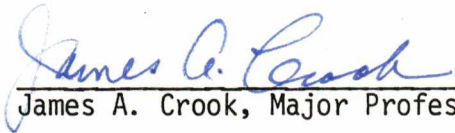
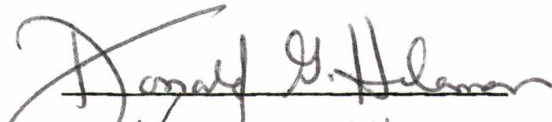
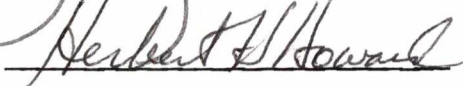


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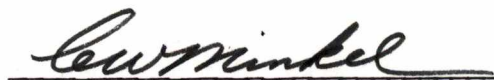
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Wanda H. Richart entitled "An Evaluative Study of Specialized Agricultural Publications." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communications.


James A. Crook, Major Professor

We have read this thesis,
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

AN EVALUATIVE STUDY OF SPECIALIZED AGRICULTURAL PUBLICATIONS

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Wanda H. Richart

December 1984

DEDICATION

With heartfelt thanks to my mother, Bertha Goad, for her love and support through many years; to my son Robby for providing the inspiration and motivation to complete my efforts; and to my husband Bob, who would have been very proud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To James A. Crook, without whose support, interest, and encouragement this project could not have succeeded, my eternal appreciation.

To Dr. Donald Hileman and Dr. Herbert Howard, who are unparalleled as committee members, mentors and friends, my sincere gratitude.

And to Conrad Reinhardt, who made this study interesting, enjoyable and possible, my continual thanks.

ABSTRACT

As with most specialized publications, the hundreds of brochures produced by state divisions of the federal Extension service have rarely been evaluated. Yet "to provide useful and practical information" is the goal of Extension, as stated in the 1914 Smith-Lever Act creating the agency. Were current publications meeting this objective? This study attempted to develop a model for evaluating these specialized publications as communication instruments. In addition, the study was intended as a benchmark for future, more comprehensive research in this area. Such an evaluative study might also be conducted for other specialized publications in a variety of subject areas.

Five Extension home economics publications were selected for this study by participating Extension agents as "most recommended" to consumers. These publications were then discussed in focus group sessions with primary readers (consumers) and secondary readers (agents) to gather information about audience reaction to the information provided. Three aspects of the publications were discussed: their use, content (including readability), and appearance. In addition, both primary and secondary readers contributed ideas for improving existing publications and for creating new materials.

This study was prompted by current emphasis on the need for evaluation of many public relations programs. Assessing the effectiveness of communications vehicles, while difficult, is extremely

important to the continued success of information and public relations programs and should be regularly conducted. This study provides one method for obtaining assessments of the publications' effectiveness directly from their audiences.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Thousands of specialized publications are produced each year in the United States. These publications present specific information to a defined group of readers, such as company employees, organization members, special interest associations, or to a common-interest public within the general public audience.

The content of these publications is purposely narrowly defined, to present the specialized messages of each particular business or organization. Almost any organized body has a story to tell about what it does. The specialized publication, whether in magazine, newsletter, or other format, has developed as an answer to this need for communication. Such publications are usually distributed at no charge to their specific audience, and are not readily available to a more general audience.

Although much time and effort are expended to produce these specialized publications, very little research has been done to determine how effective they are in delivering the producer's intended message, or what function they serve for their readers.

The primary objective of this study is to develop a model for evaluating the effectiveness of such specialized publications as a communication instrument. The secondary objectives are:

1. to determine if the specific publications under study are meeting the stated objective of their producer in communicating "useful and practical information" (Smith-Lever Act, 1914);
2. to gather information from both intermediary and primary audiences regarding the publications content (including readability), use and appearance--to generate ideas for improvement; and
3. to serve as an initial means of developing future, more comprehensive readership surveys in this area.

The publications used in this study are home economics and home management publications produced by the Agricultural Extension Service of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Specific publications to be studied from this broad area were chosen by a sample of Tennessee Extension home economists as "most recommended" to their clients, publications which seem to be meeting a need for both intermediary and primary audiences.

The study looks at both the intermediary audience for these publications, the Extension agents, and the primary audience, the homemakers, and their reactions to the publications. Extension agents use the publications as references, as tools in training sessions, and as sources of available information to pass along to others. Homemakers receive the publications upon request, or at an Extension-sponsored gathering. Both groups were asked to discuss their attitudes and opinions regarding the publications' informational value, use and appearance.

Specifically, this publications evaluation is intended as an assessment of effectiveness for specialized publications produced by an organization for which dissemination of information is an essential goal. It is being conducted to provide new data for the fields of specialized publications and agricultural communications, to give new perspectives on known information, and to evaluate some of management's assumptions through audience response.

CHAPTER II

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Agricultural Extension Service of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, produces over 100 specialized publications each year. Many of these are Extension circulars for limited distribution and program materials for one-time use, but between 40-60 each year are "Extension publications," printed for general distribution or for specific audiences within the general public on a continuing basis. Each publication also goes through an additional channel, a county Extension agent, who passes it along to the consumer.

Many existing Extension publications are also reprinted each year, either "as is" or in revised form. In all, over 350 publications are currently available through Extension services in Tennessee, about half of which deal with home economics, home management, or topics of interest to homemakers, such as gardening.

As with many specialized publications in agricultural extension and in business, service organizations and elsewhere, very little formal research has been done to determine if the publications are meeting the needs of their audiences. The term "publications audit" and its broader cousin, "communications audit," have appeared in public relations literature in the last few years as synonyms for evaluation, and public relations educators are now stressing the need for evaluation and research in all areas of public relations.

This study is designed to serve as a model for publications evaluation and research by:

1. determining if the publications under study are providing the "useful and practical" information that is the stated goal of their producer;

2. determining if the needs of the audiences for these publications are being met, specifically: are the publications serving their intermediary audience, the Extension home economists, in promoting Extension's informational product, and as a resource for training and dissemination of practical knowledge? are the publications serving their primary audience, the homemakers, in providing not only needed information, but in a form both readable and useful?

3. serving as a foundation for future research studies in these areas.

This study is not designed as a demographic readership survey, which primarily asks for information about the characteristics of an audience. As a publications evaluation (audit), this study is intended to analyze the effectiveness of the publications themselves, as perceived by their audiences. The results should point to future directions in Extension publications, as well as giving audience reaction to current efforts and recommendations for improvement.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The specialized publication, particularly regarding its content and use, has been infrequently studied. What has been more widely researched are the demographics of audiences through readership surveys, and the publication's design, writing style and readability, through journalism and graphics education. Seldom has the individual publication been discussed directly with its audience to gather immediate response.

Yet specialized publications are not new to communications. The many and varied forms of human interests and endeavors have led to specialization in publications, merely to keep pace. Those who have had a special message to share with a select audience have long found a means to reach their readers.

The important role played by specialized publications in delivering information has been suggested by Joseph Klapper (1954). He identified specialized publications as being particularly effective persuasive agents because the users of the publications identify strongly with them. Members of the audience view the specialized publication as representing their personal interests, and are likely to be receptive to the material it contains.

For some readers, specialized publications may have a more important function than the general media. In a study of Wisconsin

farm women's media use, farm magazines received stronger ratings than any of five other media on semantic differential scales (Bostion & Ross, 1965). Farm magazines received the strongest ratings of any of the media as being useful, honest, timely, believable, strong, and reliable.

The producer of the specialized publication may take advantage of this identification with his product by pinpointing both his audiences and his objectives. A specialized publication which succeeds must have clearly defined editorial goals, a sense of the market, a knowledge of and respect for its audience, and, most of all, a quality product.

This study will attempt to determine how this "quality product" can be evaluated and improved.

Theoretical Basis for Study

During the more than 60 years of mass communications study and research, theories have waxed and waned as to the effects of the media on the audience. The "bullet theory" of the 1920s and 1930s, which hypothesized a very powerful media changing audience views at will, gave way to the "limited effects model" of the 1940s and 1950s, which hypothesized little actual attitude change due to media exposure (Severin & Tankard, 1979).

The "moderate effects model" developed in the late 1960s and 1970s differs not only in the size of the effect attributed to media, but in the perspective of the model. No longer is the question "what

the media do to people," but communications researchers are now asking "what people do with the media." The audience is now seen to have control over their media use (Severin & Tankard). Such emphasis on the receiver, not the sender, of the media messages has led to the development of several important communication theories.

One of the first studies to focus on the receiver was the information seeking paradigm of Westley and Barrow (1959). The paradigm focuses on the individual's information seeking behavior and attempts to identify the factors that determine that behavior (Severin & Tankard, p. 249). Further studies relating to information seeking blended with the theories of selective exposure, perception and retention.

Elihu Katz (1968) in his essay, "On reopening the question of selectivity in exposure to mass communications," discussed the concept of selective exposure, calling it "basic to theory and research on the flow of mass communications" (Mortenson, p. 161). Katz explains that in this theory of audience-controlled media effects:

Selectivity is one of a series of ideas that have led to the reformulation of the image of the relationship between the media and their audiences. Whereas the media had been thought capable of impressing their message on the defenseless masses, it now appears as if the audience has quite a lot of power of its own. . . . This shift in emphasis represents a shift of interest away from the study of mass media "campaigns" in favor of the "uses" or the "gratifications" which people derive from exposure to the media.

(Mortenson, p. 161)

Katz further states that the concept of selectivity in media exposure "attempts to account for the repeatedly observed fact that

the media do not easily persuade people to change their attitudes or practices" (p. 161). He said that communications campaigns reach the already converted and that others simply tune out. Hence, the generalization that media typically reinforce people in their attitudes or practices, but rarely convert them.

Researchers have theorized that people will disproportionately be involved with communications which are congenial to their attitudes, which support their beliefs and practices, or in which they have an invested interest (Katz, 1968). These concepts have been translated into theories of selective exposure, perception and retention.

Selective exposure is defined as the tendency for people to expose themselves to communications which agree with their existing attitudes and to avoid those which do not (Severin & Tankard, p. 136). Selective perception is the tendency for people's perception to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. It suggests that different people may react to the same message in very different ways, bringing out the active role each individual plays in interpreting a message (p. 128). Selective perception is influenced by a number of psychological factors, including assumptions based on past experience, cultural expectations, motivation, moods and attitudes (pp. 133-134).

Selective retention is the tendency for the recall of information to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes, and other psychological factors. These three selective processes can be thought of

as three rings of defenses, with selective exposure being the outermost ring, selective perception in the middle, and selective retention being the innermost ring. Undesirable or unwanted information must pass through all three rings to reach the individual (Severin & Tankard, p. 137). See Figure 1.

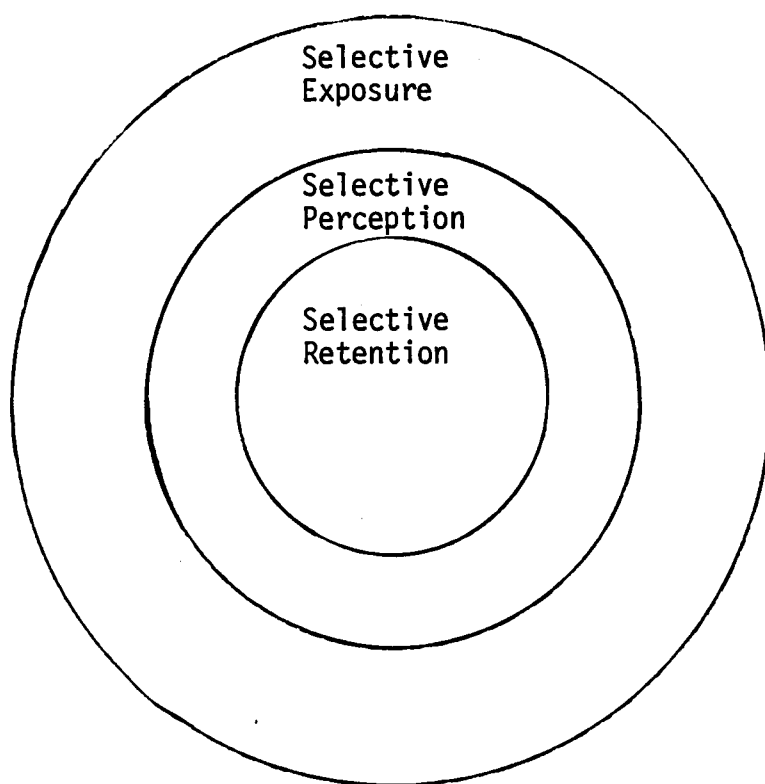


Figure 1. Selectivity.

An outgrowth of both the information seeking paradigm and the selectivity theories is the uses and gratifications approach mentioned by Katz. This approach attempts to determine how mass communications serves audience members, and it does this largely by asking them. Once again, the focus is on the purposes of

the receiver, not the producer of the message (Severin & Tankard, p. 250).

The uses and gratifications approach was first described in an article by Elihu Katz in 1959. Katz cited a few studies already done in this area, such as Berelson's "What missing the newspaper means," a 1949 study conducted by interviewing people during a newspaper strike about what they missed in their papers. Another example was Riley and Riley's study (1951) showing that children well integrated into groups of peers "use" adventure stories in the media for group games while children not so integrated use the same communications for fantasizing and daydreaming. Thus the importance of the uses and gratifications approach: different people can use the same communication message for different purposes (Severin & Tankard, pp. 250-251).

The uses and gratifications approach can be tailored to determine what functions a particular medium, such as a specialized publication, is serving for its readers. Blumler and McQuail (1969) employed the uses and gratifications approach as the overall research strategy in a study of the 1964 General Election in Britain. The central aim of their study was to find out why people watch or avoid party broadcasts and what uses they make of them. They found the primary reasons for watching involved what they termed "surveillance," or to be informed and aware of current events and issues, with only secondary mention of reinforcement of existing attitudes (Severin & Tankard, p. 252). The authors felt that a uses and gratifications

approach can be used with a variety of settings and media "to actually increase our knowledge about the effects of mass communication. Effects may be dependent upon or related to audience members' needs and motives" (p. 252).

The audience motive of "utility" was emphasized in a 1965 study conducted by Freedman and Sears, and reported by Katz. He explains what is meant by "utility" of information:

Freedman & Sears (suggest) that people want information when it answers a felt need or serves a practical purpose. . . . Freedman and Sears appear to mean by utility any piece of information that helps in the performance of a role or the successful completion of a task. In other words, the notion of utility in this broader sense is nothing short of a functional approach to mass media exposure. It asks, "what do people do with the media?"

(Mortenson, p. 167)

Katz says "useful" information may also be rejected, even when it seems to answer an objectively defined need--if the receiver perceives himself or herself as useless. He cites the series of studies by Seeman (1966), which demonstrated that individuals who rank themselves near the "powerlessness" end of a scale manage to avoid learning information which would be of use to them in their specific situations (Mortenson, p. 168).

Katz also said that, apart from the quest for support and for utility, mere interest would seem to be an important factor in selecting specific communications. The desire to see one's self reflection and the desire to keep watch over things in which one has invested one's ego are part of the selection process (Mortenson, p. 169). The interest generated by self-identification with a particular

medium, such as a specialized publication designed for members of a specific group, seems particularly appropriate for such a study.

Katz concludes that the hypothesis that individuals seek information to support their beliefs and practices and avoid information that challenges them still seems viable. He states that the selectivity hypothesis is a special case of the "uses and gratifications approach." He says that concern over the notion of utility reflects the overall shift in mass media research away from studies of short-term changes of information and attitude as a result of mass media campaigns, to studies of different ways in which mass media messages serve the social and psychological needs of their audiences (Mortenson, p. 172).

Another key theoretical base for this study is the area known as diffusion research. A multistep model, the diffusion process concentrates on the final stages of the adoption or rejection of an innovation (Severin & Tankard, p. 207). The authors refer to Everett Rogers, the most widely respected researcher in this field, in discussing communications' role in social change, "the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system" (p. 207). Social change is seen to consist of three stages: the creation or development of new ideas, their communication to members of a social system, and the changes resulting from their adoption.

Diffusion is defined as a special type of communication concerned with the spread of new ideas (p. 207). The innovation-decision process over time consists of three major components:

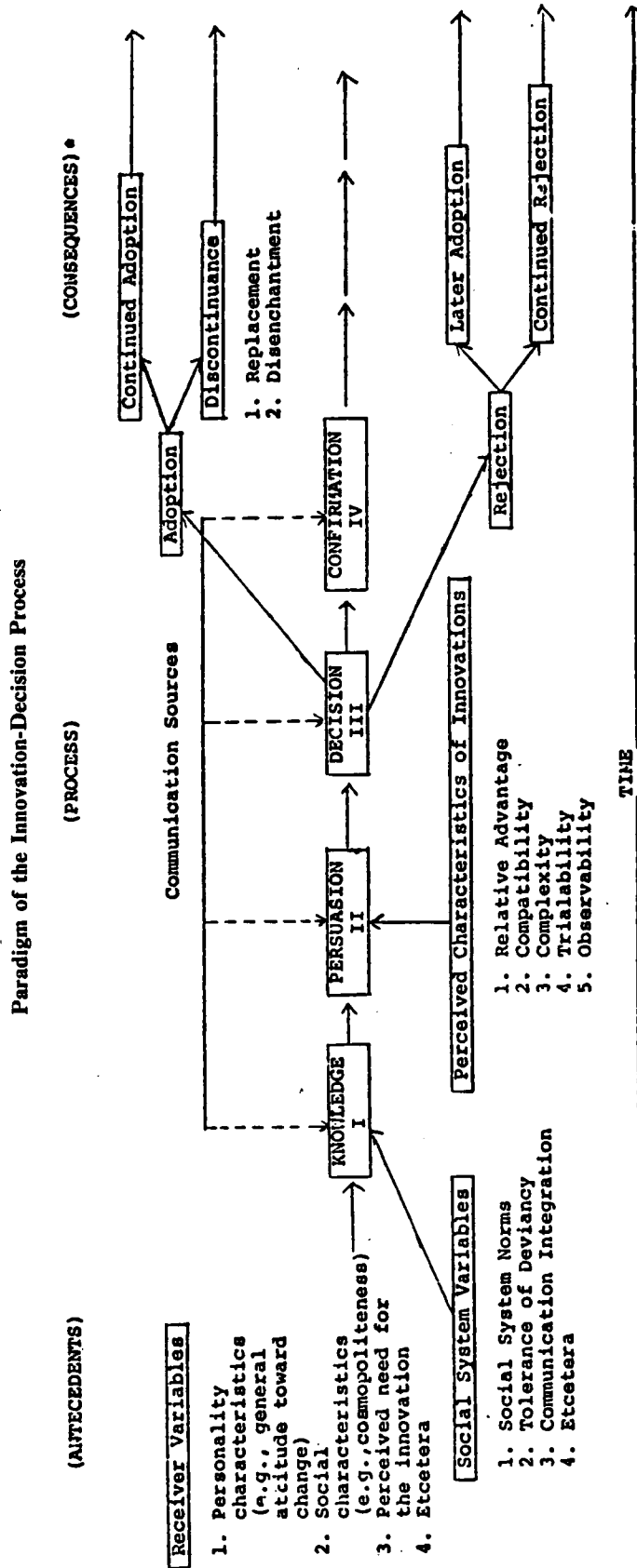
1. antecedents, including personality characteristics of individuals, their social characteristics, and the strength of their perceived need for innovation;
2. the process itself, particularly communication and persuasion;
3. the consequences (adoption or rejection).
(pp. 207, 209)

The innovation process involves an individual becoming aware of an innovation, becoming persuaded about it (favorably or unfavorably), making a decision about the innovation (adoption or rejection), and then seeking confirmation of that decision. The rate at which an innovation is adopted or rejected depends upon how the members of the social system perceive five characteristics of the innovation:

1. relative advantage--better than the idea it supercedes?
2. compatibility--consistent with existing values, past experiences, and needs of the receivers?
3. complexity--relatively difficult to understand and use?
4. trialability--can be experimented with on limited basis?
5. observability--results visible to others?
(p. 209)

See Figure 2 for detailed schematic of the innovation-decision process.

