How to Make Reports

Pan Dodd Wheeler
Municipal Technical Advisory Service

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HOW TO MAKE REPORTS

Even for City Governments -

Produces citizen enthusiasm

over City projects and problems.

Right approach:

Think of people in terms of service!

PAN DODD WHEELER

TECHNICAL BULLETIN NUMBER 30

Municipal Technical Advisory Service

Division of University Extension

in cooperation with the

Tennessee Municipal League
How to Make Reports

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Published for officials in towns and cities by the MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE of THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE DIVISION OF EXTENSION in cooperation with the TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
About the author...

Practically speaking, the modern municipal report is so new that "experts" in the field are almost non-existent. However, few individuals have had more constant and more varied experience in collecting information, designing, writing, and publishing municipal reports than the author.

As the adviser on municipal information to officials in Tennessee cities, she has worked on some 80 reports for 35 different cities ranging in size from 800 people to 200,000. She has written numerous articles on municipal report-making for The American City, which he serves as public relations editor, and for Tennessee Town & City, for which she handles writing, art, and layout.

As executive director for the Government Public Relations Association, she receives and evaluates reports of cities and other governmental agencies in all parts of the world. And she has served as a judge in many contests for city reports in several states.

In preparing this "formula" for the annual report, she draws heavily on experiences, on what others have said and written about report-making, and on the reports produced by cities over the country during the past decade.
WHAT IS A "MUNICIPAL REPORT"?

"Municipal" describes that which is of or pertaining to a town or city.

"Report," according to Webster, is "an account or relation" ... "a statement ... of proceedings and facts." As an example, Webster cites that kind of information about performance made "by an officer to his superiors."

A "municipal report," then, is an account or relation, a statement of proceedings and facts about the city, made by officers of the city to their superiors -- the citizens who elect, support, and pay them and to whom they are responsible, under democratic procedures, for the operation of the city.

Statements of the city's financial condition, a newspaper account of a council meeting, a citizen brochure about a bond issue are types of municipal reports under our definition. However, this handbook is concerned, not with those types of reports, but with the municipal report that is periodic and repeating (issued at least once-a-year, every year), is comprehensive (covering all units of the city government), and gives emphasis to service provided (what the taxpayers money bought) rather than to finances (the money itself).
WHY MAKE A MUNICIPAL REPORT?

Officials in Tennessee towns and cities which have made reports have a realistic answer for this question. Here is what they say.

City officials owe an accounting to citizens

"Our people have given us the responsibility of running the biggest business around here ... the town government. We owe them a report of our stewardship of their business." - (City of 5300)

People need a factual summary of city operations

"Citizens get most of their information about the city operations from the newspapers. This means they get stories in daily chunks sometimes written by persons inexpert in municipal business and sometimes by persons biased for or against what they are reporting. In a municipal report, all the work of the city is summarized so that people get an overall picture and they get it factually and accurately." - (City of 175,000)

Citizen support comes with citizen understanding

"We expected a hue and cry over a proposed water bond issue. But, our annual report last year explained how we had spent town funds, why a bond issue was needed, and how it would be used. Apparently, the report did the trick." - (City of 2100)

Paves way for needed municipal projects

"We have been ordered to build a sewage disposal plant. We knew we had to bring citizens up to date on why the city had to take action which involves a lot of money. A town report proved a good way to tell people about our dilemma." - (City of 3700)

"We are faced with some major expenditures. Right now, we're working on a first annual report which will, among other things, lay the groundwork for the projects we must undertake." - (City of 10,700)

Cuts down complaint and information calls

"We get many calls for information about the city -- folks wanting to know who to telephone about a stopped-up sewer, where to go for a building permit, and so on. Well, we explained all this and gave phone numbers in our report. We tried to answer questions citizens were likely to ask." - (City of 33,000)

Boosts citizen and city hall morale

"When people understand what city officials are trying to do -- and they should find out in the report -- they look on
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Boosts citizen and city hall morale

