Nebraska. The University of Iowa, Florida State University, University of California, and University of Idaho are involved in videodisc ventures. At the University of Minnesota, MECC (Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium) has been funded

by the Rockefeller Foundation to produce a 6-week economics course for 11th and 12th graders using the micro computer and videodisc playback unit. The individualized program would be helpful to rural school districts. The University of Nebraska is already offering a metric extension course on videodisc.

When videodisc is interfaced with a micro computer, random access makes for rapid and easy location of any one of the 54,000 frames. Even the commercial playback unit allows for frame by frame presentation, forward and reverse slow motion movement. These features are important to step-by-step learning or measured study of art objects. In Nebraska, there are thoughts that the entire slide library could be placed on several discs with digital access to each slide title. The disc can be operated just as you might operate a slide presentation, at four second intervals.

### Videodisc Costs

At present, Disco Vision Associates (DVA) is producing industrial customized discs for \$18.20 per disc, on orders over 3,000. Between 1,000 and 3,000, discs cost \$18.20 each, plus \$1,500 per side to master. Under 1,000, discs require an addi-



Rose Mauch

## Reaching People

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tional \$1,000 to set up each side, plus these just quoted costs.

For comparison, in 1979, an 88-page publication, 6 by 9 in size, printed in black ink, but with a four-color ink cover, and a press run of 8,000 copies cost 80 cents each. A 28-page, four-color ink (throughout) publication with 1,000 copies printed, 8½ by 11 inches in size, cost \$3 each.

At today's industrial duplicating costs (which would be higher than commercial runs probably), it would cost \$54,600 to produce 3,000 copies of two half-hour videotapes. Think of the possibilities of marketing "Living Married," "Children in the 21st Century," "Ability Not Disability," and even packaging video educational clips. These programs would be color and indestructible. Discs could be distributed through libraries, extension offices, and schools. When the RCA unit comes on the market, duplication costs will probably be less. In 1977, MCA quoted \$6 for each disc after 40. 3M is planning to master and replicate and as more companies get into the business, competition will probably lower the cost.

As we look at energy costs, delivery systems become more urgent than before. Specialists spent over \$175,000 in travel expenses to conduct statewide meetings from October 1978 through September 1979. (Remember those days when gasoline was less than \$1 a gallon.)

#### Videocassette Programing

States like Kansas, Iowa, Vermont, and Washington have been providing area and county offices with videocassette programs for several years. County staff used the cassettes to present subject matter and a telelecture hookup was used for questions. Studies in Kansas showed that 97 percent of the audience found videocassettes an acceptable substitute for live appearances by specialists. Material presented on videotape was more concise and better prepared than most live appearances. There was permanence to the presentation and after the initial preparation, the specialist's time could be released for other projects. Availability did not affect county programing and made it possible to serve different localities at the same time. The ability of the county staff to field questions and administer the programs was a key ingredient to success.

In 1977, around 1,600 companies and agencies were producing videocassettes. The video format, usually 20 minutes in length, is being used for corporate com-

munication, record of meetings, in-service training, supervision and management training, entertainment, replacement of employee newsletter, etc. The videotape has been introduced as evidence in trials and used to perfect dance and tennis techniques.

Sometimes the comment "we ought to be preparing videocassette learning

packages" is met with about as much enthusiasm as "stick'um up." However, with increased television technology and decreased travel opportunities, the necessity for developing video training and educational programs becomes apparent. ■

—Janet Macy

## News

### 'DON'T TREAD ON ME' WARN TRADEMARK WATCHDOGS

Do you ever glibly refer to all brown, carbonated beverages as coke? Or call for a xerox copy or a styrofoam cup? And what do you call that tape in the dispenser on your desk?

Shame on you! And on this writer too. I recently got a stern rebuke from the legal watchdogs at the DuPont Corporation for originating a news article that referred to styrofoam insulation rather than to DuPont Styrofoam insulation—note the capital letters. Scant difference, you say? Not to the folks at DuPont who are trying valiantly to keep the name of their popular product from passing into the vernacular.

There is such a thing as being too popular. At least that's the case when that popularity prompts people to bandy about your trademarked name, treating it as a generic term rather than as a legally protected corporate mark. Instead of being flattered by the familiarity, the affected companies fear it. With too much use, they could lose their exclusive rights to the use of the term or name. Did you know that aspirin was once a tradename? It was, and so was zipper.

Sometimes it will seem awkward to sidestep the trademarked term. "Plastic foam" substitutes for Styrofoam, but you may wonder if your readers really know what you mean. Similarly, a Xerox copy is more safely referred to as a photocopy and a Polaroid print can be called an instant developing photo without making anyone nervous. Undoubtedly you can think of many other such trademarks that



Rose Mauch

are approaching generic usage, but we don't need to—and legally, we shouldn't—help them along.