Of particular importance to the diffusion of innovations are those professional people known as change agents. These agents play vital roles in the evaluation and trial stages of an innovation (p. 210). The authors state that the mass media are at their best in providing knowledge of an innovation, while interpersonal channels are



*For the sake of simplicity, we have not shown the consequences of the innovation in this paradigm but only the consequences of the process.

From Rogers and Shoemaker (1971). Communication of Innovations. Copyright 1971 by the Free Press, New York. Reprinted by permission.

Severin & Tankard, p. 208.

Figure 2. The Innovation-Decision Process.

more important in persuading. However, they continue, "a combination of mass media and interpersonal communications is the most effective way of reaching people with new ideas and persuading them to utilize these innovations" (p. 210).

The authors discuss the need for what they term "media forums," organized small groups of individuals who meet to receive a mass media program, broadcast or print, and then discuss its content. They point out that "media forums serve to heighten the impact of change-oriented messages by reducing the possibility of selective exposure and selective perception" (p. 210-11).

Agricultural Extension agents, and the organization's publications, have long been known as agents of change. The "media forum" mentioned above is an existing tool of Extension personnel, as well as the "providing of knowledge" function of Extension publications. This long-standing theory of communications is the base on which the Agricultural Extension Service was created.

With all of these communications research studies and theories as a foundation, this study will discuss the "effectiveness" of one medium, the specialized publication, in terms of (1) how well does that medium meet the specific informational needs and wants of the members of its audience, (2) how does the audience use the information provided in the medium, and (3) what reward (gratification) is the audience receiving through use of the medium and its message?

The Growing Importance of Public Relations Evaluation

Just as communications theories and ideas have changed and expanded, so too have the concepts, procedures and practices associated with various communications disciplines. One such discipline accepted under today's mass communications umbrella, public relations, did not formally exist until the beginning of this century. The term was coined by the Association of American Railroads, to explain their attempts to sway public opinion to their viewpoint during the muck-raking era of the early 1900s (Cutlip & Center, p. 74).

The specialized field of public relations has grown and evolved a great deal in the last 80 years, not altogether smoothly. For example, the very concept of "public relations" is difficult to define. Perhaps one inclusive definition is that by Dr. Rex F. Harlow, social scientist, author, and practitioner. Dr. Harlow's efforts were under the sponsorship of the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education. His working definition:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

(Cutlip & Center, p. 5)

Current public relations education and its related texts break the practice into segments. Cutlip and Center (1982) call their

organizational breakdown "a problem-solving process of four basic steps:"

1. Research-listening--This involves probing the opinions, attitudes, and reactions of those concerned with the acts and policies of an organization, then evaluating the inflow. This task also requires determining facts regarding the organization: "What's our problem?"
2. Planning-decision-making--This involves bringing these attitudes, opinions, ideas, and reactions to bear on the policies and programs of the organization. It will enable the organization to chart a course in the interests of all concerned: "Here's what we can do."
3. Communication-action--This involves explaining and dramatizing the chosen course to all those who may be affected and whose support is vital. "Here's what we did and why."
4. Evaluation--This involves evaluating the results of the program and the effectiveness of the techniques used. "How did we do?"

(p. 139)

The authors feel that each of these steps is as important as the others. All steps must work together for the desired effect to be achieved.

Recent public relations trade journal articles, however, have seemed to stress the importance of the evaluation step. As Donald Wright (1970) said:

In recent years, those who practice public relations have shown mounting interest in communications measurements and evaluation. This new awareness of the need to more precisely examine results has been spurred on by analysis-oriented managements, and by the need to justify the public relations function in the face of stringent budgets. . . . Communications measurement became more essential in helping to determine how much public relations programs were contributing to the attainment of overall goals.

(p. 17)

Various techniques of public relations evaluation have been developed and touted in the last ten years, many of which have come to be known by the terms "communications audit" and "public relations audit." Perhaps the former lack of emphasis by public relations practitioners on assessment, the emphasis only on "getting the job done," has contributed to the current analytical approach. The term audit seems to have been purposefully chosen to counteract the common assumption that public relations is unmeasurable, or as opinion analyst Burns Roper once said: "Measuring public relations effectiveness is only slightly easier than measuring a gaseous body with a rubber band" (Wright, p. 18).

Walter Lindenmann (1980) states quite simply that "the days of relying exclusively on hunches for communications planning are over" (p. 9). He defines evaluation as "a means for determining the relative value or importance of a given program or strategy. It does this by trying to assess a program's effectiveness through appraisal or comparison with a predetermined set of objectives" (p. 10).

Lindenmann gives an example of how one corporate giant, American Telephone & Telegraph, approaches public relations evaluation, as discussed by AT&T executive John Cunningham. Mr. Cunningham complained that "measuring public relations is like trying to measure a bucketful of eels" (p. 10), and suggested that it not even be attempted. Rather than trying to assess "such vague, hard-to-define, and multi-faceted phenomena as public relations and public affairs," he said, "break down the activities into bite-sized units and measure

these more specific undertakings on an individual basis. . . . If you have an employee magazine, measure to determine whether it is effectively communicating management's messages to your rank and file" (p. 10).

Peter Finn (1982) attempts to demystify public relations by discussing what he terms communication research, as a tool for convincing management of the importance of public relations. Finn says the primary importance of communication research is in its practicality, citing G. Burke White, vice-president of public affairs for United Brands Company, who stated that the central characteristic of such research is that "the results were extremely useful--no doubt about it" (p. 12). Finn goes on to discuss the various types of public relations communications research, including the communication audit, which he sees as primary investigation, before programs are planned:

Cultivating healthy relationships with a company's key publics is impossible unless you know your audience thoroughly, address their concerns, and couch your message in their language. Planning research is designed to audit the status of a corporate relationship by examining how a principal public regards the corporation, what worries and interests that public, and what the corporation must do to improve the dialogue between itself and them. Using that information as a basis, public relations professionals can construct the most appropriate program for building a strong rapport between a specific group and the corporation.
(pp. 13-14)

The necessity for research and evaluation is also stressed by John Pollock (1983), who states that a program combining both can "minimize risk, maximize our ability to make well-informed,

responsible decisions, and give us a method for testing the accuracy of our hunches . . . research provides accurate information that is indispensable for solid decisions and program planning" (p. 17).

Fraser Seitel (1984) calls communications audits "benchmarks against which future communications programs may be applied" (p. 130).

If public relations research and evaluation are so important, what do they include? Joseph A. Kopec (1982) answered the question, "What is a communications audit?":

It is a complete analysis of an organization's communications--internal and/or external--designed to "take a picture" of communication needs, policies, practices, and capabilities, and to uncover necessary data to allow top management to make informed, economical decisions about future objectives of the organization's communication. An audit should also lead to a series of recommendations.

(p. 24)

Joyce Jones (1975) agrees, terming a "public relations audit" a broad-scale, loosely structured research study exploring a company's public relations both internally and externally. The purpose of the external audit, she states, is to "use key members of key publics, in effect, as consultants for the company" (p. 7). Ms. Jones lists four steps in the audit process:

1. finding out what "we" think (internal)
2. finding out what "they" think (external)
3. evaluating the disparity between the two points of view
4. recommending comprehensive communications programs aimed at closing the gap.

(p. 7)

The results of conducting such evaluations should be less reliance on subjective personal opinion; a compilation of useful

information with a direct, practical application. As Goodman & Ruch (1982) observe, "The findings of a communication audit are oftentimes startling, always informative, and never easily ignored" (p. 19).

Lindenmann (1983) observes that the "why-conduct-research-I-already-know-the-results" ploy that public relations practitioners used in the past is not workable in today's business environment.

When you suspect you have a lousy image and you conduct a poll that confirms that fact, then you have not learned too much. But when you conduct a poll that tells you the reasons for your lousy image and offers recommendations for improving your image, then you are engaged in what I regard as carrying out very valuable, "action-oriented" research. That's the type of research, in my view, that needs to be done more by public relations professionals.

(pp. 15-16)

This study will attempt to evaluate, or audit, the effectiveness of a small segment of one organization's total external communications and public relations program.

Review of Other Studies

Specialized publications, because they are so closely tied to personal audience interest and identification, can be highly effective if there is a "match" between the information needed by the audience and that provided by the publication. Evaluation of this effectiveness on a continuing basis is critical to the success of these publications.

The determination of how well a publication is fulfilling its stated objective is not an easy one. Various methods have been employed:

- the "expert opinion"--which invites critical review from an authority on design, readability, or another aspect of the publication;
- the purchase test--more critical and easily documented with individually-purchased topical publications, this method gives an immediate sink-or-swim feedback;
- the readership survey--most often used for gathering information about the audience and its opinions through statistical sampling.

All of these are valuable techniques and useful in gathering specific information. The information that does not show up through these techniques, however, is critical--how and why individual readers respond to specific publications. Critical issues such as content (too much, too little, too technical, too difficult to read), use (who reads, action taken, how long publication is kept, reasons for interest, recommendation to others), and appearance (size of the publication, use of color and illustration, format) are often unexplored. The publications evaluation attempts to answer those questions.

Elizabeth Older (1979) combined the indepth, personal techniques of a publications evaluation with a mail survey in her thesis, Evaluation of the use of a specialized publication. She found a positive relationship between use of other media and readership of specialized publications. In addition to the correlation between media use and readership of specialized publications, however, Older

did gather qualitative data about the publication under study from its primary subscribing audience.

Melvin Lee Sharpe (1962) also combined a study of audience analysis and publication use in his thesis, A readership-use survey of nine Oklahoma Extension circulars. Sharpe conducted a mail survey of those who had requested one or more Extension publications, attempting to determine both audience demographics and uses of the publications. Although the study had only a 30 percent return rate, Sharpe used the data to indicate that the publications were being read and were meeting the needs of the audience. Factors of readability, availability and reader motivation were discussed in this study, and Sharpe recommended additional research in the area of Extension publications.

Content preference studies have been another technique used to generate audience response. Austin Showman (1964) combined the techniques of mail survey and personal interview to determine both content preferences and use patterns for Ohio farm magazine readers. Showman was primarily interested in generating audience reaction to categories of articles both currently included in the magazine and proposed ideas. He also conducted a "family diary" study, indicating what happened to the magazine once it reached the audience: who read it first, what they read, and what was done with the publication after reading. These farm subscribers also indicated they applied a considerable amount of information gathered from the magazine to their own operations.

An additional content preference study was conducted by LeRoy Asher (1973), in which he determined newsletter readers' preferences in content, publication length, and format (one vs. two column set). Asher reported an average of 50.4 percent return on mail questionnaires, which he sent to persons on a homemaker mailing list in Navajo County, Arizona. Again, a major emphasis was on audience demographics--age and level of education were primary variables for his conclusions. This study did use readability formula to determine a "fog index," but Asher found "increased difficulty in readability did not affect reading when interest is high" (p. 107). Asher's study was primarily concerned with varying layouts and 4 vs. 8 pp. format, secondarily with subject matter.

Another approach to studying publications is to ask audiences not if the materials are effective in what they are doing, but to take a step back and ask what should they be doing? Nicholas Jankowski (1973) took such an approach in his thesis, with the University of Oregon alumni magazine, Old Oregon. Jankowski focused on four concerned groups--readers, editors, university administrators, and advisory board members--and discussed their views about Old Oregon. Again, major emphasis was on audience demographics, but with secondary emphases on (1) what the purpose of the magazine was and should be, and (2) perceptions of alumni attitudes toward, and awareness of, the magazine.

Mark Howard (1971) took an even more focused approach, eliminating readers altogether and studying only editors and managers of

companies producing house organ publications. Howard attempted to point out differences between the concepts of editors (specialists) and their executive managements (generalists) as to the function special publications should serve. Differing views about societal responsibility of such publications were expressed by the two groups, with the executives most likely to attach importance to these values.

In the specialized subject area of this study, agricultural Extension, an audience analysis was conducted by Marijean Brehm (1967). Her thesis discussed the influence of prior knowledge on requests for a specialized agricultural publication--those who possessed significantly higher knowledge about the subject were more likely to request and read the material. As Ms. Brehm says:

This study seems to lend support to the theory that prior knowledge is a motivating predisposition in the selection of communication stimuli. Extension bulletins, therefore, might be more effective if geared toward a specific, somewhat knowledgeable audience rather than toward the general public.

(Journalism Abstracts, p. 61)

Ms. Brehm's study lends support to the idea that by their very nature, specialized publications should be directed to a very specific target audience, readers who have a real need for or interest in the information presented.

The concept of analyzing prior knowledge levels relating to specialized publications was carried a step further with the work of Marcia Holdsworth (1977). Ms. Holdsworth evaluated the Your Food basebook and leaflets of Ohio State University Extension, for effectiveness in presenting information to homemaker Extension audiences.

Her technique of controlled field experiments measured knowledge levels prior to and following meetings where the highly detailed basebook and simplified leaflets were distributed and discussed. Ms. Holdsworth's findings were not complimentary to the materials.

Simplified leaflets appear to impart as much information as the more detailed basebook, and people who received no literature learned as much from merely attending one of the meetings as those who read the leaflets and attended a meeting. Conclusions indicate that while basebooks such as Your Food may be excellent for public relations purposes, their informational value is questionable.

(p. 60)

Two additional studies seem to be both audience analysis and the beginnings of publications evaluations in this field. Randall Cofer (1965) studied the Georgia Agricultural Handbook as a medium for disseminating agricultural information, with a secondary emphasis on defining the audience demographics. He concluded that the audience (who had purchased the publication at \$1.50 per copy) expressed satisfaction with it, used the information in their day-to-day operations, and would have been willing to pay even more for a copy. Cofer concludes "there is a definite place for longer, more detailed, and more technical publications in an Extension program" (Journalism Abstracts, p. 57)--a definite contradiction from Holdsworth's study.

Joseph Hice, Jr. (1976) studied the Sunshine State Agricultural Research Report, compiling an "audience inventory" for his thesis. Dealing with subscribers to the publication, he also asked for reader reaction to the report's current information, and for suggestions for improving the publication's image, audience awareness, and for new story topics.

A further giant step into the publications evaluation technique was taken by Barbara Samuel (1977). Ms. Samuel, unlike many prior readership researchers, was not expressly interested in statistical demographic audience analysis, but focused on reader's responses to the publications. The importance of her research rested on audience discussion of specific publications:

The specific goal was to find out if farm women have farm information needs that aren't being met, whether they feel that farm magazines could help meet these needs, and, if the magazines are not now as helpful as they could be, what changes women feel would be necessary to make them that way. An attempt was also made to measure women's awareness of magazine information presentation style and how it affects their reading habits.

(Journalism Abstracts, p. 115)

Ms. Samuel conducted personal interviews with 35 farm women, asking about specific interests in farm magazines and the women's view of their treatment by the magazines they read. Two-thirds of the women felt farm magazines could be more helpful or interesting, with most suggested changes about problems encountered in daily farm life. These women stressed the need for simpler language, definitions of technical terms, and greater visibility of women in the articles.

Other areas of importance for specialized agricultural publications have included audience awareness of their availability, and audience attitude toward both the publications and the Extension Service in general. Jay Holman (1963) studied the University of Nebraska agricultural publications, discovering that 70 percent of the non-farm men and 60.1 percent of the non-farm women in his sample

were not even aware of Extension publications' availability. However, over 50 percent of the population studied indicated a need or desire for information contained in these publications. The problem here, a long-standing one for Agricultural Extension, is not in the publications product, but in making potential audiences aware that the information service exists.

Robert Jarnagin (1964) wrote his doctoral dissertation on another major concern of agricultural communicators, Farmer attitudes toward the cooperative extension service in Illinois. Jarnagin used focused interviews with selected commercial farmers to determine their attitudes (1) toward Extension as a broad entity, (2) toward their specific county agents and farm advisors, and (3) toward the Extension Service as a source of agricultural information. Jarnagin found all three categories were highly favorable to the Extension Service. His study results were to be used by extension administrators to plan further communication strategies to reach this highly targeted audience.

In Tennessee, only three studies have been completed regarding Agricultural Extension publications. In 1965-67, a research study was conducted to analyze the ordering patterns of Extension agricultural publications in the state (J. E. Francis, R. S. Dotson, & C. E. Carter Jr., 1970). The study focused on the county agents, specifically their method of ordering publications (on an approved form or not), how often publications were ordered, the total number of publications ordered, and what general classification the

publications fell into (insects and plant diseases vs. fruits and vegetables, for example). The study found that total money appropriated to the county Extension service was the best predictor of total number of publications ordered, but there was no effort to determine why specific publications were ordered in preference to others. This study was basically an inventory of publications ordered and on hand during this two-year period. No audience analysis or readership criteria were included.