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city officials with new respect. A good report boosts citizen morale about the town, increases respect for the work officials are trying to do, and provides incentive to the city officials to do a better job." - (City of 400,000)

Tones up cooperative spirit of citizens

"Our leading banker has said that because of our public relations program -- which includes making an annual municipal report -- he wants to help us out and feels other people do too. He has said that 'when city officials are willing to take citizens in as partners in running the city a new spirit of cooperation on the part of businessmen and citizens is generated.'" - (City of 33,000)

Our people demand a report

"When we incorporated, some of the citizens said they wanted an annual report. They've been paying taxes 100% and we've been issuing reports every year. The two things go hand in hand -- our people demand a municipal report, and we've found it pays to comply." - (City of 1100)

These statements by Tennessee city officials are typical of the way officials in cities elsewhere reason about a municipal report. Obviously the favorable response varies with the activity reported, the skill of the reporter, and the needs and plans outlined. Not all the "good" results will be recorded by every reporting city. One or more of the favorable reactions, however, can be expected by cities where officials have done a good job, where they issue a factual report, and where the report attracts and holds citizen readers, viewers, or listeners.

The reasons for making a municipal report are sufficiently sound to persuade an increasing number of cities each year to make such reports. The Government Public Relations Association estimates that of the 2500 cities with 5000 or more people, 800 provided a municipal report to citizens for 1955-56 ... conservatively 33% more than the number of reporting cities for the previous year. Of the 800, about half published printed reports, the other half reported to citizens via radio, TV, films, slides, and talks.

Tennessee's experience is that cities with less than 5000 people are interested in reporting. In 1953, of the 17 Tennessee cities making reports, 12 were cities with less than 5000 population. During 1956, 25 of the very small cities reported. While national figures are not tabulated for the smaller cities, indications are that city governments, in municipalities of all sizes, harvest good results from a municipal report.
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WHOSE REPORT IS THIS? AND FOR WHOM?

The definition of a municipal report suggests that "officers" make the report to their "superiors." So, in most cities, the report is made by the elected officials who have general-administrative duties, the mayor alone or the mayor and the council. The report is made to the citizens.

In municipalities where there is a city manager, he may make the report to the mayor and council, in which case citizens are somewhat incidental parties to the report. Preferable, therefore, is that the manager join the mayor and council in making the municipal report or that the report be that of the mayor and council only, based on a report to them from the city manager and so indicated in the report.

It is essential that the report not be one from city officials to other city officials but from city officials to citizens.

This principle suggests that the report must be geared to the "man on the street" -- in presentation, point-of-view, language, and illustration.
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It must be interesting to him -- because it competes for his time with many other activities. It must be concise -- because citizens are busy people. It must be true -- because people sense and disregard "cover up" material. It must be related to the individual citizen -- because he is more interested in himself and his family than in anything or anybody else in the community.
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FORMS FOR A MUNICIPAL REPORT

There are a number of ways in which city officials can report, effectively, to citizens. The following are ways which have been used by cities in Tennessee and throughout the country.

Booklet

The booklet or magazine-type report is among the most usual. It may be mimeographed, multilithed, or printed. In size it ranges from 4" by 6" to a large 11½" by 14" (Life-size) and from about four pages to 48 pages.

The magazine-type report accommodates illustrative material (photographs, drawings, charts, and graphs), but it may be only a word-story. Use of color and the booklet design is at the discretion of the reporting officials, their technical adviser, and their report-budget.