Moral to the story: Mind your trademarks and you won't get your knuckles rapped. Take it from this swollen knuckled and contrite writer. ■

—Deedee Nagy

# Communication Scene

## THINKING AHEAD IS VITAL TO COMMUNICATING

### You've got to circulate to percolate—

That's the advice given to public relations classes at one large Land Grant University. Getting to know people and making contacts is an essential part of our work in extension.

### Ten Commandments Contest still on—

We've received a few additions to our list of commandments for good publications (*Reaching People*, January 1980), but unlike the old list that Moses transcribed, ours can stand a lot of revision. Any ideas?

### Can promotion do much about your image?—

Many public relations people believe there isn't much *except*—and that except is important! The best thing you can do is *position* yourself in a market. By positioning, advertisers and marketers mean you look at and adjust your product to take care of a specific audience that few if any others are serving well. You pick out a specific audience and then direct your communications toward it. Then promotion can change your image. That's the message from William Burkhardt, manager, market development service, 3M.

**If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!**—Sounds a little like defeatism or surrendering your ideals or abandoning your well-thought-out objectives, doesn't it? Hold on a

minute. Alden Grimes, executive vice president of the American Dairy Association and former advertising agency executive, has an explanation. A few years ago dairy farmers were experiencing big losses in milk consumption among youngsters under 12. Milk was being outsold in the market place. Competitors were successfully promoting and selling various powders that youngsters could mix easily to satisfy their sweet tooth. So ADA decided to join them by marketing the "magic cow" concept. This merely said, "Take your powder and put it in milk rather than water and you have magic cow." Grimes admits that there may be nutritional weaknesses in the approach, but maintains that the result is better because youngsters did get milk into their diets. ADA then followed by marketing their own syrup, "Milk Mate." ADA successfully "repositioned" itself in the market with about the same product but with another name. Tells us something about communications doesn't it?

**A fourth grade story**—A fourth grader, asked to fashion a story with a lesson to it, had this to say:

*Socrates was a Greek. He went around telling people what was wrong with them. They poisoned poor Socrates.*■

Harold B. Swanson

- and the constitutes of the task are understood
- to obtain a satisfied education
- warning from there attorney's
- for upon the question of food or bad advice rests the possibilities of a virtuous college period or one wracked with wasted semesters
- will contribute to better repaire between them
- drop by and visit unexpectedly
- faculty subgroups are associate professors, professors, and doctors
- many indiscreet audiences will become obvious
- the importance of two-way communication is always imminent
- this may impede with any attempts to instill good feelings in the unwilling or dissatisfied student who will never change
- prepared by an undergraduate with a degree in public relations
- by means of some subtle hints to the Board of Regions, they received ten year and promotion

We like to argue, of course, that most of these students really knew better but the fact remains that their eyes and their fingers played sorry tricks on them. The point is that the unwary and uncritical writer can end up saying some very strange things. And that's why we need dictionaries.

Speaking of dictionaries, they're not the only useful communication books to have around. *Roget's Thesaurus* or *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms* have bailed many a writer out of a difficult word situation. Margaret Nicholson's *Dictionary of American-English Usage* and the old *Perrin Writer's Guide and Index to English* have long been among my favorite references on how to put together a coherent sentence.

A stylebook is also useful to have; most journalists rely on the ones from Associated Press and United Press International. They're basically the same. The UPI book is easier to use since it has a spiral binding and will remain flat when open; the AP book has the added advantage of containing a libel manual. The *AP Stylebook* can be ordered from AP News-features Department, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 10020. For the *UPI Stylebook*, write Newswire Stylebook, United Press International, 220 E. 42nd St., New York 10017.

(continued)

# Word Power

## TITLES, THE BOOK VARIETY, PROVE VALUABLE TO COMMUNICATORS

Many people have assumed, uncritically, that writing is but the written version of the oral language and that if it sounds reasonably all right it should look OK, too. Unfortunately, what shows up on paper sometimes strikes those of us with

strong editorial reflexes as a bit sad but occasionally funny. The following were culled from a set of mid-semester term papers submitted by, of all people, senior journalism students:

- media have excess to campus

A good book that deals directly with the kind of writing county extension workers might want to do is *Agricultural News Writing* by University of Wisconsin ag journalists Claron Burnett, Dick Powers, and John Ross. Along with its emphasis on basic news writing concepts, it speaks to such things as meeting stories, radio writing, speech and information stories, conferences and short courses, fairs and shows, features, marketing news, and personalized columns. It is published by Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company in Dubuque, IA.