In 1975, Charles Morgan conducted An evaluation of selected Tennessee Extension 4-H project literature for his master's thesis. He surveyed professional county Extension personnel doing some youth work during 1975. This evaluation also did not attempt any audience analysis, but dealt with agent responses to specific format and subject questions about 4-H materials. Findings were correlated by agents' years of experience, highest degree attained, college major, and by number of 4-H honor club initiates in that county for the previous year. The agents were asked to rank publications as excellent, good, fair or poor, but no criteria were given for these rankings.

In 1977, Phyllis Boyce conducted The development and testing of a seven-unit series of Extension money management newsletters with selected home demonstration club members and non-members in Clay County, Tennessee. Ms. Boyce sent seven money management informational newsletters to selected homemakers, evaluating their knowledge of the topic both before and after receiving the materials.

All communication with the participants was handled by mail. Although knowledge and skills of both club members and non-members was seen to improve from pre- to post-test, the change was not statistically significant (p. 48). Other results of the study included compilation of audience demographics for both groups, and the rating by both groups of the newsletter as a "good" source of money management information (no criteria were provided for rankings of "good" vs. "bad").

No other studies of agricultural publications in Tennessee have been located. However, the need for continuing evaluation of these publications, as with any specialized communication medium, is imperative. To be effective in presenting its message, any organization must understand not only its own viewpoint, but that of its audience.

As Edward Paul Salek (1980), who researched A readership study of a national trade association newsletter for his thesis, stated:

Although not a proven science, readership surveys can provide the editor of a publication with some measure of reader reaction. A survey will produce results which will enable the editor to determine what the readers think of the physical appearance of the publication, the contents, the editorial slant, and the nature of the audience. It can also reveal attitudes about other aspects of the organization, such as overall communications, company policies, benefits, etc. Since most responses will be favorable, it can reassure management that the publication is worthwhile and that the editor is doing an effective job. If nothing else, it will show readers that you are interested in their opinions, that you are willing to make the publication as interesting and valuable to them as possible and that the organization respects the readers enough to ask for their opinion.

(p. 17)

This publications evaluation is an attempt to provide specific Extension audiences with a forum for voicing their attitudes, needs, wants, opinions, and suggestions, as well as serving as a benchmark for future evaluation studies.

CHAPTER IV

BACKGROUND OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

The Origin of Extension

"Extension" is a term that refers to the extending of a function beyond the home location (Mosher, 1978). In 1873 the term extension education was first used at Cambridge University in England to refer to the extension of regular educational programs away from the regular campus (Mosher, p. 4). The idea of agricultural extension grew both from the development of extension education and from the prevailing agricultural climate.

The beginnings of agricultural extension in the United States are traceable to the mid-1800s. The basic information service was born from the needs of the people--the primarily rural Americans who wanted to learn from "ag college professors" about farm subjects, but who could not leave the farm to attend a university. These farmers needed to know about insect pests, why protein is important for fattening livestock, about the newest grain varieties--generally how to succeed in farming ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

As early as 1859, Massachusetts records an "institute" for farmers sponsored by the state board of agriculture. Open meetings of "agricultural societies" became popular in the New England states, with the agricultural colleges using the institute concept as a means of publicizing their programs, recruiting students, and building

political support. By 1900, more than 2,000 such institutes were held yearly as the movement gained national recognition ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

The United States Congress encouraged the growing agricultural research and communications trend with two landmark bills. In May of 1862, President Lincoln signed into law the Land-Grant bill, endowing the state land-grant colleges with 11 million acres of public land for education and research.

In 1875, both Connecticut and California established a prototype of an agricultural experiment station. Stimulated by the demand from land-grant colleges to develop facilities for additional agricultural research such as the Connecticut and California models, Congress passed the Hatch Act in 1887. This act established agricultural experiment stations in every state, and gave another impetus to the growth of agricultural services (Kelsey and Hearne, 1963).

The concept of bringing directly to the farmers information generated in these land-grant colleges and experiment stations provided the foundation for the extension service soon to follow. Considered the primary instigator was Seaman A. Knapp, agricultural teacher for the United States Department of Agriculture in southern Louisiana. In 1903, Knapp's successful fight against the Mexican invasion of the boll weevil in Texas commanded national attention. In proposing a "demonstration farm" to show area farmers how following USDA directions could help combat boll weevil damage, Knapp

successfully brought useful, practical research knowledge to the farm community ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

The United States Secretary of Agriculture commended Knapp's work and provided financial support to determine what could be done about "bringing home to the farmer on his own farm information which would enable him to grow cotton despite the presence of the weevils" ("Cooperative Extension," 1976). Knapp's work provided the beginning of today's Agricultural Extension Service.

In January 1904, the first county agent was appointed to "hold meetings" for the communication of agricultural information. In the period 1906-1914, the extension concept begun and fostered by Knapp grew rapidly. The General Education Board, funded by John D. Rockefeller, furnished \$1 million to extend farm demonstration work throughout the South. More than \$1 million more came from local businessmen, equipment companies and tax units who saw the possibilities for agricultural growth ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

The dissemination of home economics information was a growing, but secondary, area of agricultural communications during this period. The farmers' institutes of the 1800s had listed programs "especially for women" ("Cooperative Extension," 1976). A typical program included home sanitation; kitchen equipment; house furnishings; home decoration; preparation of foods, quick breads and pastries; and use of leftovers.

"Reading courses" for women were offered during the 1890s in several Northeastern states. Topics included household economics,

"what to eat and how to eat it," and a "study of child nature" ("Cooperative Extension," 1976). The first home demonstration agent was appointed by the United States Department of Agriculture in June 1910, to serve three adjoining counties in Virginia.

The informational emphasis in the 19th century was primarily agriculture, however. The importance of home economics information to the rural homemakers became more evident by the early 1900s. Farm women wanted useful and practical information about their daily lives--preservation of foods, vegetable and flower gardening and the like. One of the sponsors of the Smith-Lever Act which created the Agricultural Extension Service, Congressman Lever, stressed the importance of home economics information in his remarks before Congress:

This bill provides the authority and the funds for inaugurating a system of teaching the farm wife and the farm girl the elementary principles of homemaking and home management, and your committee believes there is no more important work in the country than is this.

("Cooperative Extension," p. 13)

The Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service was formally established by the 63rd Congress in May 1914. The purpose of the extension service was to:

. . . aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage application of the same.

(Smith-Lever Act, p. 1)

Further, the extension work was to be carried out in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, and was to consist of:

. . . the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in said colleges . . . and imparting to such persons information on said subjects through field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise.

(Smith-Lever Act, p. 1)

A theoretical model of the extension service is shown in Figure 3.

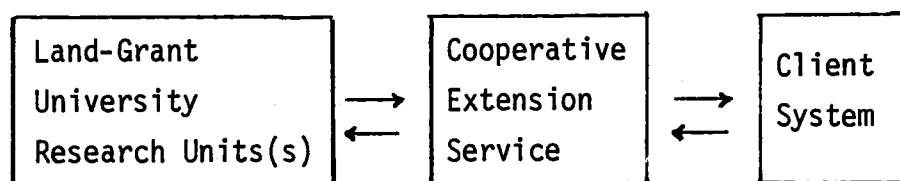


Figure 3. Theoretical Model.

NOTE: Bridging the gap between knowledge producer and user (Awa, 1978).

The primary goal of Extension, to communicate useful and practical information, is stated clearly. The messages to be communicated, relating to agriculture and home economics, and the primary channels to be used, field demonstrations and publications, are also stated clearly. The importance of publications in fulfilling the mission of Extension is inextricably linked to the service from the beginning.

The Growth of Extension

The entrance of the United States into World War I brought more importance to the role of home demonstration agents. With the theme Food Will Win the War, the United States Department of Agriculture greatly increased efforts to expand production of agricultural

commodities. Home agents led the efforts, also taking active parts in Liberty Loan and Red Cross campaigns ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

Extension services received another boost in the 1930s, when the USDA selected Extension to explain and interpret the new agricultural agencies and government action programs to farmers and ranchers. During those lean years, home agents expanded their efforts from garden and food production and preservation to teaching home and money management and other useful homemaking skills ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

Another World War brought Extension to the forefront, with the Food and Feed for Family Living campaign of the National Defense program. "Victory gardens" became fashionable, as home demonstration agents stressed food conservation ("Cooperative Extension," 1976).

In the last 40 years, Extension agents have found their roles changing, becoming more technical. In a more complex age, Extension too has diversified. "Subject matter specialists" trained in highly specific, technical areas are now centrally located to serve the needs of several districts, many counties. These specialists provide detailed information to the intermediate link in the communication chain--the county or home agent--who then fulfills Extension's role by providing that knowledge to the client audience.

Brunner and Pao Yang (1949) explain:

Thus specialists are the professional liaison between the county agents, the agricultural college, the experiment station, and the United States Department of Agriculture. . . . They are the dispensers of subject matter information

in their fields, simplifying and clarifying this information so as to enable the people to understand and apply it to everyday affairs.

(pp. 45-46)

Although subject matter specialists and county/home agents serve in different roles (one as a specialist, the other as a generalist), Turner (1981) explained that they worked together and became the vital "linking agents" by which the mission of the Extension service was accomplished.

As Extension personnel have changed, so too has their audience. The urban/suburban/rural mix of American life is profoundly different today than in 1914, or in 1934, or in 1954. The growing urbanization of America, the commercialization of agriculture, the change in lifestyles and work patterns have irrevocably altered the exclusively rural focus of Extension and the services it provides.

Where once rural people looked to agriculture for employment, in recent times they have had greater opportunity in industrial and service employment; therefore more farmers have begun to combine farm work with full-time employment.

Rural homemakers too have been profoundly affected by these societal changes. Whether employed outside the home or in the traditional homemaker role, these women's lives were changing. As Maggie Barry (1952) predicted:

The work to be done in the home must be accomplished with a minimum of time and energy in order that the homemaker may be released from continuous service. . . . She cannot be a cook, scrub woman, seamstress, laundress, dairy maid, gardener, poultry raiser, wife and mother in the scientific twentieth

century, with its rapidly rising standards of living and consequent high cost--the farm homemaker can continue to be a producer only if she is also trained to better home management in a home that is equipped for more efficient housekeeping service and gives time and opportunity for richer personal and family living.

(p. 166)

The image of the individual farm dweller has also changed. Rural sociologists Conner and Singh (1981) wrote that prior to World War II, farm people were usually viewed as self-sufficient, independent, God-fearing defenders of the republic, a product of what sociologists call agricultural fundamentalism. Now, they said, "Farm people, due to technological developments in agriculture and economic growth in general, have entered the mainstream of American economic, social and political life. They're no longer distinguishable from non-farm people."

As Befecadu (1982) explained, today the Extension communicator's major concern is in finding effective ways to communicate relevant information to meet the everyday needs of these modern farm people. The ability to identify the clientele, to identify their needs, and then to provide an effective educational product is imperative. Christenson and Warner (1982) wrote:

The future of the Cooperative Extension Service depends on its ability to demonstrate its impact on its environment, to document its effectiveness and to maintain a climate of political legitimacy. (But) the scope of the agency is so broad and the subject matter so diverse that it is difficult to establish clear parameters for . . . assessing its effectiveness.

(p. 370)

Assessment may indeed be difficult, but Extension has no choice. Extension management must face the challenge of proving Extension's value in order to maintain financial support.

From the establishment of Extension in 1914, its existence, activities, and funding needs were at one time accepted and supported almost without question. But this attitude is changing.

In 1977, the United States Congress issued a mandate calling for an evaluation of the economic and social consequences of the Cooperative Extension programs. The mandate was unprecedented in Extension's 60-year history, and its effects spread throughout every phase of Extension's work (Bennett, 1982).

Today, as legislators balance the funds of increasingly urban and industrial taxpayers, the trend remains one of accountability in proving actual effectiveness, in "diffusing . . . useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics" (Smith-Lever Act, p. 1).

The importance of accountability, of evaluation and assessment has never been more important. One Extension program which should clearly be involved in such program evaluations is communications, the function responsible for production of Extension publications.

The Role of Communications in Extension

Leagans (1961) said that communication is "the process by which two or more people exchange ideas, facts, feelings, or impressions in ways that each gains a common understanding of the meaning, intent

and use of messages" (p. 19). The key elements of communication are a source, a message, a channel, and a receiver. Extension serves as a channel for communication, but, as Leagans concluded, "Channels are no good without careful direction or use in the right way, at the right time, to do the right job for the right purpose, with the right audience, all in relation to the right message" (p. 20).

Extension's reason for being depends on communications, both oral (the "imparting information . . . through field demonstrations" of the Smith-Lever Act) and written (the "publications" referred to in the Act). This study will be concerned solely with the written communications of the Extension Service to its various publics.

A 3700-year-old farm bulletin from Iraq gives the earliest detailed account of Extension-type teaching through publications (Noordhoff, 1966). The Iraqi record, written on a clay tablet in Sumarian, the oldest known form of writing, was discovered in 1950 by a joint expedition of the Universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania. Instructions guide the farmer from sowing of the grain to harvesting it (p. 206).

Modern agricultural Extension publications in the United States began with Reuben Brigham, the first Extension editor of Maryland in 1913 ("Cooperative Extension," 1976). Brigham developed standards of professional quality for agricultural communicators in both mass and specialized media.

Today's agricultural communicators are following guidelines developed by Brigham and others over the 70 years of Extension

existence. Their duties involve communicating information to individual members of a collective audience interested in agricultural and home economics topics, "to give the facts and let the people make their own decisions" (Kelsey & Hearne, p. 265). The importance of the communicator's role is emphasized by these authors:

In arriving at their conclusions they (the audience) are, however, influenced by the particular facts you have chosen to present, the way you present them, who you are, what institution you represent and other less obvious factors. We must admit that to teach is to persuade.
(p. 265)

A primary goal of Extension, and its communicators, is not only to provide information, but also to teach. To bring knowledge of research and operational techniques to the Extension audience is the foundation of the organization's existence. Extension communicators act as facilitators in transmitting the messages of agriculture and home economics from the subject specialists, the researchers, and the universities to the public. Communicators provide a link between the technical expertise of the researcher and the audience's information needs.

Communicators in Extension work in a variety of media--broadcast, audio-visuals, special events, and print. This study focuses on only the print responsibilities, more specifically the home economics specialized publications portion of that medium.

Agricultural Extension communicators have utilized specialized publications, known as bulletins and circulars, since the service was founded. Smith and Wilson (1930) point to these publications as highly important to Extension work:

Considering cost and effectiveness, bulletins and circulars constitute one of the most economical agencies for reaching farmers and helping them to better practices.
(p. 307)

Extension publications are primarily written by subject specialists, who gather information from the research and residential teaching facilities of the universities where they work, and from the agricultural experiment stations conducting research in the field. As the United States Department of Agriculture Joint Committee Report on Extension Programs, Policies and Goals (1948) explains:

Without full coordination of the three college functions--resident teaching, research and extension--extension cannot give maximum service. Extension must know what the experiment stations are doing in order to get their findings to farmers; the resident teaching staff trains the students from which extension draws its workers. On the other hand, the job which extension does--or fails to do--has a great influence on the attitude of the people of the States toward the research and academic work of the colleges.
(p. 28)

Extension communicators receive publication manuscripts after they have been approved for publication by an Extension reading committee. The communicators' responsibility is to edit and prepare the material for printing, such as a magazine editor does. The agricultural communicator must utilize basic knowledge of communications theory and practice, and information about the intended audience, to make these publications readable, useful and helpful to their readers.

The role of Extension communicators can perhaps be better understood by considering one typical example, the Agricultural Extension Service of Tennessee and its communications function, located on The University of Tennessee campus at Knoxville.

Tennessee Agricultural Extension Communications

On July 1, 1914, the United States Department of Agriculture and The University of Tennessee jointly organized a Division of Extension (Sims, p. 16). Although county agricultural agents had been active in the state since 1910, and home economists since 1911, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 gave official national status to Extension workers.

Tennessee's first staff specialist, in animal husbandry, was also appointed in July of 1914. Others, in agronomy and in dairy, were working within a few weeks (Sims, p. 17). The necessity for publications was recognized immediately, as a necessary outgrowth of the specialists' involvement.

The Official List of Publications issued by The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service lists three publications produced in 1914:

Outline of Organization of Agricultural Extension Service

by H. A. Morgan, July 1914

Home Work for Winter Months for Club Girls, Kitchen Rules, Etc.

by Louise Turner, November 1914

Home Work for Winter Months for Club Girls, Cereals and Breads

by Louise Turner, December 1914.

Two of the first three publications were for homemakers and girls, emphasizing the importance of this Extension audience from the beginning.

Early home economics publications featured such subjects as "What To Do When Cleaning House" (1915), "How to Choose Woolens" (1915), "Good Light Bread" (1916), "What to Do to Keep Well" (1916), and "What to Do with Vegetables" (1917), subjects dealing with the traditional homemaker concerns of the era.

Today, the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service has a trained staff responsible not only for publications, but a wide variety of communication forms. Approximately 20 staff and support workers in the communications section handle all public and media relations for the statewide service from the campus at Knoxville. These communication professionals prepare both print and broadcast news releases, audiovisual presentations, exhibits, demonstrations, special event planning and programs, as well as the design, editing and production of hundreds of special publications annually. The communications staff works closely with the subject specialists who author publications, and with Extension personnel across Tennessee to determine the needs of Extension audiences. The communication staff also act as trainers and as a resource for other Extension staff in effective use of the media and in effective person-to-person communication (Objectives, Extension Communications Section).