In this form, the city report is an impressive document. Generally it has a long life in the household (longer than the newspaper, a letter, radio or TV presentation). A booklet allows for considerable variation in presentation and illustration. It may range in price from 4¢ per unit (for a mimeographed report) to $1 per unit or
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Look at what's been accomplished 1955-56 and 1956-57

* Better streets because they've been resurfaced (so have business alleys)
* Land purchased -- 57 acres -- for recreation and industrial development
* Park, lake, and football field being planned for this new area
* Zoning for orderly growth, done with help of the State Planning Commission
* Engineer studies completed on water and sewerage system needs

...this is planned for the year ahead:
* City Beautiful Committee for cleanup, planting, and beautification
* Extend corporate limits of Sharon to 57 acres the city has bought
* Build a new road to the property and extend the water system to serve it
* Continue progress with the support and help of the people of Sharon

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ALDERMEN
   James Erwin
   Eugene Gordon
   Jack Simmons
   R. C. Stokler
RECORDER W. W. Roberts
WATER SUPT. Truman Adams
MARSHAL Reece Cole
CD DIRECTOR Jerry Cannon

Three Cheers for SHARON

A Report to Citizens on Township Government
SHARON, TENNESSEE OCTOBER 1957

1956 & 1957

...more (for an elaborate, slick-paper, picture-filled report).
Planning and layout deserve special attention in this kind of municipal report.

Folder

The folder is a popular report from among the medium-sized and smaller cities. In size, it ranges from a sheet that folds to 3½" x 5⅞" (post-card size) to one that folds to 3¾" x 8½" and fits in a regular #9 or #10 business envelope or is a "self mailer." The folder may be mimeographed, multilithed or printed.

The folder accommodates illustrative material easily--allowing, when opened, expanses convenient for presenting large tables or financial data. Photographs, drawings, color, and imaginative layout control the effectiveness of the folder form.

As a folder, the city report is in an "easy-to-handle" size, has a long potential life and is inexpensive -- ranging from less than 1¢ per unit if mimeographed, to 25¢ or more for a larger, multi-colored folder. The folder is easier to mail than any other report type.

Newspaper

Recently many cities, large and small, have published municipal reports in the newspaper. The newspaper report may be a half-page or full-page in the newspaper proper:
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full-page insert (two sides back and front); or a complete tabloid section, inserted in the newspaper.

Newspaper format (headlines, sub-heads, stories in columns) is usually followed. Photographs and other illustrative material can be accommodated. Color can be used by some big city presses. Weekly papers and small-city dailies will confine their printing to black and white or perhaps black-and-white with one accent color.

A newspaper report is usually paid for on the basis of regular space advertising rates with art work and engravings for pictures costing and amount over and above the space rates. While costs will vary greatly, excellent newspaper reports are done for as little as 5¢ per delivered copy.

The newspaper report is automatically distributed, has wide readership-potential, appears in the timely style of the regular newspaper-story which people are used to reading and like to read.

But the newspaper does not have the "staying" quality of a separate printed report. Several large cities have overcome this weakness of the newspaper report by utilizing the tabloid (magazine-style) which slips out of the regular newspaper and can be kept along with other magazines. Jackson, Tennessee, employed a newspaper insert (two sides) which folded three times to make a booklet-type report, which was probably kept after the newspaper, in which the report appeared, was thrown away.

Most newspapers provide professional services to the city without charge: help with writing, headline-composing and the layout. Newspapers often have available -- from newspaper files -- suitable photographs for the report.

Letter

A letter from city officials to citizens is a brief, informal way of reporting. Not often used, it has good possibilities for the small city. It can also be used to complement, explain, and promote other types of municipal reports, particularly radio and TV reports or reports made via speeches.

The letter can be mimeographed or printed. It should be friendly, informal, and genuine. The letter may not have a long life -- but readership potential is high. It is, of course, easily distributed via mail. Its cost is small.

Radio Program

The radio report may be a one-program affair or a series of three or five programs, appearing on successive nights or the same weekday night in successive weeks. Time may
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range from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. The hour, preferably, should be in the evening (Class A time). The program may be done entirely live, may be tape-recorded and played back, or may be partially live, partially taped.