Finally, I strongly recommend two other little paperbacks for their value in thinking about communication and most other things extension educators do. Written by Robert Mager, the first is *Preparing Instructional Objectives* and the second, *Goal Analysis*. They're put out by Fearon Publishers, Inc., 6 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002, and are worth their weight in gold, even at its current price. ■

—Don Wells

recover the facts you need. Leaving, you steadfastly resolve to avoid any further courses from *this* presenter. You can empathize with the presentation problem, but you cannot without great effort sort out the material you need.

Why can't teaching visuals, overheads (OVH's) specifically, make you smile? Why not be *pleasing* as well as (or while) teaching?

The solution, I submit, could be the use of humor with a teaching purpose, and vice versa. The teaching function of visuals can be supported and enhanced without sacrificing purpose. Stimulating the audience and increasing the attention level of a visual presentation is in the commercial world a keystone to bridging the gaps between product and customer. If the product is a course or a lecture, the same holds true. And overheads used in this bridge are missing the boat if they exclude using mirth with mind building. Even the most intricate of presentations can use a little relief, (not spelled R-O-L-A-I-D-S) even more so, because they *are* intricate.

Recently, the American Council for Better Broadcasts completed and published a survey of telecasting (that could apply to most captive audience visuals) attempting to pinpoint a general philosophy constituting good information presentation. In it two key elements discovered as essential were (1) visuals that contribute substantially to honesty, factual integrity, and technical accuracy

# AV Notes

## OVH's (VISUALS, OVERHEADS) WITH A SMILE

You have planned for and carefully arranged your busy schedule to be able to attend an attractive short course offering with updated and much needed information for future use in your program. Arriving breathless and a bit late, you slip into the crowded semi-darkened lecture hall and find a seat facing a huge lighted screen.

You settle back and to your increasing dismay find yourself involved in a boring

presentation of typewritten, rambling visual frames accompanied by a verbal monotone of intricate statistics and figures, an almost verbatim repeat of the visuals on the screen. Forty minutes later you yawn for the umpteenth time and then, with the room suddenly flooded with light again, blink at the others, pass knowing looks of resignation, and mentally try to strip away the boredom to



Art by Cecil Nelson, Jr.

combined with (2) the use of humor in essentially believable situations to help us all laugh at life. (*Communication Notes*, Nov. 1979)

Specifically, a well-planned visually relevant presentation is preferable to an unstructured one lacking continuity. At present many teachers simply drop-in a spot of humor and hope it suffices. A picture may not be worth a thousand words if the picture is not a well chosen one.

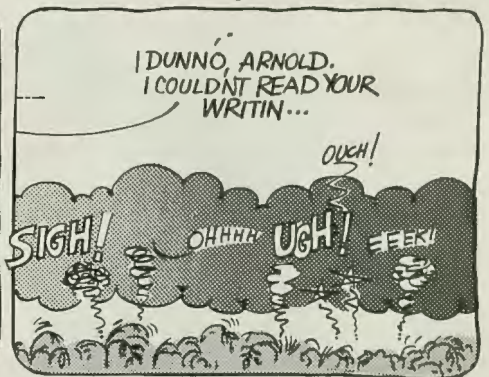
There may be a situation when the solemnity of the facts do not allow the latitude of humor. Still it seems apparent from use by many extension specialists that illustrated materials with humorous content *do* relieve that certain monotony we mentioned earlier.

And if the humor selected relative to the rhetoric or teaching points presented is carefully and attractively added without detracting from facts and relieves boredom, your effort will produce applause instead of yawns! Why not give it a try? I for one certainly opt for a smile or two while I try to get smart. How about you? ■

—Cecil Nelson, Jr.

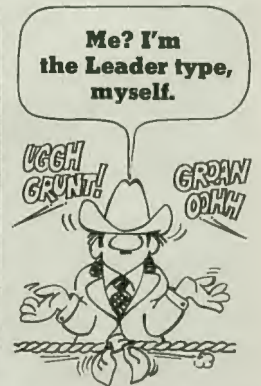
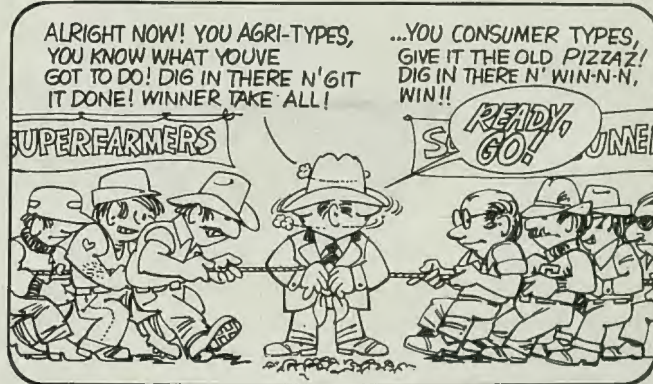
**Arnold Ace**

by Prof.R.E. Search



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Art by Cecil Nelson, Jr.

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