The need for communicators and their skills is recognized by state Extension management. Dr. Lloyd Downen, Dean of the Agricultural Extension Service of Tennessee, in a speech entitled "How Extension Communicators Make a Difference," said:

Communications is at the heart of every effort we undertake. In fact all Extension programs involve communications in one form or another. Without a communications section, specialists and agents would be on their own to find the means to communicate with their clientele. . . . Without a communications section to provide assistance in the packaging and production of mass media, educational materials and publications, give training in communications skills and consultation on the use of communication methods, our entire educational and informational program would become tedious and outdated. The lack of involvement by a communications section . . . would diminish our program's quality and effectiveness. In short, there would be a drastic reduction in the quantity of information reaching Extension clientele. More important, there would be a serious reduction in the quality of information going out because communicators are initiators and planners as well as "producers" of messages and media.

Dr. Downen touched on the importance of the many roles played by today's Extension communicator. Kern (1978) lists three major areas of communications responsibilities:

1. as a craftsman, a highly competent processor of information who, given the raw materials, will make the communication the best it can be. This role is creativity, most often in a specialized medium.

2. as a communication programmer, a multi-media expert who is less concerned with precise content than the outcomes desired, and what combination of media may be used to achieve that effect. This rule is media knowledge, production expertise, and a special capacity to juggle several media at one time.

Both these roles rarely question why, or whether such messages should be produced, but work at producing the best results.

3. as a consulting communicator, which is a broader perspective, embracing the human processes of communication as well as

media and production expertise. The consulting communicator utilizes various behavioral disciplines including communication theory and practice, the psychology and sociology of communication, group and interpersonal communication, and the technology and principles of production for communication. The consulting communicator role is a partnership with the subject specialist in the planning processes and leadership in applying communication practices (Kern, pp. 6-8).

The communications staff of the Tennessee Extension Service are experienced in the first two roles, moving into and developing the role of the consulting communicator. A part of this development is a realization of the need for evaluation of communication messages produced by the organization.

As Wells (1979) says:

We should be taking a more scholarly approach to our jobs, and to our profession. Several things are meant by that:

1. Developing a modest but rigorous program of evaluating the things we do.
 2. Getting involved in some systematic procedures for assessing audiences and for assessing audience needs as audiences see them.
 3. Working out a reasonably elaborate and sophisticated point-of-view about communication processes.
 4. Getting into long-range goal setting and communication program planning, including specification of clear-cut performance objectives and defensible operation strategies.
- (pp. 20-21)

This study was undertaken with these concepts in mind, as a first step toward continuing evaluation and evolution of the Extension communications role.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

The basis of this study is an evaluation of specific home economics publications produced by the Agricultural Extension Service of the state of Tennessee. The study is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of these publications in providing "useful and practical information"--their stated objective (Smith-Lever Act, 1914), to generate ideas for improvement, and to serve as a benchmark for future research.

Evaluation is recognized as one of the most vital, although most difficult, functions of the Agricultural Extension staff. As the Joint USDA-NASULGC Committee on Extension (1948) stated in its report:

Extension must improve its program evaluation if education is to be relevant for (its) audience. Evaluation must be based upon two factors:

- Was the Extension function performed effectively? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Were results obtained by the public served appropriate to their needs? Again, evaluation must ask why results were effective or ineffective.

(p. 42)

These evaluation factors are particularly appropriate to this study.

Selection of Publications for Study

The publications produced by the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service are defined as "a leaflet, folder, or booklet of any size printed for general distribution, or for specific audiences

within the general public" (Agricultural Extension Service publications series, 1983). The publications are usually printed in quantities of 2500 or more, are stored and distributed to county Extension offices as needed by the (Knoxville) Extension mailing room, and are listed in Extension publication order catalogs.

The current order catalog (1984) lists more than 300 publications available in both agricultural and home economics areas of interest. Of that number, some titles will be revised, some dropped, and some added each year as needs change.

For purposes of this study, a list of all currently available home economics publications was compiled. The list included eight subject areas: clothing; family economics; energy conservation; family life; food, nutrition, and health; housing and equipment; interior design and crafts; and ornamental horticulture and landscape. A total of 154 publications were included; some were relatively new, some revised, some original material which had been reprinted as necessary.

This publications list was mailed to a purposive sample of ten Tennessee Extension home economists from District III (Chattanooga area). These agents were asked to choose the ten publications they most recommended to the homemakers in their county, publications they believed were "most helpful" in Extension work. Agents were to choose publications based on personal experience--no set criteria were provided to limit or confuse the choices. The researcher's intent was to identify for this study publications both familiar

to and with proven utility to Extension's target audiences.

From these agents' responses, the five publications chosen most frequently were to be used in the study. The publications so selected, and the number of agents who chose them, were:

<u>Canning Foods: Fruits, Vegetables, Pickles, Jellies</u>	10
<u>Preserving Foods: Freezing and Drying</u>	10
<u>Basic Sewing Techniques</u>	7
<u>Your Will is Important</u>	6
<u>Care and Repair of Simple Household Equipment</u>	5

The first two publications are in the subject area of food, nutrition and health; Basic Sewing Techniques is a part of clothing; Your Will is Important is prepared by family economics; and the final publication is listed under housing and equipment. Of the eight subject areas included in the list, four were represented in the five publications to be evaluated.

Description of the Publications

Canning Foods (PB 724), a basic "how-to" guide for the novice to the experienced canner. The publication is 6" x 9", 72 pages, black ink on white stock. The cover has a line drawing of fruits, vegetables and a canning jar, with an accent color of red added to the black-on-white design. Contents include basic information about selection of canning equipment, how to prepare fruits and vegetables, charts for processing times, answers to specific questions, recipes, scorecards for judging products, and a metric conversion table. The

publication is divided into three sections: canning fruits and vegetables; pickles and relishes; and jams, jellies, and preserves. There are both an index and a table of contents, and line drawings are used for illustration throughout.

Preserving Food (PB 725), another basic "how-to" guide. This publication is 5-1/2" x 8-1/2", 48 pages, black ink on white stock. The line-drawn cover is similar to the canning publication, but the color of ink--blue--is used directly on the stock with no black type added. Contents include information about freezers, containers, specifics about freezing fruits, vegetables, meats, fish and nuts (mostly in chart form), how to dry foods, definition of terms, questions and answers, a metric conversion table, and several line drawings for illustration. A table of contents and an index are included.

Basic Sewing Techniques (PB 719) is a fundamental approach to home sewing from selecting a pattern to sewing on the final button. The publication is 8-1/2" x 11", 62 pages, black ink on white stock, with a green stock for the cover. Heavily illustrated with line drawings, the contents include specific directions on how to construct a garment, including step-by-step visual guides; sewing equipment needed; a description of figure types; and how to select fabric. The cover features line drawings of females in simple dresses. An index is included.

Your Will is Important (PB 805) is designed to provide information to Tennessee residents about the state inheritance laws, and the advisability of making a will. The publication is 5-1/2" x 8-1/2",

8 pages, black ink on white stock. The format is all question-and-answer, with no illustrations inside the publication. The cover is a simple line drawing of a scroll-design document surrounding the title. No color is used, and neither an index nor a table of contents is included.

The Care and Repair of Simple Household Equipment (PB 273).

Another "how-to" guide for the novice home handyman, the publication is 6" x 9", 48 pages, black and brown inks on white stock. The cover and most interior pages use two-color printing, black type with accents of brown. The cover features line drawings of tools and cleansers, accented by black and brown on a grey background. Contents include information about repairing fuses, cords and plugs; small appliances; large appliances; kitchen utensils; and guidelines for safety with electricity. Line drawings are used as illustration throughout the publication. A table of contents is included, but no index.

Readability

The publications produced by the Agricultural Extension Service are intended for distribution to interested audiences throughout the state. Extension's traditional primary audience has been rural dwellers, who may have less formal education than their urban counterparts. It is important, therefore, for these publications to be written at an acceptable reading level for this audience. Readers must be able to understand the material to benefit from it. The next

step in this study was to determine the readability, or "fog index," of each publication under review.

Robert Gunning developed his "fog index" as a "method of estimating the probable success a reader will have in reading and understanding a piece of writing" (Severin & Tankard, p. 68). Readability formulas have been proven to be useful in determining the ease of understanding or comprehension in reading of specific written material.

Readability formulas have been part of communications theory since the 1920s. Perhaps the three most widely respected are Rudolf Flesch's Reading Ease, Gunning's Fog Index, and Wilson Taylor's Cloze Procedure (Severin & Tankard, pp. 73-83). This study utilizes Gunning's formula.

The publications have "fog indexes" as shown:

Canning	11.3
Freezing	8.8
Sewing	7.0
Wills	12.8
Household Equipment	9.4

Reilly (1981) states that a fog index score of 15 is usually considered "easy" reading, with anything over 35 getting into the "difficult" range (p. 282). Certainly these publications are well within the "easy" range. Extension personnel seem to be presenting their material in a form that is easily read by a non-college-educated audience. Reilly cautions, however, that the fog index

is only an indicator, and should not be so rigidly adhered to that it may inhibit writing. The most important factor, he states, is to know the audience's educational level and write appropriately (p. 283).

Readability is particularly important in writing for Extension audiences, as they may not have the formal reading skills of the more educated urban worker. Kelsey and Hearne (1963) caution Extension authors to:

write for the majority of your clients . . . the very ones who are likely to understand the least need the information the most. Readability involves three questions about printed matter: (1) Is it read? (2) Is it understood? (3) Is it effective in bringing about desired changes?
(p. 338)

The five publications in this study have an acceptable reading level. The other two elements mentioned by these authors, getting the material actually read and the ability to bring about desired changes, are subjects for further studies.

Use of Focus Groups

The method of data-gathering selected for this study was a series of focus groups, with the researcher acting as moderator. If the purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of these publications in meeting the needs of their audiences, one measure of that effectiveness would surely be to ask those audiences for their assessments.

According to Goldman (1962), the group depth interview is most frequently useful and appropriate in the developmental and exploratory phases of research (p. 62). It may be used to develop correct questions for large sample surveys to follow. Goldman also points out that group interviews conducted at several points along the developmental stages (of a publication, for example) help the producers make decisions based on audience reactions before large investments of time and money are committed.

Focus groups are not only used in the initial stages of product development. Antilla (1982) states that they have been a popular and useful research tool since the 1950s to explore new markets and to keep in touch with established product users so that attitude changes do not catch management unaware:

With their ability to uncover complex motivations, focus groups have been found effective in explaining what people like or don't like about all manner of things.

(p. 79)

Fletcher and Bowers (1983) describe the typical focus group as consisting of five to ten members, selected on the basis of some important similarity (p. 117). The authors feel the correct number of participants is important, as well as an interest in the product under discussion:

You should have a minimum of five participants to facilitate good discussion and interaction. However, if you have more than ten people, you will probably have one or two who feel intimidated and will not take part in the discussions. You must have people who are familiar with the product or service or who are likely to use it. You should probably offer some kind of financial incentive, but it need not be direct payments to participants.

(p. 117)

The authors also say that physical arrangements for the interviews are important:

The setting should be as casual as possible. You will want to make an audio tape recording of the session, so arrangements must make such recording possible. A conference table or a circle of comfortable chairs works best.
(p. 118)

Once the participants are in place, the authors state it is the moderator's responsibility to explain the purpose of the interviews, stress the need for everyone to voice opinions and to interact with each other, and to mention that the taping is for analysis only. The moderator should stress candor of responses, have a written questionnaire to keep the session on track, then act solely as a guide, participating in the discussion only to ask questions or bring participants back to the subject when necessary.

Fletcher and Bowers conclude that focus groups are often preliminary to more extensive survey research, so that recommendations for future research are an expected part of this technique. Focus groups may, however, make future research unnecessary if researchers or managers decide results were so conclusive that further research would not be worth the cost (p. 118).

Although Fletcher and Bowers discuss the focus group technique from the advertising point of view, Lindenmann (1983) says that focus groups are also very valuable in public relations planning and program development. He cites his own firm's considerable success in using focus groups of "elite" audiences, such as shareholders,

business executives, and academicians, to test new concepts, to brainstorm, and to generate new ideas (p. 16).

Kopec (1982) commends the use of focus groups as worthwhile in a communications audit, once audiences have been identified for research:

In the case of large, amorphous publics, it's important to sort out areas for special attention. These "hot spots" may be completely unknown to management. How interviewees respond in focus groups is often at least as important as what they say.

(p. 26)

Mariampolski (1984) states that focus groups are an important part of the growing resurgence of qualitative research in the area of public relations:

The nub of qualitative research--and its claim to validity--lies in the intense involvement between researcher and subject. Because the moderator can challenge and probe for the most truthful responses, supporters claim, qualitative research can yield a more in-depth analysis than that produced by formal quantitative methods. . . . Qualitative research is a convenient method of acquiring an in-depth understanding of an audience--its vernacular, the images to which its members attach meaning, and members' motivations and interests.

(p. 21)

Focus groups have several advantages as a data-gathering method, and several disadvantages. The advantages include:

1. identification of trends--Mariampolski states that the use of focus groups in politics, for example, has helped fine-tune communications to members of specific publics, including revealing nuances and emerging issues missed by more traditional polling methods (p. 23).

2. stimulation of new ideas--Goldman theorizes that the interaction among group members may bring out new ideas that would

never be mentioned in individual interviewing. The group's reaction to these ideas is also valuable to the researcher (p. 62). The in-depth probing allowed in this technique can generate a greater understanding of human action than a response to a yes-no question on a survey form.

3. a window into the dynamics of attitudes and opinions--

Goldman states that the flexibility or rigidity with which an opinion is held is better exposed in a group setting than an individual interview. In the course of a typical group session, an opinion stated with finality and apparent deep conviction can be modified a number of times by social pressures or new information provided by the group. This pattern of modification in opinion, Goldman says, is often as rewarding as the opinion originally stated when attempting to understand motives (p. 62).

Focus groups can also be helpful in providing researchers with the language people use to describe experiences and feelings in relation to the product being studied, a valuable aid in developing and wording questions for a later questionnaire.

4. greater spontaneity and candor than may be expected in an individual interview. Goldman states that it is not unusual for group members to discuss issues that would not have been admitted to an individual interviewer, nor is it unlikely that group members who would not ordinarily "have time" for an interview, busy professionals such as physicians, for example, will participate in a group discussion (p. 62).

5. more productive and greater volume of information--Edward Fern (1982), assistant professor of marketing at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, studied focus groups, unmoderated groups, and compilations of individual interviews. He concluded that focus groups outperform both the other methods in numbers of ideas generated (p. 11).

6. flexibility of use--Fern also stated that focus groups are valuable because the technique may be easily bent to a variety of uses, such as generating hypotheses; exploring attitudes, opinions, and attributes; testing new product ideas; evaluating commercials; and identifying and pretesting questionnaire items (p. 1).

7. speed--when a quick assessment is important, focus groups can be extremely valuable. Long and Marts (1983) report using focus groups to evaluate a three-day conference, at the end of each day's sessions, to modify the remaining sessions as appropriate. These authors found this technique gave current, easily summarized, relevant data which could be used almost immediately (p. 6).

8. cost--the minimal cost of moderator and transcriptions, when compared to a randomized mail or telephone survey, for example, can be quite important to a small company interested in research.

Some of the disadvantages of focus groups are those of qualitative versus quantitative research:

1. no statistical data is produced--Goldman feels that the focus group functions to ask why, not how many. It focuses on the

understanding of the motives of behavior rather than cataloging the number of individuals who act in a particular way (p. 67).

2. non-predictive results--the subjective opinions of focus group participants are their own, expressed in individual attitudes, and are not necessarily indicative of a larger population. Although data may be improved with random sampling techniques, the focus group is primarily useful in establishing the range of attitudes held by consumers, but it does not reveal the representativeness of those attitudes--that is, how many people adhere to any given opinion.

3. difficulty in recruiting participants and last-minute cancellations--Fern points out (p. 12) a frequent problem facing focus group researchers is that participants may be difficult to identify, and may cancel at the last moment. Fern suggests that one way to ensure preferred group size is to over-recruit respondents, which may cause problems if all participants arrive. Keeping the group size within manageable and productive limits is difficult.

4. moderator bias--may significantly alter the data if the interviewer does not observe strict neutrality. The problem of objectivity and the importance of trained, experienced moderators must be recognized as imperative to focus group technique.

The focus group concept is a fairly simple one, and may researchers now agree that it does have a place in research, says Mariampolski (p. 22). Public relations professionals, he continues, "are recognizing that although the head count is important, it pays to have a thorough understanding of what it is you're counting"

(p. 22). Susan Antilla agrees, "When used properly, this form of qualitative research can be invaluable for helping companies understand marketing problems" (p. 82).

Group Sessions and Areas of Discussion

Four focus group sessions were conducted for this study during the months of August and September 1984. The two primary audiences of Extension home economics publications, Extension home economists and homemaker/consumers, were included in the group interviews. In selecting group members for participation, an effort was made to include primarily rural, suburban and small town residents, as well as a varied mix of ages and of length of experience with Extension activities.

The first focus group included eight Agricultural Extension home economists from selected counties of East Tennessee. The three additional groups, one each in the counties of Roane, Campbell, and Anderson, included homemakers who were currently active in Extension activities, interest groups, clubs, and the like.

The homemaker participants in these county meetings were chosen by the Extension home economist in that county as likely to be familiar with or interested in the publications under review. In each county, all homemaker participants were personally contacted by the Extension agent in their county, the purpose of the focus group was explained, and their cooperation secured. These homemakers were then mailed copies of each of the five publications in advance of

the group meeting, and asked to look through them for ideas and comments. In keeping with the ideal of five to ten members per group, the optimum number for participation was set at eight per session. In two counties, eight homemakers participated; eleven participated in the remaining county, for a total of 27 homemakers.

The important similarity among the group members was their involvement with Extension. Although the conventional wisdom regarding focus groups differs as to whether participants should be anonymous or know each other, in all cases for this study the participants were at least acquaintances, if not friends. Departing from the recommended practice, no financial incentives were given. Perhaps as the research was being conducted with the approval of Extension Service management, no problems were encountered with either identifying participants nor in last minute cancellations.

All group sessions were conducted in conference rooms, with participants seated around a rectangular table. Specific room dimensions and accommodations varied between locations, but all were adequate to the task. An audiotape recording was made of each session. Sessions varied between 80 minutes and 110 minutes. Approximately six and one-half hours of recording yielded a transcript of about 25,000 words.