Many formats are suitable for the radio report. The program may be a talk by one city official or talks by several. It may be a narrative, handled by a radio station commentator with tape-recorded segments featuring the voices and sounds of citizens, city officials, busy streets, the water works, and so on. The report could be a question-and-answer program with selected citizens asking question of city officials. It might be a drama utilizing a "typical" family visiting various municipal departments and operations or enjoying city services in their home, school, business, and church.

The format selected for a radio report should be that which can be done well by the people and facilities available. For example, a "family drama" should not be undertaken unless a professional director or producer is available.

The radio program should be presented in time donated by the radio station. Special costs -- of tapes, station personnel time spent in rehearsals, costs of advertising the program -- should be borne by the city.

A municipal report in this form will have wide listener-potential, has the shortest life of any report, must be backed up with pre-program advertising and possibly a summary information sheet (letter or folder) which citizens may retain when the program is over.

TV Program

The municipal report via TV enables the use of visual material which makes for easier understanding and more lasting impressions. The TV report might be one program of a series. Length of the report program ranges from 15 minutes to one hour.

The TV-program format is highly flexible: panel with question-and-answer; narration by announcer or official spiced with charts, graphs, slides, and motion picture film; a dramatic show utilizing people and visual aids; or a film showing city forces at work.

TV stations in Tennessee should provide free time for such programs. Special production costs -- film, slides, production accessories, must be paid for by the City. This type of report is short-lived, attracts attention, can make good viewing for TV watchers.

A TV-report, however, takes planning by professional television people, requires the services of producers and
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**Motion picture**

Motion pictures lag behind other types of reports. But this way of making a municipal report is vigorously endorsed by cities which have used it. From the little Village of Patchogue, NY, and the City of New Orleans, La., municipal officials testify to the effectiveness and versatility of filming the city's progress.

Amateur cameramen pooled their equipment to film the Patchogue story of village government. The village paid only the cost of film (which includes development of one copy). The film is in black and white. Narration is provided by the person showing the film.

New Orleans has a movie cameraman on its public relations staff. Its moving pictures are in color but without sound. Narration is provided by city officials.

Motion picture reports are lively, unique, attention-holding, impressive and versatile. Films can be used for TV presentations and for showing to groups. This kind of report, however, requires the services of professionally competent people and the availability of expensive equipment.

**Talks by City Officials**

The municipal report via talks to organized groups: service and business clubs, professional organizations, civic groups, and church and school associations takes considerable time on the part of the reporting officials, an ability to eat lunches and dinners of creamed-chicken and green peas, a presentation that sparkles, and visual aids to supplement the speech.

While the municipal report made via a speech-series costs nothing, the props (charts, slides, films, and exhibit materials) that give life and meaning to the talk will require an expenditure. A folder report, distributed to the audience when the speech is made, or a letter sent to members of the audience after the speech has been made, strengthens and reinforces the municipal report delivered as an address.

The late Memphis Mayor Frank Tobey was an exponent of the municipal report via speeches. He said that such a report allowed him not only to report, personally, to many citizens, but that his personal appearances gave
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citizens a chance to "talk back and tell me what they think, want, and appreciate."

Variations of these general types of municipal reports are many. Two are worthy of special mention -- the calendar report and color slides.

A calendar of municipal events has been developed by Richmond, California. This "Family Reminder" is a 52-page report. Each page lists the days of one week, Sunday through Saturday; shows community meetings taking place during the week; and carries a photograph and descriptive outline of some activity, program, accomplishment, or personality of the Richmond city government.

Richmond citizens responded so well to the first "Family Reminder" (1955), the same format has been used again. City officials say that the calendar "fills a citizen need, humanizes community services, creates greater awareness of citizen responsibility, provides needed information, and stays around for an entire year, continually receiving attention from the household or business since the calendar is in daily use." The cost, Richmond officials say is 34 cents a copy on a quantity run of 17,000.