The researcher acted as moderator in all sessions. Participants were welcomed to the meeting, then given an explanation of how the focus group was to be conducted, what issues were to be discussed, and the length of the session. Emphasis was placed on the freewheeling

exchange of ideas, and participants were urged to be candid. Although the taping device was plainly visible, the moderator pointed out to the participants that their conversations were being recorded, with mention that no one would be identified in the research findings.

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was prepared in advance for the moderator's use only, for keeping the discussion appropriately centered. Three primary elements of the publications were discussed: their content, their use, and their appearance. These three areas were seen to reflect the effectiveness of the publications in providing the useful and practical information of their stated objective, and in meeting the needs of their readers. The intent of the researcher was to provide a glimpse into the often-unexplored efficacy of not-for-profit publications. As Rivinus (1982) observed:

Some not-for-profit publications have outlived their usefulness. They are out of touch with their audiences. Their editors are removed from the practical realities of their constituents. The coverage is obsolete or innocuous. But, how can the management know this in an essentially noncompetitive environment?

(p. 103)

This study represents an attempt to talk directly with those who use not-for-profit publications and record their views. Folio, the periodical for magazine editors and designers, has consistently urged producers of publications to do reader research, but to be careful: "Editors who do decide to use research often fall into the trap of asking readers what they want to read, rather than what they need to know" ("Editors have arrogant attitude," p. 44). This research attempts to avoid that trap, by concentrating on the

audience's needs, as well as its reaction to current publication products.

Extension agents were asked to discuss the publications relative to their own use as references, tools in training sessions, and as sources of information to pass along to others. They were also asked to mention any comments made to them by homemakers in their county about the publications and their use, or to make observations about the publications' changing outdated practices. Many of the content and appearance questions were very similar for agents and homemaker groups, with agents responding both personally and as reporters for homemakers with whom they had worked.

Homemakers were asked to discuss their own use of the publications, including reading habits, use of the information provided, pass-along readership, discussions stimulated by the publications, actions taken, length of and place for publication retention, and ways in which the publications helped them personally.

Content questions to homemakers included discussion regarding the publications' meeting their stated objectives of useful and practical information, as well as providing new, timely, accurate, and interesting information needed by the audience. Participants also discussed the ease of reading the publications, the amount of information provided, and any homemaking developments not currently served by Extension publications (such as microwave cooking).

Homemakers also discussed the appearance of the publications, specifically as it related to their understanding and use of the

material. The publications' size, use of color, cover design, illustrations, and type size were discussed. Several formats, including the question and answer structure of the will publication, were commented on. Professional appearance and invitation to readership were also mentioned.

Participants were given the opportunity to suggest improvements in the publications, as well as discussing ideas for new publications to meet currently unmet needs. Additional comments were encouraged.

Subject areas for focus group questions were determined after review of existing standards. Rowena Ferguson (1976) lists five criteria for judging magazine content in her book, Editing the Small Magazine. They are:

1. balance--for a broadly based appeal, as well as directed toward one or more minority groups in the constituency;
2. comprehensiveness--keeping abreast of current changes, providing a wide range of interesting subjects;
3. variety of subject matter and treatment--specific methods of presenting information, such as a report, a picture-story, a column, or an editorial are mentioned;
4. suitability to slant--determining if the publication is written from the correct perspective; and
5. principles of effective communication--the publication should, both visually and textually, communicate the same message to the readers as intended by the producers.

(pp. 39-43)

Ferguson states that the entire magazine should impress the reader as being persuasive, congenial, and directed to him in terms he understands (p. 43).

Noordhoff (1966) gives the successful formula for an Extension publication, as stated by county agents:

1. the subject material:
 - a) gives information that people want or need
 - b) is up-to-date, specific, useful, well organized
 - c) is meant for only one audience
 - d) is tied closely to Extension educational work
 - e) is well planned before writing
2. the writing is clear, brief, interesting, and easy to understand
3. the artwork and typography are attractive, well-illustrated, and the type is legible
4. distribution of sufficient number of copies should be made on time and within easy reach of readers.
(p. 207)

All of these criteria (except distribution) were considered in design of the focus group questionnaire.

In addition, the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service Guide for its annual communications (publications) award was studied. The design of the questionnaire used by Elizabeth Mae Older (1979) in her thesis research, Evaluation of a Specialized Publication, was also a valuable tool. Finally, the research conducted by Nancy Hild (1984) for her master's thesis was invaluable, as she used focus groups to study an in-house university newsletter. All of these sources were reviewed to construct a questionnaire for this study.

Data Preparation

Transcripts were made of the audio tape recordings from each focus group. These transcripts eliminated non-essential conversation, and are, therefore, not a verbatim written record. Every comment was then extrapolated from the written transcript, paraphrased in some cases so it would make sense out of context, and coded. See Appendix A for Code, and Appendices B through E for coded remarks from the groups. Comments are not in sequential order. They are grouped together under the predetermined headings of Content, Use, and Appearance. The Extension agent responses are grouped separately under each heading, as their use of the material and their perspective is different from homemakers.

It is acknowledged that a subject dropped and returned to later may have more import than a subject discussed only once, but no attempt has been made to weight the remarks. This is not intended as an in-depth psychological study. The researcher is not qualified to determine the import of remarks based on facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, identity of the speaker, or any of the other indicators employed by psychologists.

Comments are not mutually exclusive; some may logically fall into more than one category. The researcher has attempted to place such comments as precisely as possible. There is always an element of subjectivity attached to such decisions, and this researcher acknowledges that in some instances, cases could be made for adding or eliminating comments within a category.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following definitions are applicable:

Group--a number of interacting individuals having a community of interests.

Publication--a booklet produced by the Agricultural Extension Service of Tennessee for limited distribution to readers with an interest in the subject.

Useful--helpful; giving service; usable; serviceable.

Practical--having to do with action or practice rather than thought or theory; workable in actual practice; using common sense.

Effectiveness--producing the desired effect; attaining results; having an influence or producing an impression; meeting stated objectives.

Limitations of the Study

The basic function of focus groups is to uncover opinions or motivations. Focus group research seeks qualitative, not quantitative data. The quality of information is based on a single judgment, by the researcher in this case, by the client or manager in other cases.

This study is intended to record a range of views about Extension publications, with an eye for improving the publications and as a foundation for future research. It is not intended as predictive

data for a larger population. Because the selection process was not random, the results cannot be generalized to other readers or other publications. Focus group discussions do offer insight into the spectrum of opinion held by readers that may later be tested quantitatively through a randomized sampling technique.

This researcher is not an experienced focus group moderator, nor a psychologist. The lack of an experienced moderation must be recognized as a limitation.

The relatively homogeneous composition of the focus group participants is both an asset and a limitation. The primary audiences of Extension have been traditionally agriculture and home economics-oriented, and it is from this population segment that participants for group sessions were recruited. However, it must be recognized that noninclusion of other possible Extension audiences does not allow their input into the evaluation of the publications.

Finally, there is no real agreement among focus group researchers as to the exact methodology to be used. Controversies over the size of the group, the effects of acquaintanceship among group members, the productivity of groups versus individual interviews, and the role of the moderator have added fuel to the fires of those who criticize this data-gathering method. For disciplined, academic, replicable research, it is a limitation.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

All focus groups discussed the publications in terms of use, content and appearance. Each group was also asked for suggestions for improving existing publications, and for ideas for new publications. In addition, the home economics agents were encouraged to discuss any problems currently encountered with their use of Extension publications--any needs that should be addressed. Appendix A shows the questionnaire guideline used by the researcher in the group interviews. Appendix B lists the categories and subtopics coded for each subject; Appendices C through F contain the actual remarks from the group sessions. In each case, remarks by agents and homemakers have been separated, as they speak from differing perspectives.

Use

Agents use the materials to distribute directly to homemakers, in response to an informational question or a specific request. They also use the publications as reference materials, for background information for locally produced news articles and radio programs, as handout material in leader training sessions or other Extension gatherings, and to create displays in public locations such as libraries. One agent reported compiling a "newlywed kit" of Extension

publications for distribution through her local county court clerk's office. Most agents also have a personal file of publications kept in their office for ready reference.

The agents primarily use the publications as singular materials, not as parts of a large concentrated effort on one subject, for example. They stated that the publications should be designed to stand alone in presenting information to readers.

Several agents reported receiving calls from homemakers requesting specific publications as replacements for materials "borrowed" by friends or relatives. Pass-along readership is apparently widespread.

Homemakers in all three groups used the information provided in the publications for reference and for self-education. Using the publications in preparing programs for other group meetings was mentioned in two group sessions. Homemakers also mentioned using a specific publication such as the brochure about wills to help them or their families make a decision.

Every homemaker who responded in all groups kept her Extension publications for a period of time--they were not read once and discarded. One homemaker mentioned having the canning booklet--or its predecessor--for more than 15 years. The intense loyalty shown for these publications by readers was an unexpected finding. Many homemakers mentioned their use of Extension publications over long periods, with several references to "our" publications. The homemakers who use these publications generally feel a strong identification with them and refer to them frequently.

Most homemakers had specific places to keep their publications. The canning and freezing publications were most frequently kept with cookbooks and the sewing publication with a sewing machine, for example. Other storage places mentioned were file cabinets, kitchen drawers, desks, and a tool box (for the household equipment publication).

Many homemakers did cite instances of pass-along readership, with daughters, husbands and neighbors most mentioned as additional readers of their publications. Homemakers generally agreed that the publications were extremely useful to them in their homes. Many stated that they "couldn't get along without" their publications. Homemakers in these groups displayed a real sense of identification with the publications, one measure of the success of a specialized publication.

One homemaker stated that she used her Extension publications "to find out what I want to know when I want to know it," echoing the practicality of the publications as reference material. All homemakers who responded felt the publications were created to help them, and many expressed appreciation for their availability.

Content

Agents generally agreed that the available publications are providing both useful and practical information as outlined in Extension's stated objectives. Many agents did, however, express dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the material. One agent suggested

placing an emphasis on leaflets and folders, produced more frequently and less elaborately, if that would provide more current information to homemakers.

Some current homemaking practices not covered by Extension publications were discussed by the agents. They mentioned the current use of microwave ovens and food processors as examples of topics which should be included in the publications.

Agents stated that current publications were used primarily as references, and that "new" information was rarely provided. They mentioned several publications that needed updating, as either the information or the illustrations were no longer current.

All of the agent felt the content of the publications was helpful to homemakers, and was also helpful to them in presenting Extension's message of effective home economics practices. Most comments about content were requests for more publications and additional information, with several remarks about the necessity for keeping materials up-to-date.

Homemakers also agreed that the publications did follow the stated objective of providing useful and practical information. They also said that the publications did provide enough information to cover the subject comprehensively, in some cases more than an expensive reference volume.

The publications were almost uniformly complimented for their readability, with only one homemaker requesting additional definition of terms. Most homemakers thought the publications were written "for

anyone to understand," and encountered no problems with technical terms or difficult language. This reading ease corresponds to the "fog index" of 12.8 or less for the publications as determined by this researcher, as mentioned on page 54.

Homemakers requested publications on microwave cooking; on dishwashers, food processors and other new appliances; on selecting upholstered furniture; on growing and preserving herbs; and on simple car maintenance. They requested changes in the sewing publication to include the newer knit fabrics and even more basics for beginners in clothing construction. One group also mentioned the need for information on health and exercise topics, and nutrition for older people. Basic crafts publications, such as knitting and crocheting, were also requested.

Homemakers were basically pleased with the existing publications. Most homemakers in the groups were using their publications frequently, and were eager to receive new materials. No problems with the timeliness of the materials were noted. Homemakers felt that the primary issue in the area of content was the need for additional publications.

Appearance

The agents voiced more comments about the appearance of the publications than the homemakers. Perhaps because of working with the publications daily, they were very concerned about the outdated appearance of some Extension materials.

Agents generally favored line drawings for illustrating publications in preference to photographs, citing both the cost and the dated nature of photos. Most agents realize that Extension publications are not intended to compete with consumer magazines, and cannot be as elaborate. However, agents did mention specific illustrations that were badly in need of change.

All agents approved the use of color on the publication covers, but there was disagreement as to the necessity of color inside the publications. One agent stated that if money were the problem, she'd rather have more publications and less "fancy ones." The agents color code publications, referring to the "red book" (canning) or the "blue book" (freezing), and state that any change in color cover of these would cause them problems.

Agents said the publications' size was generally convenient, but one agent stated she had to turn the sewing publication on its side to fit into her county's display shelves, and that didn't invite readership. Agents generally criticized the type size of the publications as being too small and difficult to read. The strictly question-and-answer format of the will publication came under criticism, as being difficult to find a specific answer quickly.

Most homemakers said the overall appearance of the publications was inviting and professional. The sizes of the publications were acceptable; a few called them "handy."

The discussion about illustrations included some interesting observations. One homemaker disliked some of the drawings in the

sewing publication, saying they were unclear and would be difficult for a beginner in sewing to understand. She suggested shading of one side of the fabric, as in commercial patterns, for the sake of clarity. Another homemaker praised the line drawings, saying photographs "would look too polished, too professional for a 'help' book."

Homemakers universally liked the use of color on the cover, with reaction mixed in regard to color inside the publications. Most agreed that it was not as important as the content, but that some form of illustration, even if not in color, was needed to represent "how-to's" and to break up large amounts of copy. Two homemakers complained about the lack of illustration in the will publication.

In contrast to the agents, no homemakers stated the type size was too small in the publications. Homemakers generally praised the legibility and clarity of writing of the publications. Some homemakers called them "professional looking," but most were more concerned with utility of content than eye-catching appearance.

Agent Needs

As in any interactive discussion, comments, questions and suggestions were provided by the group which were not wholly predictable. The agents were encouraged to discuss problems they were having with Extension publications, and a variety of responses emerged.

Agents requested more input into the topics for publications. They especially requested an individual copy of each publication as it was printed, so they could be aware of available publications.

Most agents did not know an Extension publications order catalog existed, and were delighted to receive one.

Comments were made about the need for agents to be informed in advance of news releases that urge consumers to "pick up a copy of this publication from your county Extension office." Many times, agents said, they did not know about the publications mentioned or have a method of checking news articles before printing.

Agents expressed frustration with lack of communication about publications from the university Extension offices. One agent stated she had scheduled workshops, ordered publications, and discovered too late that the publications were no longer available. Home economist agents also expressed frustration at being unable to get enough copies of popular publications, such as canning and freezing brochures. Apparently only a limited number of copies were printed annually, and no allocation schedules were set. Agents said they were not informed when a publication was "killed."

The primary concern of agents regarding publications seemed to involve intra-Extension channels of communication, as well as with the timeliness of the materials. Agents do heavily rely on these publications for their daily professional lives, and do appreciate the efforts expended to provide them a useful product.

Recommendations

Appraisals of Extension publications should not stop with a focus group study on a small segment of the total number of

publications available. Evaluation should be an on-going process. The focus group discussions were successful as a first step in providing a framework for future studies. Below are some specific suggestions, some recommending changes based on the discussions already held, some recommending additional research:

1. The objectives of Extension publications should be stated in measurable terms, with specific outcomes to be achieved. This would greatly facilitate the evaluation process. Total number of publications produced and/or distributed is a common yardstick for evaluation, but others could be developed. Determination of the influence of these publications is much more difficult to assess, but extremely important.

2. Extension publications are distributed statewide through county offices, public displays and a variety of gatherings. With this system, it is currently impossible to determine who actually reads Extension publications. Unlike periodic newsletters, with a fixed mailing list or a narrowly defined circulation area, Extension publications are distributed, free of charge, to anyone who requests them. This study attempted to locate readers for specific publications and ask for their evaluation, but further research should be conducted to determine who audiences are for other Extension materials. A method should be developed for discovering both existing and potential readers of these publications. Perhaps a method could be developed providing incentive for Extension agents to collect demographic data from publication readers. Such information could

be an unobtrusive form of evaluation, such as a response card within publications (similar to warranty information) asking for demographics and comments about the material. The agents should be recognized in some manner for the additional effort required to collect this information.

Only when the audience is known can authors directly address those readers' specific needs. As Wheelwright (1977) stated, editors should "develop empathy with readers" (p. 10) by knowing all about their lifestyles, education, size of family, social affiliations, personality, work habits, reading habits and the like.

3. Additional focus group interviews should be conducted to further evaluate existing Extension publications in a variety of subject areas. This study is intended as a foundation for building future assessments and audience research.

4. Focus group sessions with both homemakers and agents should be continued, to monitor important issues within these groups. Extension publications' authors should be aware of changing audience patterns and of developing trends that could affect their readers. And, as Ingalsbe (1976) stated, "One of the better ways of making a friend is to ask for his help or advice. . . . This designed closer contact with readers should bring about better understanding" (p. 29).

5. Extension personnel should investigate the possibility of providing more frequent information in leaflet form for current awareness issues. Publications are important references, but one-page leaflets may be valuable attention-getters.

6. An update of both illustrations and content of specific publications should be considered to respond to suggestions mentioned in group sessions. Homemakers and agents discussed needs in a variety of publications.

7. Extension communicators need to investigate ways to illustrate publications that will not become dated easily. Continued use of line drawings is recommended, but additional thought might be needed to become more flexible.

8. New publications could be created to respond to specific needs stated in these focus group sessions.

9. Extension communicators should maintain the use of color in publication covers and investigate the possibility of modifying colors as publications are revised, for easy color-coding. Color inside publications may be unnecessary with logical and graphically clear illustrations.

10. Extension management should investigate the possibility of a procedure allowing agents input into consideration of topics for publications, possibly an annual "needs survey" or other appropriate instrument for gathering information from the counties.

11. Agents should automatically receive copies of each newly printed publication, with distribution of one copy per agent, not one copy per county. Agents need to be informed as to availability of Extension materials.

It should be remembered that specialized publications such as those produced by the Extension Service do not compete in the open

marketplace. The immediate sink-or-swim feedback provided by newsstand sales is not forthcoming. However, these publications should provide their readers with information that is helpful to them; information which, according to the stated objective, is both useful and practical. The information should also be understandable, in a convenient form, with comprehensive coverage of subjects which meet the needs of the audience.

The Extension publications seem to be relatively successful in meeting their stated goal. The audience responses were basically approving of current efforts, with many suggestions and comments to add to and improve the publications' effectiveness.

Suggestions for Future Research

Not only do Extension publications need to be consistently evaluated for effectiveness, but the system should be studied to determine better ways of presenting Extension's message. Several of the homemakers in focus group sessions mentioned that many of their friends, neighbors and relatives were not aware of Extension's range of services. The visibility of Extension, particularly among non-farm audiences, has traditionally been a problem area, and one which should be explored.

Some Extension audiences also receive a variety of newsletters on a wide assortment of topics. These publications also need to be evaluated, both for utility of information and for format and appearance issues.

As a comparison study, an evaluation of these publications by current non-readers might provide helpful data--how do those unfamiliar with Extension's publications respond to these "most recommended" brochures? In addition, a study using publications currently available but not widely used might provide insight into why the materials were not utilized. The possibilities for evaluation of publications both for Extension and other information distributors is limited only by imagination.

The use of focus groups to evaluate many types of publications could be further investigated. This technique is valuable for providing immediate feedback on a variety of topics, and editors of publications often find such information very useful in planning future projects. The information gathered in focus groups might also be used as an initial research tool to learn the broad spectrum of opinions and concerns of the publication's audiences. Future studies should include a moderator skilled in group dynamics, to assess not only what was said, but how comments were made.

Finally, as stated in Recommendations, page 79, the true nature of today's Extension audiences should be investigated. Traditional thinking has dictated that Extension materials were designed for rural dwellers, yet many of the home economists in the focus group sessions discussed homemaker clients in small towns or suburbs. It would be invaluable to Extension authors to determine precisely the current composition of his or her audience, so that publications can be written directly to those targeted readers.

No publication can operate successfully for long periods of time in a vacuum. Each publisher should instigate, as a basis for continuing publication, a process of on-going evaluation of its product. This study is intended as an example of one method for conducting that evaluation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions in this form were used by the moderator to keep the focus group discussions within subject parameters. The questionnaire was used by the moderator only--participants were not given copies.

U--Questions relating to use of information in publications

How would you use the information in these publications?

Would you discuss any of the information with others? Who? What subjects might you discuss?

Do you keep the publications, or read them and discard them?

If you keep them, how long might you keep them?

Do you have a specific place to keep your publications? Where?

Would others be likely to read your publications? Who?

Do you usually read the publications once, or more than once?
If more than once, which parts do you reread?

Have the publications helped you in any way? If so, how?

C--Questions relating to opinions of publications' content

The objective of the Extension service is to provide useful and practical information to its audience. Do you think these publications are doing that?

Was the information in these publications new?

Was the information easy to use?

Was there information provided that you don't receive elsewhere?

Was the information timely?

Do you think Extension publications are a good source of information?

Do you find the publications interesting?

Were the publications easy or difficult to read? Any problems with unclear language or technical terms?

Was enough information provided? Were there any unanswered questions?

What changes would you suggest to improve the publications?

Are there areas you need more information about? What?

Are there any changes in the way you do things that are not being picked up in Extension publications?

Are the publications meeting your needs?

A--Questions relating to opinions of publications' appearance

Does the overall appearance of these publications invite you to read them?

All the publications in this study have line drawings, none have photos. Yet some Extension publications do have photos as illustrations. Which type of illustration is more helpful to you?

Generally, is the type size large enough to be easily read? Is the typeface (the design of the type) easy or difficult to read?

Four of these five publications use color on the cover. Is that necessary?

One of the publications uses color inside the publication. Is that helpful in reading?

Do you think the cover designs are appropriate?

What about the size of the publications? Are they convenient?

The publications aren't structured alike--they have differing formats. Some have general information first, then more specific material; one is entirely questions and answers. Which format works best for you?

N--Agents' needs regarding publications

What special needs do you have as an intermediary audience for the publications? Are the publications meeting your needs?

What suggestions do you have for improving the publications to make them more effective in presenting Extension's message?

What additional information or further recommendations would you like to discuss?

APPENDIX B

CODE FOR IDENTIFYING SUBJECTS OF DISCUSSION

The following designations were used to codify transcripts of the focus group discussions. The remarks from each group were extrapolated and identified as referring to Use (U), Content (C), or Appearance (A). The designations were further broken down to identify sub-categories within each category. Therefore, U-1 refers to use of information, U-2 to retention of publications, etc. Within each appendix, comments from agents and from homemakers were separated for clarity.

U1-4 Description of uses of information in the publications (Appendix C)

- U1--How information in publications is used by readers
- U2--Retention of publications
- U3--Pass-along readership
- U4--Ways publications help readers, gratifications in use

C1-5 Opinions about content of the publications (Appendix D)

- C1--Do publications follow Extension's stated objective of providing useful and practical information?
- C2--Are the publications meeting the needs of the audience?
- C3--Do publications provide comprehensive coverage of a variety of subjects with sufficient information?
- C4--Are the publications interesting, readable, easily understood?
- C5--What are the changes in homemaking practices that need to be reflected in publications?

A1-6--Opinions about appearance of the publications (Appendix E)

- A1--Overall appearance
- A2--Illustrations
- A3--Type size and typefaces
- A4--Use of color
- A5--Size of publications
- A6--Format

N Agent needs in publication areas (Appendix F)

APPENDIX C

COMMENTS REFERRING TO USE OF INFORMATION

Appendix C contains all of the comments coded to fall under U1-4 (Use). The Appendix is divided into two subsections: those comments made by Extension home economists and those by homemakers. Appendices D and E follow the same format for the other research categories of Content and Appearance.

U1: How information in publications is used by readers

Agents

When a homemaker calls in with a question concerning, say, canning, then I will try to answer the question over the phone, then send her a publication if she needs additional information or if she would like to receive one.

They're reference material for news articles too.

They're good content for radio programs. They don't send enough material for those. Maybe every two weeks you get two articles, and when you're doing twenty programs a week . . .

If I have a leader training on foods and nutrition I show them all the things that we have on that and they can have them. If they don't like what the specialist sends for a program, they can make up their own, using publications.

I've had displays like at public locations at banks, libraries or something like that. If you lay out publications to show what the Extension Service offers, and you come back to get your display and they're half gone . . . We provide order blanks to ask for publications but some take them right then.

We pack a kit of publications for newlyweds too that's distributed through the county court clerk's office. We put in publications on budgeting and just basic food information, just elementary type, and let them know we're available and where we're located and some of that type of information.

This one on wills--I've probably had more calls from people that were not club members calling after reading a news article saying this is available than I've ever had from any other news article. Of course these on canning and freezing--you give those out every day during the summer almost. But as a one shot deal, I've had more calls on that will publication than others I can remember.

The newspaper has a file with lots of our publications because we have action line and people call them for information. So we send the paper publications and ask them to put them in a file drawer so it might help them. The library also has many of our publications. With the food change update last year, they handed out (publications) for us. They are responsible for distributing a lot of information like this. The publications are given out either by themselves or in groups of two or three--usually--but I don't use them in coordinated long-term training sessions. Each should be complete in itself.

Yes, definitely, they need to stand alone.

Homemakers

When I can, I use this book to look up how long, and what temperatures to use.

I use this book every time I start to can, and this book every time I start freezing.

They are invaluable--I don't can or freeze every day, so I have to have somewhere to go to look up how to do it.

As the wife of a probate judge, I would advise everybody to read the publication on wills and heed the advice--keep everything up-to-date.

I'm interested in these types of things, so I've kept up with what publications are available.

I appreciate the fact that they're free. I've ordered some USDA publications, and there's a charge for those. I guess they figure if you have to pay for them it makes you use them more than just getting them and throwing them in the garbage, but I use these just as much.

If they pay for them, they won't order them unless they really want them.

I've used all of these publications at one time or another except the household equipment one--I hadn't seen it before.

Whether I would sit down and read the entire publication, or just scan it depends on what I'm looking for, how much time I have, and what the subject of the publication is. I might just look at one page of the canning book, but I might sit down and read the entire will booklet at one time.

I would scan in the sewing booklet too, looking for the area I was having difficulty in or needed refreshing in.

If you didn't know how to do any of this, I think I would start from the beginning and read the whole thing.

But then I think you'd go back and read what you needed at the time, like if you needed pickles, you'd read pickles.

I use quite a few of the Extension publications.

I have given programs at garden clubs and other places and used the publications and told people they were available, and from where. I used the canning and freezing publications for that just last month. I've also used the one on growing strawberries and another one on starting a garden, and they've really been helpful.

I scan the books when I first get them. Then when something comes up and I need an answer, I refer to the booklet.

I did read the will book all the way through. It's so short that's not hard to do.

The Retired Teachers Association has a meeting coming up soon about having a will made, and this booklet would be nice to use for that. Could we get extra copies for other teachers?

I think the sewing book is for very specific information. The canning and freezing books--by having recipes--gives me ideas for things I want to do.

I get new Extension publications every time I come up here.

All we have to do is call our county agent and we get answers to lots of questions. She sends us publications through the mail.

We get publications when we have a program and there's some information we need.

We all take advantage of publications in lots of ways.

I don't read all of it at one time--you read the part you want right then and there.

The will publication is different--you have to take it as a whole. I would read it all at once.

The canning publication I might use just to find out about beans--I wouldn't read about anything else then.

I like to sit down and read recipes for relaxation. That part of the book I might sit down and read all at once.

I read cookbooks like a regular book, to get ideas.

When I first started out, there were a lot of things in here (canning and freezing brochures) that I didn't know, but now, since I've done it for several years, it's pretty much used as a reference. But the household equipment book was new to me, and I thought very good.

My mother calls me on the phone to ask me questions about how long to cook beans, or other things about canning, and she knows I have these books to look at. I gave her copies of both of them, but she still calls me, because she knows I have mine handy and she keeps losing hers.

I read the publications to find out what I want to know at the time I want to know it. I don't read them like I would a book or magazine, so they don't have to be interesting.

I do like to read some of the publications, especially the ones on plants, just because they are interesting. But for the reference publications, like these, I may only read part of one page at a time.

U2--Retention of publications

Agents

I keep one of all these publications behind my desk so I can reach for them, but then I have them on the shelf too.

I have my own personal file of where I make notes in too, close by my desk. And then I have them on the shelf.

I have all mine in a notebook by subject matter, where I can also lay it out for the public. They can flip through the notebook and see which publication they need. And I have taken my shelves down when we moved and have all the publications in file drawers by number. It's a lot easier to get to. It took a while to set up, but it's real easy to see what you've got on hand, to take inventory and put up. So it works real well.

Homemakers

I've had these publications (canning & freezing) ever since I've known (county agent)--over 15 years at least.

My canning and freezing books are with my cookbooks, this (sewing) is with my sewing machine.

My household equipment book is in my junk drawer--it's very convenient there. The others are in my file cabinet--I try to be organized.

I've taken the Singer sewing machine classes--this sewing book goes with my Singer sewing book--they're not far from the same size.

I keep the canning and freezing books with my recipe books. All the others go in a cabinet drawer.

I try to keep the publications handy, where I always know where to find them. Usually that's in my desk.

I keep the publications all the time.

I keep them for future reference.

I've had the canning book for many years.

Once I get a book like these, I don't let it get away.

The canning foods and preserving foods are in my recipe file. Every year I have to go back and look at them several times.

This sewing book has been around a long time. I've had it for years, and it is a wonderful thing. For the young basic sewer--anyone who wants to start out. You'd be surprised just how much a young 4-H seamstress can get out of this book.

I keep my publications all together in a drawer in the bottom of my cabinet--it's full of Extension publications.

I keep these (canning & freezing) where I cook and this one where I sew.

I keep these (canning & freezing) on top of the refrigerator, filed with the cookbooks, and the others stay in the desk that has the file folders in it, and my sewing book stays in my sewing machine case. There is a system to where I keep them.

And this one (household equipment) should be in the tool box.

I have a particular place to keep them so when I need them, I can find them in a hurry. If I have to search through the bottom of a junk drawer filled with all kinds of things, forget it!

Mine (canning & freezing) have fruit stains on them, but they still work just fine.

I've still got some of them (publications) dated back to when they came from the university in 1932 and 33. I'm going to hold on to them--they still have some good recipes I use.

I've got a little white cookbook that my uncle gave me when I was very young in 4-H, that says University of Tennessee Cooking something on it. I wouldn't give it up for nothing. It has some real good recipes in it.

U3--Pass-along readership

Agents

I had this lady call the other day and ask for publication 724. I said, "You do, what's the name of it?" And she said, "It's canning foods. I had one and all my friends saw it and I keep giving mine away. They told me to just get another one." So she's got it memorized by number.

It (publication) gets around to one farm wife when others see it they all want one. So it doesn't always come straight from us--it's handed.

I think a lot of husbands read some of them too. From what I hear from the women, they take it home and they say, "My husband sat down and read that whole thing after I brought it home."

That's especially true on household equipment. I think that one--husbands read it a lot.

The one on estates--these men read and enjoy those. The one that's about estates and trusts.

Homemakers

All of the publications I've had about household equipment--my husband enjoyed reading them.

Sometimes my husband will read one of my publications before I do, if it's laying around and he sees it.

I've asked for extra copies of both of these (canning & freezing) for both my daughters, and my mother-in-law.

I've convinced several of my neighbors to call (county agent's) office and get copies of several publications, especially the canning and freezing ones.

Everybody who's ever seen any of my publications wants one.

I've sent several people to the Extension office for a booklet.

I have trouble keeping the ones on canning and freezing, because so many people pass through and want to take it with them.

I bet I've given 30 or 40 of the canning booklets away, because every time I get one someone sees it and wants it, so I get another one and then someone else wants it.

I can't keep either the canning or freezing books. All my neighbors have borrowed mine and I just go ahead and get another one, because I know I'll never get mine back.

The publications are passed on--particularly to members of the family. I've given my daughter several of the booklets, then replaced them.

I've sent several publications to my daughter in California.

My husband reads my publications.

I'm going to take this publication (wills) home and beg my husband to read it. We really need to have a will made, and I think this publication might convince him it's important.

My 10-year-old reads a lot of the publications on crops--growing strawberries and all those, anything on foods--he gets use from them too. Even the 5-year-old likes to look at the pictures in some of them.

U4--Ways publications help readers, gratifications in use

Agents

The one on wills--it will prompt them to make a will. When they read a little more about it and the reasons why a will is important, that would influence the people more than likely to go make a will.

I think the main thing is it's just good practical information that they can use in a lot of ways.

Homemakers

I don't think the importance of these publications can be talked about too much--especially when you consider that they're free!

We (my husband and I) updated our will after (county agent) gave me a copy of this publication and we realized how important it was.

This publication (will) could definitely cause someone to make a decision. It's extremely important.

I think this is a very good publication (will). Reading it has made me vow to make a will--in fact I've made an appointment with a lawyer.

The publications have started several discussions, especially the one about wills.

My daughters talk to me about these two (canning and freezing) a lot, especially the one who lives in California where she can get all those nice fresh fruits and vegetables.

People don't necessarily think about providing for a special need. I have a handicapped grandson, and reading about the need to spell out special provisions for him made me aware that I need to do that.

Having something to show someone when you're talking about a subject--like the necessity for a will--is very important. That's where these publications are important.

This is an update on the will publications. I had another copy that wasn't as up-to-date. I was glad to get this copy; it gave me some information I didn't know.

Food canning too changes with the times. I have an older copy of this booklet, but I'll use this new one now.

I started my grapevines by getting an Extension booklet on how to grow grapes in Tennessee, and they're doing well.

I have been canning out of the canning book for three years, and I've never lost one single thing. If you go by the book, you're safe.

The canning book in particular has really helped me.

There's quite a bit of difference between this will booklet and the one published in 1978, I think. I was glad to see that the information had been updated. There's been a lot of changes in that time, and I was glad the Extension Service was keeping up.

I went to the library to get a book on wills in Tennessee, and never did get any information. So I'm glad there is some information available from the Extension office.

I have had a problem with canning corn, and our agent had to call UT for me to see if the cans were okay. I kept reading in the canning book, and I wasn't sure if I had done it right, so I asked her to check for me. So the book did cause me to ask about exactly how to do it.

I think the will booklet could really help people who read it.

(Will) This booklet has been available through the county agent's office here a long time and it has helped a lot of people over in our community decide to make a will.

The publications are important to let poeple know what to do--particularly in the case of the will booklet. It's important for a reference, but it's also important to emphasize to friends or family that they need to do this (make a will).

The hardest thing is getting people to realize they need a will. If this book can make anyone realize that, it's done a great service.

This wills publication--our club had a program on it, and discussed it. A lawyer came to talk too--it was real interesting. He said a few things which are not in this book. For instance, your wills should never be exactly alike. One of the things involved in which one dies first, if there's an accident. I remember you must not have identical wills because that causes problems.

Most of the things about wills you need a lawyer to do--it's so complicated--unless you understand that sort of thing. At least this booklet tells you that.

A lot of people say "That's how grandma did it" and that's how they do it. I think these publications can show people that there's an easier way for lots of things.

The updated methods shown in these books are better, and usually easier, than the way mom did it. The problem is just getting some people to change their habits.

Whatever I'm getting ready to can or freeze, I always look up in these booklets. I don't try to remember from time to time exactly how to do it, but use the book. That's why these are so important to me.

The publications help in that they keep us up-to-date in the way to do things. There have been so many changes since I was just learning how to can and freeze, many years ago.

Not so much with these particular publications, but with others, I'm always learning something about gardening or crafts, for example.

For people who have never canned or preserved, these books are terrific. I gave copies of both to my mother-in-law. I was surprised at how much she didn't know, because she was raised on a farm, but she says these books have really helped her.

APPENDIX D

COMMENTS REFERRING TO CONTENT

C1--Do publications follow stated objective of providing useful and practical information?

Agents

Yes, they're useful and practical, but I have a problem with the timeliness of the information. By the time we get a publication approved, go through screening and everything, it may be two years before we have a publication to hand to people who need the information more quickly than that. We do mimeographed materials, and hand-outs, but there should be some in-between way to get information to people on a more current basis. Maybe we could produce leaflets or flyers, anything that will get the information to the people faster than a waiting period of two years.

People ask me about specific things and I have to tell them we'll have the information, and it will be good, but it will probably be a year or two after the big emphasis on that is over. There should be a way to get even small pieces of information to the counties quicker.

If we had leaflets, they could be for an entirely different purpose than the publications. They would be intended more for awareness, just to let people know about current trends or issues, while I think publications are meant as references.