Wichita, Kansas, was a pioneer of reporting via colored slides. There are 36 slides, in color, which, with commentary, tell the city's story. Five thousand persons saw the first slide report in showings to civic clubs, PTA groups, church and business associations and school groups. Bookings are handled by the city and a city official presents the commentary. This can be adapted to the interests of the viewing group. Facts, however, about the city operations, meshed with the slides, are mimeographed and provided to the commentator.

Wichita's first slide report proved so successful that two more reports, for as many years, have been produced. Lewisburg, Tennessee, has also developed a color slide report.

In deciding on the kind of report most suitable for your city, consider these factors: availability of newspaper, radio, and TV media in your town and the popularity of these media with your people; the willingness of media directors to present a municipal report and their ability to provide technical help in the presentation; the quality and cost of local printing; the quality and cost of lettershop work (for multilithic reproduction and mimeographing) available in your town or in a nearby town; the speaking abilities and personality of local officials.
citizens a chance to "talk back and tell me what they think, want, and appreciate."

Variations of these general types of municipal reports are many. Two are worthy of special mention -- the calendar report and color slides.

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WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE REPORT

City officials in different cities have different reasons for issuing municipal reports, (Chapter II). Different formats require different types of presentation of data (Chapter IV). This suggests that reports will be as individual in emphasis and theme as municipal circumstances and formats are different! But, regardless of the purpose of the report, the ideas to be emphasized, and the form in which the report is presented, certain information should be included in all reports. These basics are:

Identification - the name of the city, the name of the State, the period of time the report covers, and the month-and-year in which the report is being presented.

Vital Statistics - an estimated population (as of date of the report), total assessed valuation of properties in the city, the tax rate, a narrative or graphic explanation of how the city is organized with special emphasis on the citizen's place in the organization, the location of the offices of the city government, and the place and time of meetings of the municipal legislative body.

Operations - A listing of "highlights," major accomplishments of the city government during the period covered by the report.
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Operations - A listing of "highlights," major accomplishments of the city government during the period covered by the report.
## Finances

A statement of General Fund income and expenditures and a report of the debt of the city and how it is being repaid.

In addition to this information, basic to a municipal report, many cities want to include some or all of the following, depending on the size of the city, the aims of the report, and the manner in which the report is made. Included are:

- **Departmental information** - projects accomplished by various departments or units; indication of staff size, training, increase or decrease; departmental expenditures for the period of the report.
- **Municipal Development** - material indicative of expansion of city services; building in the city; new industry locating in the city; and activity in planning, zoning, annexation.
- **Recognition for the city** - awards won by the city, city units, or personnel of the city in recognition of municipal achievement.
- **Financial data** - statements on funds other than the General Fund; comparative data for several years; comparative data with other cities.

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Financial data - statements on funds other than the General Fund; comparative data for several years; comparative data with other cities.
Future plans - problems which face the city; plans the city has made or hopes to make for the future.

Directory information - a listing of city officers by name; a listing of all major units of the city government, often with some indication of what the unit does, its telephone number, and its address.

Photographs, charts, graphs, and drawings should be included -- depending on their suitability for the type of report being made -- where these visual elements enliven the report or make it easier to understand. Illustrative materials are functional. Do not use them if they complicate the report, are irrelevant, unattractive, or poor in quality.

6 THE REPORT EDITOR'S WORK AND RESOURCES

Someone must be responsible for getting together information for the municipal report, writing it or seeing that it is written, and arranging for its presentation.

This person may be the mayor or manager. It may be an individual or a committee, named by the mayor or manager. The individual is sometimes a member of the city staff; sometimes a private individual with ability to do this kind of work. The committee may be composed of city personnel, of citizens, or of both city and private people.

In cities where there is a public relations unit (under whatever name) or an official charged with public relations duties, the unit or individual official is the "report editor."

In many cities, the mayor or manager has an administrative assistant whose duty, at report-time, is that of preparing the report. In one Tennessee city, the city librarian serves as report editor and his committee is made up of five city department heads. In other communities, the city recorder serves as report editor. In one town, a
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housewife who was formerly a newspaper writer is the municipal report editor.

The work of the report editor or committee usually includes:

1. Deciding the type of report to issue OR presenting a recommendation on the type of report to issue for decision by the mayor, manager, or council.

2. Collecting data for the report from an official, in the case of the smaller city, or from unit or department heads, in larger cities. This may be done by use of questionnaire forms which city staff people fill in. Or the editor may request a memo summarizing activities and appropriate information from city department heads.

3. Checking the city scrapbook (and every city hall needs one); newspaper files; a listing of legislation; interdepartmental reports; and minutes of council meetings.

4. Writing the report or seeing that it is written by a person who volunteers for the work or someone employed to write the report.

5. Handling the collection of pictures and art work.

6. Doing a layout, working script, or speech (depending on the type of report being issued) and seeing that the municipal report reaches the place of presentation (printer, radio station, TV studios, etc.).

7. Arranging for the details of presentation (proofreading, rehearsals, etc.).

8. Arranging for distribution (actual program presentation, or distribution of publications and promotion of the report.)

Fortunately, the report editor or committee has fine resources in even the smallest community. For instance:

for help with: see:

Paper................. printer or paper company representative
Type-faces............ printer or makeup man at newspaper
Printing.............. printer or newspaper staff member
Layout............... Local artist
                      art teacher
                      newspaper staff member
Photographs -- on..... Newspaper morgue
                      file and to be made City files
Libr ary files (cuts can be made of
                      local commercial photographer
Library file photos without damaging
                      local amateur photographer
 photos in any way)
                      local photo club (as a team of
photographers)
                      Police Department photographers
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Needed</th>
<th>See:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>printer or paper company representaive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type-faces</td>
<td>printer or makeup man at newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>printer or newspaper staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Local artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>art teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photographs -- on.....</td>
<td>Local newspaper staff member</td>
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<tr>
<td>file and to be made</td>
<td>Newspaper morgue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>City files</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local commercial photographer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local amateur photographer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local photo club (as a team of photographers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Department photographers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library files (cuts can be made of library file photos without damaging photos in any way)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Art Work

Local commercial artists
Local amateur artists
Students in local schools
Newspaper cartoonists
Staff in planning commission, engineering offices
Clip book service of local printer
Clip books (Volk Art Studio, 1401 N. Main St., Pleasantville, N. J. -- art work may be clipped from these books. Fine commercial art, low cost)
Artist in local advertising or public relations office

Mailing

Local post office

Mailing lists

Utilities department customer listing
Tax rolls
Phone directory
Chamber of Commerce listings
City directory

For film or TV presentation of a report, help of a professional director or producer is necessary.

For radio presentation, the program director, copy writers, and announcers at the local station can provide needed assistance.

Visual materials -- for use in public addresses, TV presentation, or film presentation -- may be available from

a local audio-visual education teacher, art classes in local schools, artists of commercial advertising firms, staff members in planning or engineering offices. (Also see "Art Work," listing above.)

For help in promoting the report -- bankers, retail merchants, the Chamber of Commerce, local schools and libraries, the local newspaper(s) and broadcaster(s).

In Tennessee, assistance on any phase of annual reporting -- planning, designing, writing, production or publication, and promotion -- is available, without charge, from the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, Box 8260, University Station, Knoxville. The service is provided in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League.
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NOW . . . ABOUT THE ACTUAL WORK

Report-writing takes writing skill and some understanding of what a municipal report is all about. Looking at and reading through reports from other cities is helpful to the report editor.

It has been the experience of many report editors that setting a theme or story-line around which the report may be designed is a first step. Once determined, the organization of the report, the visual materials or illustrations are oriented to that theme or story-line and the whole report falls into the pattern more easily.