All of these publications are just basic information and they are used as references--even by me. I don't remember all the times and temperatures for canning--I look them up.

If you're looking to reveal something new, you don't get it out of publications. But they are excellent references.

I think each publication needs to be considered from the point of view of is it a worthwhile publication or is it trivial, and does it support our objectives? The publications should support our recommended practices. A publication on making candy, for example, wouldn't be exactly what we recommend, from the nutritional standpoint, unless it was just for Christmas or something special.

We would rather have a trifold leaflet on something of current interest than taking the time to wait two years for us to get a printed publication, and then it's almost out-of-date. Like our impact materials were so helpful, because they were little leaflets and they were timely.

Or the leaflets that have come out from the marketing agents. Those were great.

I've used those so much. I wish we could have several like those leaflets, because they're on a current interest.

I think the leaflets are great for aesthetics, but I've actually found as much useful information in the canning and freezing books. Still they are great handouts.

Our people are looking for the most current information--because that's what we say--that we're going to provide timely information. Publications don't always do that--leaflets could.

I think we'd all agree that what we have is both useful and practical. We just need more--and more current information.

Homemakers

Publications do provide useful and helpful information.

They've been very helpful to me.

I think this one (household equipment) is especially good for people who just don't know anything about household appliances. Lots of people might not know that a simple thing like a refrigerator not being level could cause a problem.

I think this one (household equipment) is really good, because it's so clear.

The information was both new and for reference. There were some new things, not so much in these publications as in the one about strawberries, for instance, but then there were also just lots of basic reference material.

There are publications that are older, that need to be updated.

The canning book is good because it includes recipes with the how-to's.

I didn't know a pear didn't ripen on the tree until I read it in that book (canning).

One of the questions I had--on the back of these publications it says free to eligible persons. Who is eligible? What does that mean?

I think the publications are real practical. They've helped me learn to do several things.

This sewing book is basically what I learned in high school home economics. For anything fancier, there would have to be another book.

I don't see how they could be much more practical.

C2--Are the publications meeting the needs of the audience?

Agents

I've been so frustrated ever since they've discontinued the reseating chairs publication, because the one it was replaced with, weaving with cane, does not show how to use sea grass. That's the part I used the most. So I've been mimeographing my copy of the old publication for group meetings.

Please get the reseating chairs publication reinstated. I can't tell you how many times I've used it.

It would be great if there were some way to survey the counties--to ask them to come up with 5 or 10 needs they have for publications--things we deal with every day, so that we can let the specialists know what we are asked about.

When helping homemakers make decisions, sometimes you just can't get away from brands. We have to have knowledge of the brands, even if we can't recommend them.

When I get calls about food preservation, and I've been getting many, I always end my conversation with "Do you have an up-to-date canning reference?" That's when I ask for their mailing address and ask if I may send them a ready reference. I've gotten a lot of what I call "Thank you" calls for the publications. One young homemaker called to thank me and said that was the nicest thing she'd ever gotten--"even better than a cookbook."

I've gotten a thank-you card for a publication--I've got it on file. It's the only one I've ever received.

I had two young homemakers take this publication (will) home and ask their husbands about making a will. Both couples have wills now, because of this publication. I gave them both a copy telling them, "This is important to every family." So the publications can make a difference to people.

Homemakers

(Sewing) I did feel the information could be updated. Like the knit materials that so many people use now--I didn't find any information in here about those.

We desperately need a publication on microwave cooking. At least I do!

I think you could go into shortcuts about sewing. If not in this book, then in another one.

Cleaning wood paneling is another thing I'd like to know more about.

I would love to have a publication on how to select good furniture--what to look for. I'm looking for a couch, and I need to know what's important to notice.

It is hard to tell about upholstered furniture, what to buy and how to take care of it.

I think everybody is interested in microwave cooking. We would really like to have a book about the basics of microwaves.

I need to know how to refinish older plaster on walls. Not sheet-rock, but the older type of plaster. I haven't been able to find anything.

A lot of poeple are going back to using wood stoves to heat with. You never see anything on cooking with a wood stove like that, but people are beginning to use them again. They don't know how to use them if they've never been taught, like by their mother or grandmother.

I wish publications could help us in buying large items. I know they're not supposed to recommend brands, but if they could just say what to look for when buying a stove or refrigerator, it would really help.

I'd like to see a booklet on herbs. Growing them especially, and preserving them.

I'd like to have some information on seasoning with spices.

The women's club in our area is going to be growing herbs and things that they can make wreaths out of. We need help with that.

The one I wish was better, bigger book was the one on chair caning.

The one on chair caning has been changed--the old one had how to cane with the sea grass, and that's not in the new one. And that's the best section in the book. I don't know why they had to leave it out.

The publication on buying appliances was not helpful--it really needs to have more information in it. It's very vague.

I'd like to see a book with a little basic information about a variety of crafts.

I think the publications we have to talk about today are good, but there are so many others we need.

The biggest problem I see with these publications is they need to be updated more frequently, cause things change.

The fabric has changed so much. There isn't anything in the book about sewing with fabrics other than woven, and that's what a lot of fabric is now. There definitely needs to be a publication on sewing with knits.

There should be another book called "Beginning Sewing" even before you get this one, for people who have never sewed. I bought a pattern recently, and it left out a lot of things they just assume you know how to do. If I was a new sewer, I never would have understood how to get the dress together.

I just got a microwave, and I really need to know about it. Not so much recipes--there's a book that came with the oven that has recipes--but do's and don'ts, what to do if the food doesn't cook evenly, that kind of thing.

Microwaves are changing so fast--when I got mine two years ago you couldn't put spaghetti in it, and now you can. It would be hard to keep up-to-date in publications for something changing that fast.

How about the differences between types of microwaves--like the carousel type? Mine isn't that type, but I don't know enough about them to know if that's good or bad.

I'd like to see publications on basic crafts, like knitting and crocheting.

I'd like to see a publication on do-it-yourself simple car repairs, especially for women. I don't mean putting in a transmission, but how to know what to look for when a mechanic works on your car, so you don't get ripped off. Call it Powder Puff Mechanics.

I'd like to see a few basic things about car repair, like how to take care of your battery, taking care of your radiator, checking the water hose lines, what to do when you break down on the road at night, checking your brake fluid, what tools you should carry with you in the car if you're traveling alone, even how to change a tire.

There's nowhere to find out the do's and don'ts of what to do if you have a car accident. I would love to see some information on that. Like what the insurance company needs, always read the police report--things like that.

I think there should be a book on nutrition for people over 60 years old. There's a lot of older people who don't eat well, because they're alone, or they don't cook like they used to. But they do need to know about nutrition.

What about publications talking about using less sugar and salt? People are very health conscious today, and some of us know we should cut down on sugar and salt, but not everyone knows why.

If older people used those tables about calories, it just wouldn't work. If I ate that many calories, I'd be as big as a hippopotamus! The tables need to be adjusted for the older population.

I read something recently about women with osteoporosis--women who weren't getting enough calcium and who had bones break just by bending over. These are older people, who might not be aware of the need for increased calcium, in milk or whatever.

Right now would be an excellent time to have publications on health because people are beginning to be aware of these issues, and are looking for information on what to do to stay healthy.

I don't think basic health information would go out of date. If we just had information about foods necessary for proper nutrition, for example, that wouldn't be likely to change.

People are more aware of the need for exercise now. Any information on exercise would be welcome.

Any craft publications would be great. Basic knitting, or basic embroidery would help adults just learning, and would help 4-H kids too.

Anything about finishing crafts would be good--so many people start projects and then don't finish them because they don't know how . . . the little things that make a real difference in the finished product.

Anything on economizing in crafts would be good.

A publication about inexpensively framing pictures made from needle-work would be real helpful to me.

Exercise for older people is important. Could there be a publication on what we older folks can do--safely--to keep fit?

And there could be something about exercises to do while washing dishes, or sitting in a chair, or just while you're in a car, not anything strenuous, but muscle toners?

C3--Do the publications provide comprehensive coverage of a variety of subjects with sufficient information?

Agents

I get very frustrated with those on buying appliances--those really ought to be looked at. It doesn't tell you all the different types that are available, and what you can expect from the different types--it just gives you general guidelines on how to be a good consumer. A consumer book as applied to everything is what they are and they don't help.

The household equipment publication needs to be updated right now. There's a wringer washing machine in here. They don't have a microwave, and they don't have drip coffee makers, they don't have food processors. There's a lot of new appliances--that's what women need to know about, not wringer washers.

It doesn't have to be a publication--it could be a leaflet. On each new thing that comes out, we need information then, not a year later.

We just don't have enough publications on up-to-date subjects.

Homemakers

This publication (will) does answer some important questions, but there should be a reference as to where to go for further information.

The publication I've seen similar to this--called When There is No Will--may need some updating. It needs to be more of an attention-getter.

Maybe putting in some hypothetical cases of what can happen without a will would make people understand more clearly how important a will is.

What happens if there isn't a will when there's not a lot of money, just your home and your automobile, household furnishings, but no

large dollar amount--the publication just mentions figures about a total estate, but that's hard to translate into figures when you're talking about possessions, not savings accounts.

I ordered a larger, very expensive book on simple repairs, and I don't understand everything in it. I do think I understand what's in this book (household equipment). And I think there's just as much information in this booklet as I would ever need to use. I wish I'd saved my money (for the expensive book).

I have the Reader's Digest volume on repairs, and I use it quite often. I didn't know that Extension had this book, but now that I've seen it, I will use it.

The information was not really new--I didn't find anything in here that I hadn't had at some time over the years, in some class.

In the canning book, on page 5, about the lids on the jars . . . I suppose all of us use the two-piece lids, but there is nothing in here about how to remove your rings from your jars when you're ready to store them. Those of us who've done canning will know, but someone who's canning for the first time will wonder when and how to get those rings off.

It also doesn't say that Kerr lids fit best on Kerr jars and Mason lids fit best on Mason jars--not everyone might know that.

In the canning book, why not a list of things that can be corrected and how to do it? I don't think the questions and answers (p. 28) are enough. There may be more than one reason for some of these things to happen.

That scorecard included in the canning book--I just don't care for it. I'm sure it may be important to someone to see what they've done, that all the beans are exactly the same size, and so forth, that might mean something. But not to me. I'm interested in getting a usable product for the winter, not if my jars would win a contest.

I just forget about the scorecard and go ahead and can. I'm not interested in contests, just good food.

Perhaps some information at the beginning (of the food books) or in the general information section as to the importance of following directions exactly.

A tip I heard from (county agent) which isn't in here is to put vinegar in the water you're using to can the jars, to keep from having that white circle in your canner.

It's such a good book (canning), but there's always room for improvement.

There's quite a bit of information that you'd have a hard time finding anywhere else, at least in so good a form to use.

I think the sewing book needs a vocabulary list, or definitions, or something to help you read and understand a pattern.

I don't see any use for having a scorecard, unless you were being judged at a fair or in a contest. I'm going to eat it anyway.

I like to look at what the canning material is supposed to be like, so I can see if I've done it right.

Nowhere in the canning book does it say not to reuse the lids. Nowhere on the box does it say "Do not reuse." My sister reused the lids, and lost 90 per cent of her stuff. It should say not to reuse the lids.

Somewhere I read you're not supposed to use jars over and over for the same thing, like jellies or pickles, because the sugar or vinegar can get into the glass. I don't know if that's true or not, but that should be explained one way or the other.

The lady from the Ball canning company in Greeneville said to throw the lids away if you'd had them longer than a year. That didn't make sense to me, because some stores keep their lids from one year to the next, and they aren't going to throw them out, so why should I? I think if that's true, it needs to be explained. She said the temperature might affect the rubber lining or something.

I've also heard you shouldn't use a case knife to get the air bubbles out, but to use rubber or plastic. That isn't explained in the canning book.

A hot jar will break real easily, and you really should be careful in handling them. I don't remember seeing that in the canning book.

(Will) I think they left something out of here. They used to have something about what would happen if you didn't have a will, about what would happen to your estate, who would get everything.

In here (will) it tells about if the court appoints an executor the court tells the percentage that he gets to take care of the estate. It doesn't say how that executor is chosen.

There used to be a publication that said what happened if you didn't have a will, what happened to the wife or the children. I didn't see that in this book. I think that ought to be in here. It's important that people know that the wife would only get a child's portion, whatever that is.

In some cases brothers and sisters would be included even over the rights of the wife . . . I really think those things ought to be in here.

There's not enough in here (will) about trusts. It does just mention it, but there's not really enough information about it.

It talks about a trust, but it doesn't tell you in here that it's going to cost you money to set it up. The people who administer it charge. That should be in the book.

And just because you put it in your will that you want it done, and even if the lawyers have drawn it up and everything, that doesn't mean it's going to work. You can still come out losing nearly everything you had, or your family can.

And also it didn't tell you that in the state of Tennessee, after you pay your inheritance tax, they can come back three years after that and reappraise your house and you have to pay more. People should be aware of that.

The food preserving publications must have been written a long time ago, because they leave out the microwave.

Another thing--it tells you to put all that water in jams and jellies and then to cook it eight degrees above the boiling point of water. When you add all that water you've got to boil it all out, before it gets up to 220 degrees. They should cut down on that.

It says in here to always look for a jar that says Mason on it before you can in it. They don't all say Mason any more. If you buy them in a box that says "For canning and freezing" you're okay, but they're not all going to say Mason on them. Some will say Kerr Mason or Ball Mason, but not all the jars are labeled. There are fancy ones, quilted-looking ones, that don't say anything anywhere on the jar. The book needs to warn people that not all canning jars will say Mason now.

In the canning publication it does not say to use hot jars, at least I couldn't find it. It says in some places to put your jars in hot water, but you can put your jars in the oven, set on about 212 degrees, and your jars are hot, and they're dry--no need to worry about dropping a wet slippery jar. Or you can put them through a cycle of the dishwasher. These are tips that are helpful if you don't want to deal with handling scalding water.

You do need to warn people to be careful and follow directions exactly--for instance, if they put jars in the oven to heat, they should be careful to set the oven at 212 degrees, not 500, or they'll break their jars.

We dry apples in the hothouse where we raise plants. It works really well. Maybe the book on preserving could mention that there are several ways to dry foods.

I've helped with 4'H'ers learning from this book (sewing) and I think it's real good. Of course, we do help them individually, so maybe these are things that need to be explained better for someone reading and working on their own.

C4--Are the publications interesting, readable, easily understood?

Agents

I wish the publications would not say to me "Use one pound of fruit." I wish they would say, "Use X cups of fruit," because the homemaker doesn't have the foggiest idea, and neither do I, what a pound of fruit is. Not 3/4 pound of sugar--tell me how many cups that is. The homemaker doesn't measure by pounds, they have no way to weigh it.

So many times we have publications that tell you to use some chemical name, and you have no idea what it is yourself, whereas if they could just put a commercial name and then put the little exemption clause that they weren't endorsing it. It would make it so much more practical. The one I'm thinking of in particular is "Removing spots and stains"--stain removal. Every time I read those I wonder what in the world I tell them to go look for, whereas if you mentioned a brand name on the shelf, they'd know exactly. I've seen other states do that, and then put a little exemption clause by the material.

For the stain removal--if we could just have a sheet to staple into the agents' books so we'd know what they're talking about--that would help.

I think the level of technical difficulty depends on the publication. I think the one on sewing has to be pretty technical, but then the ones on buying a range, buying a refrigerator--have you ever read these? They don't tell you anything. They're useless.

These are reference type materials, not just the type you'd sit down at the first page and read all the way through.

When the publications are written like the will one, all question-and-answer, and you need to refer to something specific--it takes a while to find what you're looking for--with no index. Not necessarily this one--but other longer publications--it sometimes takes a few minutes to find the answer, and if you have someone on the phone waiting for an answer, that can be embarrassing.

I like the canning one because it does have definitions. It may not be applicable to all publications, but for at least some, you need definitions.

Homemakers

The publications seem to be written so that anybody can understand what they're talking about.

I've got the Handyman's Encyclopedia, about 22 books, and I never pull one off the shelf. But I will use this (household equipment) because it's simple--even I can understand it!

This one (household equipment) I think I can understand!

The publications are interesting.

I enjoyed reading mine.

For non-college people, they are good.

The booklet on wills is interesting enough that is someone picked it up once, they wouldn't put it down until they went through it--it's only eight pages.

Explanations are real plain--easy to understand. And you don't have to search for the actual meaning--it's right there.

Especially in the household equipment book--it's written until even I can understand it, and I'm not mechanical at all.

The publication about sewing might throw some people. If you know how to basically do it to begin with, you wouldn't have a problem, but if you were real new, it could be hard in places.

The booklets are to the point--they don't say "You could use this instead of that." They don't get you confused.

C5--What are changes in homemaking practices which need to be reflected in the publications?

Agents

The only thing we've had on microwaves is that home study course. The home study course is excellent, but it doesn't help a woman who wants to buy a microwave. And I've had that call--I'm sure all of you have "What kind of microwave should I get?" "What should I look for?" And I feel real ignorant.

I think we just need more information on all the new appliances, including microwaves, food processors--all the things homemakers are using now.

Homemakers

We need a publication on the care of hardwood floors. With so many people getting interested in restoring old houses, that's something we could use.

There definitely needs to be a microwave cookbook.

And we need to know how to defrost in a microwave safely.

I've heard of people using their microwave for preserving, like blanching of beans. But who knows whether that's safe?

In the preserving foods publication, talking about drying foods, one of the easiest and cleanest ways when it's hot is to just put your apples on a screen or whatever, and put them in the car with the windows rolled up, and in one day they will dry.

I'm sure things like drying apples in the car would have to be tested and approved, but if they work, why not a book with not only basic information, but shortcuts wherever possible? So many people are working full time now, they don't have the time that some of us do to do all the canning and freezing.

On page 11 in that sewing book, you just simply can't straighten materials in this day and age by drawing a thread and going through all that rigamarole. They just won't straighten, and that should be just taken out of the book. It might really discourage someone who is just learning to sew, who spends a whole day trying to straighten a piece of material that's crooked. I don't see any point in having that in the book.

In the household equipment book--they now have food processors, and that's not in here. It ought to be updated to include food processors, because a lot of people do have them now.

Microwave ovens also need to be included in the household equipment book. Of course, I think we need a separate publication on microwaves.

I think the basic thing with all of the publications is just to keep them updated. We'd like to see a new version at least every five years.

Dishwashers aren't included in the household equipment book either.

We have all these appliances that make things easier; we need to know how to take care of them.

APPENDIX E

COMMENTS REFERRING TO APPEARANCE

A1--Overall appearance

Agents

The will publication is on such a depressing subject. And then when you look inside it's all writing, and it's just like reading a text-book--boring.

The publications aren't exciting--but they're not meant to be.

They're mostly okay--but I think some of the looks could be improved.

Homemakers

Eye appeal is important in every area--the books need to be attractive.

I think the information is most important, not the looks.

These publications aren't real pretty, like a magazine with lots of colors. For those of us who know what's in them, that doesn't matter. It might matter to someone picking up a publication for the very first time.

We're interested in the information. Appearance is necessary, but only to help get the information across.

A2--Illustrations

Agents

The will publication is pretty dull. There are no pictures.

I think the reason so many publications have drawings and not photos is the expense of printing--not because the drawings are better than photographs.

Photos sometimes can date something. Even though the material is just as relevant, sometimes a photo can date it quicker.

You do need something to illustrate them--please no publications with just page after page of typed material!

Like the will publication--unless a photo is necessary to illustrate something that they need, it isn't necessary. I can't imagine what illustration you might have in that publication.

I don't think people expect to see pictures in the will publication. They want it serious, and they want facts. I think that's what it should be, this type of publication. Maybe some of the others need to be jazzed up, but not that one.

I think lots of times pictures or drawings, unless used to show technical information, is just used to break up some reading because it's intimidating, but if you had headings, captions, little small print that lets you know what you're about to read--that could work just as well to break up the material.

Some of the publications really need to have their covers looked at. I remember one with a pig on the front that's pretty funny--and I don't think they're meant to be funny. I think they could be made more attractive--they don't have to put the picture of a rear end of a pig on the cover.

But that's really no different from us seeing a can on the front of a canning publication. It's what appeals to that person in their area of interest.

I think the biggest problem I have is from people who pick up a publication and say, "I'm not going to read this, look how old these pictures look. This must be as old as the hills." Even if the publication isn't updated, the pictures need to be changed.

The home improvement ones are the worst (outdated). With hairstyles and clothes and houses.

Perhaps in designing the publications they could keep this in mind and use cartoon type characters so they aren't outdated so quickly. If it's a publication that they think will be used for five or ten years they should plan this into it, so it doesn't look outdated in two or three years.

Some of the interior design ones--the furniture is pretty crummy looking. You can always call it antiques, but that doesn't always work.

Homemakers

I like the drawings, no photographs. The drawings are clear, where a photograph could be shadowed.

With the drawings, you get the impression that someone else did this, and knows that it should be done this way.

A drawing relates more to me than somebody else's picture. I much prefer the drawings.

Pictures look too polished, too professional for a help book.

Photographs get dated too easily, especially in sewing and fashion.

I think you recognize details more in line drawings than in photos.

Photographs can make the booklets look out-of-date, even if the written material is still perfectly okay.

A picture of the finished recipe would be helpful (canning book), to compare your results with others.

Some of the pictures in the sewing book are not very good, but the pictures on patterns aren't very good either.

The sewing book--the clothes are a little outdated, particularly on the cover. It might tend to turn some people off.

As long as the illustration is clear, it doesn't matter if it's a drawing or a photograph. It does need to clearly show us what they're trying to tell us in the words with it.

In the sewing book, they should do what's done on the pattern instruction sheets, and shade one area, whether it's the right side or the wrong side, but do it throughout the book. That way it would be clear which side they're talking about.

On page 17 (sewing book) where it's illustrating seams, it's a little difficult to tell what the right side is, and what's the wrong side, especially if you're new at this, if you're just beginning. I think those people would have lots of trouble with these illustrations.

On page 17, they're talking about a topstitched seam, but the picture looks like basting threads, and that's where the machine stitching should be on a topstitched seam, not up there where they've got it.

I think all the illustrations on seams (sewing book) should be re-worked.

They need to scrutinize the whole thing (sewing), especially the illustrations.

Figure 34 (p. 17, sewing) that illustration is misleading. They don't need that great big hunk of stuff sticking out there--it doesn't serve any purpose. Why didn't they just cut that out of there?

A3--Type size and typefaces

Agents

The type is too small. It needs to be larger.

The homemakers can't read it.

Possibly enlarging the print--even of the questions in the will publication--would make it easier to read.

I've never been consciously aware that the print was too small in any of these.

There are older people, though, who wouldn't read these easily.

In the canning book, there are more than one kind of type. Pages 28 and 29 are more readable than 34 and 35, for instance. That's partly because of the spacing--they've left some blank spaces, and that helps you get through it.

The dark print used in the will publication all runs together--it is hard to read. I don't like it at all. It gives me a headache looking at the page.

Homemakers

For us, it's easy enough to read. We might know some people who could use a larger size type.

It seems easy to read to me.

I'm so glad to see the print is large enough to read. With recipes in the paper, it's real hard to read them, but these are easy to read.

I can read these publications easily, without struggling. So many things now, the type is so small it's really hard to see.

The type is a good size.

A4--Use of colorAgents

If you're trying to advertise, everybody knows if you use bright, primary colors, they'll create interest.

I don't think it's worth the extra money to put color inside. I think having the outside cover in color is good, but it's not necessary on the inside.

It's not like we're advertising--looking for people. We already have their attention. They're already in the book, looking for something. We don't need to add color to get their attention inside.

I don't feel like we're competing with magazines. This isn't something people will lay on their coffee table because it's pretty.

The color on the outside looks a lot better in our bulletin racks than all black and white.

Just as long as we have more (publications) color doesn't matter. I'd rather have more different publications than fancy ones.

I refer to the "red book" and the "blue book" for the canning and freezing publications. Please don't change those colors, or we'd all have to relearn our habits.

When you update other books, if you could change the color, so we could ask a homemaker "Do you have the green book or the yellow book?" Then we know if she has current information, and we can easily tell if our publications on the shelves are old or not.

Homemakers

I'm glad the covers are in different colors. It's so much easier to reach for the one I want.

(Household equipment) This just looks like a dirty nail book--a hard work book. The gray isn't very appealing.

These (canning and freezing) are bright, appealing.

I think the color selections are good.

And this is appropriately morbid--black and white (wills).

They catch your eye by using colors--that's the important thing.

I like the use of color inside the household booklet. It seems to make it more interesting.

I don't think color would add anything to the sewing booklet. The drawings show more details.

The use of color would definitely help, even if it's just to attract someone to pick up the booklet.

I like it better when a publication has color. I liked the household equipment book, because it had color inside.

Having color for emphasis really works. I would be much more likely to pick up a publication with a colorful cover than a black and white one.

I'm so used to the red and blue covers on the freezing and canning booklets--I hope they never change them, or I'd never find them in my drawer.

The use of color for emphasis is a good idea. I think people will respond better to anything with color in it.

I think the color inside the household equipment publication is just to make it look nice. I think the diagrams without color are just as effective in explaining what they're trying to explain. But it does look nice with color.

Color will fool you. I've bought cookbooks because the pictures were so beautiful, and the recipes weren't worth a hoot. So I would read these publications even without lots of color, because I know from experience they have lots of good information in them.

Color does make a difference. My daughter teaches ninth grade, and when given the choice between geography books with lots of color pictures, and ones without, even though the material was basically the same, the kids got really excited at the idea they could have books with all these gorgeous pictures. Even the parents got involved looking at the books with the photographs. So color can affect your response to a book.

Black and white is so dull.

If I look in my drawer and see the blue, I know it's for freezing, and if it's red, it's for canning.

Color makes something stand out. I think the more color in these, at least for the covers, the better.

If people knew what was in the publication, they would read it even without color. But not everyone knows about Extension books.

A5--Size of publications

Agents

The sewing publication won't fit on my shelf--I have to turn them sideways. When people look at them with their necks bent, they won't take them as well.

The size of the others (except sewing) is good.

Homemakers

The books are a convenient size.

The sewing publication needs to be larger--it catches your eye because it is bigger.

I like this large size in this one (sewing) too. Maybe it's just because I'm used to it.

Most of the sewing books I've seen are large, so this is fine.

I think the sewing book is a good size. With all the illustrations, it needs to be that large.

I don't think the size of the sewing book is a problem, but I do like the smaller books better.

The size is comfortable.

They're handy.

I like that one (sewing) the best because I use a filing cabinet, and it just fits.

The sewing one matches my other sewing book from Reader's Digest.

Most cookbooks are this size (canning), so this is perfect for keeping together with the others.

A6--FormatAgents

I like the questions like they have in the back of the canning book.

I like to read the question and answers because it makes me feel that I'm not so dumb--I have the same questions other people do. But it is difficult to find something specific real easy (in the will publication).

I think if in the will book, they had some sort of general outline with basic information, and then the questions, it would be more effective. I don't like just the questions that are unorganized and you can't find anything.

I've also seen publications where they ask a question and they never answer it. That really is one of my pet peeves. This one (will) is not like that--it does a very good job of answering the questions.

Homemakers

(Will) I think people should read the whole thing, but an index would help if you had a specific question.

But if you're really interested in it (will) you're going to go ahead and read it. An index wouldn't mean anything to me, because this booklet is so short, I'd read the whole thing at one time.

The length of the booklet is what's really important. For more than just a few pages, you do need an index.

I think the pressure canner information should directly follow the water bath canning information (p. 13, canning).

The questions and answers are helpful. I can look for an answer to a certain question without reading the entire book.

I really like the questions and answers.

The will publication is good--I like the question and answers.

Having a question and answers section is definitely helpful.

If it says canning on the front, with fruits, vegetables, pickles, and jellies, that's the table of contents. You don't really need a table of contents.

I don't agree. I think an index or table of contents is necessary, at least for me to find anything.

I wouldn't alphabetize the canning book. I would put fruits, then list all the fruits under that, and then vegetables, and then pickles, and then jellies, putting types under each heading.

I prefer things alphabetized in an index.

The household equipment book needs an index. A table of contents isn't quite the same thing.

I think the table of contents is plenty for the household equipment book. I haven't had any trouble finding things.

I need information in a short time--I don't have a lot of time to sit down and read long booklets. I think shorter leaflets about one specific subject would be great.

APPENDIX F

COMMENTS BY AGENTS REFERRING TO SPECIAL NEEDS

These comments were made by agents regarding their special needs in working with Extension publications.

Sometimes we are not aware of what is available in publications. There are some specialists who have a list of what is available in their own department, but you do have to ask about others, or wait for an inservice, which may be months away. My major problem is not knowing something is available, picking up something in someone else's office and finding out it is one of our publications.

I got this one (household equipment) in another county and asked "Where did that come from?" It was the first time I'd seen it.

I didn't know we had a catalog of Extension publications available.

The one I had was dated 1977.

I had never seen the catalog before today.

I think every agent ought to get a copy of everything new that's printed. That doesn't happen now, but it's needed.

We need to know about all publications, even agricultural ones, because we get questions, and we need to know what's available to refer to the county agents.

Especially if you end up in a county that does not have a county agent for a time, then you especially need to know things.

If someone comes in your office with a question about agriculture, even though I might not know the exact answer, if I know that there's a publication with the correct information, I would have a resource to give that person.

The only way it would work one publication per county is to make sure that each county leader passes it around, and that just won't always happen. There's a lot of paper that comes across our desks, and sometimes it could get lost in the shuffle. It would really help if we could each have a copy.

I feel I should have a file with every publication available, but I don't. We don't always know when new publications are available.

Sometimes I'll see a publication in another county and it's one I've never seen before. That's frustrating.

We need an inservice on publications. Bring a copy of each one, or somehow expose us to them, so we know what's available.

It would be wonderful to have a room somewhere on the Ag campus, even if it's a closet, that is kept up-to-date with publications, so when we're in Knoxville, we can go look and order publications.

I was working with the neighborhood center which distributes the low income cheese, just the other day, and she asked me if we had something that showed all our publications. I said no, because I had no idea this publications order catalog existed.

The specialists used to hold off their new publications for the grand premiere at inservice training, but I think they're getting better to go ahead and put these in the mail as soon as they're available, rather than make us wait nine months or a year later for inservice. Many times I've seen publications in the mailroom that I've never seen before, and then they'd show up 6 or 9 months later at inservice. That's a big time lag.

Our people have heard about things before we have sometimes.

When do we discard things? I've never thrown anything away in my life. We are never notified to get rid of anything.

I never know what's current, or if there's been an update or something.

I've been so frustrated ever since they've discontinued the reseating chairs publication, because the one it was replaced with, weaving with cane, does not show how to use sea grass . . . That's the old part I used the most. So, I've been mimeographing my copy of the old publication for group meetings.

The only way I find out about something that isn't available is to order it, and get a different publication. I just assume that it is a replacement, but there's never any notification.

I've been planning workshops, ordered the publications, and then found out that they weren't available. That really hurts!

Sometimes with UT publications, more with the USDA publications, news releases will come out and say "Contact your county Extension office" and you've never heard of the publication before, much less have them available.

Is there an existing list and the price for USDA publications? Could we possibly get one from the publications office?

Phyllis Inman was on Channel 2 with several Christmas crafts, saying the directions were available at the local Extension office. I had several calls, but I had no idea what they were talking about. That's embarrassing.

On the news articles, we have talked to our county paper, and we have asked them not to put anything into the paper unless it comes directly from our office, because so many times the articles that came from UT mentioned materials we didn't have, or knew nothing about.

The little Dixon county paper where I was from, the county agent would take one of the news articles from UT, update it, personalize it, run it under his name. Then the paper would run the same article somewhere else in the paper as news from UT. That meant two articles just alike.

I think it would be interesting and helpful if you could do an in-service training with all the publications and all the agents and let us tell someone about the ones that need to be updated. They should do it periodically, or each department should do it.

I'm led to believe that the USDA nor the land-grant colleges are not doing very much research in equipment, and this apparently is the reason we do not receive anything. They assume that we can go to the appliance store and pick up the information on commercial brands as easily as the homemakers can.

And yet we can't recommend brands, so that puts us in a bind, as to talking to people about buying appliances. We don't have anything to give them, to show them, and we can't keep all the commercial leaflets and give those out.

Can we provide homemakers with information from Consumer Reports? I've heard both yes and no, but I've done it.

If we don't have any other information, we have to back up what we say with something. I've referred them to Consumer Reports when I'm at a loss for information.

I requested information on a particular piece of equipment, and the specialist mailed to me some commercial material. I didn't have to go looking for it, but I couldn't use the material to recommend anything either.

How come no one ever plans ahead--in the summer we always need tons of these canning and freezing publications, and we always run out. Always--we're told, "No more this year."

It's because gardening and home preservation are becoming more popular with young families, and no matter how many we order, there's always a greater demand than we have.

How many are we limited to on these publications? Is there a limit? Is a county allocated so many?

Are the publications first come, first served? No one has ever said.

The canning publication--there were some changes this year--and I tried to replace them with my homemakers. Maybe that's why we're out of them.

No, it happens every year, they just don't print enough (canning and freezing booklets).

I'm curious--who is usually on a committee to review publications" I think this is the first opportunity I've ever had to say what I thought about publications, other than 4-H publications.

I've heard specialists say, "It's being reviewed by the reading committee and it's going to be out," but I never know who's on those committees.

It seems that they would let the people who are the direct arm to distribute these publications have a little input into them.

I have read one publication before it was printed--I'm not sure if that meant I was a part of a reading committee or not.

I think they use the specialist who wrote the publication, and another specialist who is familiar with the material, and then someone who is not familiar with it, to see how well it reads. I don't know who else.

I know we've had input into surveys, but never about publications--and certainly never in a group situation like this.

Many times I want to know more than what's in the publication--as a teacher--as someone who should be aware of background information. Sometimes I wish that there was a teacher's edition of these publications, or something extra for the agents who use them. Sometimes I get asked "Why is this so?" and I need background help.

I think that when specialists get ready to do publications, if they could study what's being done in other states it would be a great help. If there's a good publication being used in another state, there should be some kind of cooperative arrangement that Tennessee could also publish that. I know it's been done before with some things. And I know there are good publications available in other states--Kentucky, for instance. Before a specialist at Tennessee spends hours and hours doing a publication, why not look at what's already available? The other states' publications could be personalized for Tennessee, and it would be much easier than writing one from the beginning.

"Care and cleaning of furniture" was from another state, and it's been a really popular publication.

I've picked up publications from Bell County, Kentucky and Lee County, Virginia, and they do have real good ones. There's no reason why we couldn't have the same information. I don't think these things are copyrighted. For example, there was one on "Clothing for large women" that we really need.

We're a cooperative service, so why not share with other states?

I have a real problem with knowing how and where to order publications. When I ask my secretary to order, usually she'll tell me two days later that "We don't order those from there" and I never know where to order.

I don't even know where to order this "order catalog." It says "E.C."--what does that mean? And where do I order it from?

Our office doesn't have an order catalog like this. Ours is from either 1975 or 1976, and I haven't seen a newer one.

Every agent needs a copy of this catalog--not just one per county. We all order publications--and we all need to know what's available.

They assume if something is mailed to our office we automatically see it and we don't. Our Extension leader may assume we got a copy of it too and it's not passed around. I've had mine ask me "Did you get a copy of this" Inside offices, there's no specifications on what Extension leaders are supposed to hand you. Is there?

VITA

The author was born in LaFollette, Tennessee. She attended secondary schools there, graduating as valedictorian of her high school class. She completed a B. S. in Journalism from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she was business and advertising manager for the student newspaper, The Daily Beacon. She was also voted "Most Outstanding Advertising Graduate," and held membership in Phi Kappa Phi, Kappa Tau Alpha and Gamma Alpha Chi.

Following a year as fashion copywriter for a retailing chain, she joined the staff of WATE-TV in Knoxville, where she held a variety of advertising and public relations positions, including promotion and public service director. She then became assistant director of communications and development for East Tennessee Baptist Hospital in Knoxville, followed by involvement in a private healthcare management and public relations consulting firm in Oakland, California and Dayton, Ohio. She is currently assistant professor and publications editor for the Agricultural Extension Service of Tennessee in Knoxville.