The theme idea may be an accomplishment of the past year or a goal for the year ahead. For example: Johnson City, Tenn., emphasized industrial development in 1956-57 -- so its annual report for these years was built around a local family taking a "new look" at city services and operations while showing an industrial prospect over the city. Patchogue, N. Y., built its 1955-56 report around a new municipal swimming pool.

Port growth was a highlight in Richmond, Va., so this was the theme of a newspaper tabloid report for that city.

Improvements in school-and-recreation facilities call for a "dedication to youth" report. Extensive street-paving work, a new city hall, airport expansion and reorganization, training and new equipment in police or fire departments -- all provide "theme" subject matter.

The theme may develop around an individual in the city or a group which has served the community. Examples: founders of a community, a veteran mayor, a citizen group which studied school needs and then made recommendations which were carried out, young swimming champions who trained in the city recreation pools and then brought attention to their home town as national champions, a group of long-time city employees who served the city in obscure but important jobs.

The season of the year may suggest a theme. Thus Dyersburg, Tennessee, sent "Seasons' Greetings" for Christmas and the New Year via its report -- a one-page, red-and-white folder. Columbia, Tennessee, issued its report in early fall, utilized fall colors and leaves in the design, and titled the report, "Leaves from the Record." Another Tennessee city, Hohenwald, made a Thanksgiving report called a "Harvest of Services." The possibilities here are many.
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An analogy can give a report real impact. But it takes skill to carry it off. Examples of analogies, well done, are the reports of Berkeley, Calif., 1952, "What's the Score" in which the operations of the city were compared to and reported in the style of a baseball game. The same idea was used in the 1952-53 report by Austin, Texas, "Play Ball."

A current trend -- something everyday people are talking about -- suggests a theme. Thus Smyrna, Tenn., did its prize-winning 1954 report as "Dragnet, the documented story of your Town Government" and gave citizens "just the facts."

A visual symbol can be used to set a pattern for the report. Jackson, Tenn., themed its report, "The citizen is the key to Jackson's government," and a key was carried throughout the report. Greenwich, Conn., found a chef, tasting a pudding, was right for its report, "Proof of the Pudding." A Texas cowboy cartoon-figure starred in a Midland, Texas, report.

This is not intended as a primer on writing or spelling or editing. It must be assumed that whoever gets the job of report preparation will have these basic skills.

So -- there's no necessity for reminding report editors that a popular-style report means:

1. everyday language
2. concise summary style
3. short sentences
4. topical subheads for clarity and good layout
5. logical organization of material
6. style-agreement throughout the report (Make style decisions at the beginning: Will "City" begin with a capital or a lower case "c"? Will official titles be capitalized or not? Will "Street" be spelled out or carried as St.)
7. accuracy in the spelling of proper names
8. toeing the line on facts.

There are "trouble spots" in planning and writing a city report. Repeated experience in dealing with municipal officials and department heads has spotlighted two of them.

The first is "over-reporting" -- writing too much about any one element or unit of the municipal government. It's easy to do when a department head, for example, is particularly enthusiastic and energetic. He has facts, figures, and pictures. His story is almost ready-made. It's difficult to evaluate the work of his department with another where the department head is less personally vigorous, doesn't have the same grasp of what is needed for the report, and makes no special effort to relate his operation to the public.

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There is a sound measure for space demands. It is answering the questions: "How important is this to the man-on-the-street? Is it directly related to him? Will he understand it? How much does he need to know about this operation? How much does the city want him to know about it?"

Danger number two is reporting finances. Finance officers are concerned with figures -- and lots of them. They want to tell a complete story and feel that a condensation, however logical, tells less than the whole story.

The truth is that financial data is utterly wasted on most citizens. They do not want to know that much about city finances. They cannot understand the details. Checkups show they skip complicated finance data, and, given so much, fail to get any of the financial story. Again, a measure of the kind of financial data to include is this question: How much does the man on the street need to know and how much will he read and digest about finances?

Certainly the trend in municipal reports is to highly simplified (but rigidly accurate) graphic presentation -- charts, bars, graphs, comparisons -- and away from details and confusion.

In Kingsport, Tenn., where traditionally a detailed financial report has been included in the city's printed booklet because "bankers and bond buyers want all this information" -- a compromise was reached. Mimeographed sheets -- showing details of financial operations -- were prepared for distribution to special interest groups and made available to any citizen who wanted them. The printed, popular-style city report carried a minimum and understandable financial story. Incidentally, printing costs go down with this kind of a solution.

Reporting officials -- the report editor/committee and any others involved in preparing the report -- work best if they understand the why of municipal reporting (Section 3), recognize the importance of the report, and want to be a part of it.
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10 "B's" for Report Writers.*

BE EASY! Writing can be fun. If you work too hard, your reader suffers with you.

BEGIN: Forget about definitions, explanations, your philosophy of municipal government. Start at once with what you want to say.

BE SIMPLE! Just put it down -- short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.

BE INTERESTING! Don't tell everything about the city government -- just what you think the reader wants to know and needs to know.

BE VIVID! If a picture or chart can be used -- and will illustrate better than anything you can write -- use it.

BE BRIEF! A paragraph will be read when a page is skipped (and a good sentence will be listened to when a long involved one will not be heard). Writing goes by quality -- not by weight.

BE ACCURATE! Check your facts. If you use names, include first name, middle initial, and last name -- correctly spelled (or correctly pronounced).

BE TRUTHFUL! Use creative ability to decide on a theme for the municipal report and to tell the story well -- but don't create facts or wrong impressions.

BE PROMPT! Set deadlines for yourself and those working with you, including the printer. Meet your deadlines. See that others meet theirs.

*Adapted from "Print It Right," 1954, Frank W. Hubbard, Nat'l. Schools Public Relations Assn., Washington.

PROMOTING READERSHIP OF THE REPORT

There's a real investment in a city report. Whether it costs a penny a copy or a dollar a copy, time, creative effort, and plain hard work goes into the reporting process.

And whether this investment of money and brain is worthwhile depends partially on getting the citizens to read what has been prepared for them.

In a little town of 400, the mayor, a retired businessman, "promoted" the town government report in a thoroughly personal way. He walkaround town, handed out reports to every business establishment and to people he met on the street, urged them to read it and to stop by his office and tell him what they thought. This is PROMOTING readership of the report.

In metropolitan New Orleans, on the other hand, a handsome and costly printed report captures public attention because of careful, professional promotion.

At the close of the year, opinion leaders (business, civic, professional people) are invited to a special session of the City Council where the mayor delivers his annual address. He covers city government highlights of the year and personally presents the published report to council guests.
10 "B's" for Report Writers.*

BE EASY! Writing can be fun. If you work too hard, your reader suffers with you.

BEGIN! Forget about definitions, explanations, your philosophy of municipal government. Start at once with what you want to say.

BE SIMPLE! Just put it down -- short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.

BE INTERESTING! Don't tell everything about the city government -- just what you think the reader wants to know and needs to know.

BE VIVID! If a picture or chart can be used -- and will illustrate better than anything you can write -- use it.

BE BRIEF! A paragraph will be read when a page is skipped (and a good sentence will be listened to when a long involved one will not be heard). Writing goes by quality -- not by weight.

BE ACCURATE! Check your facts. If you use names, include first name, middle initial, and last name -- correctly spelled (or correctly pronounced).

BE TRUTHFUL! Use creative ability to decide on a theme for the municipal report and to tell the story well -- but don't create facts or wrong impressions.

BE PROMPT! Set deadlines for yourself and those working with you, including the printer. Meet your deadlines. See that others meet theirs.

*Adapted from "Print It Right," 1954, Frank W. Hubbard, Nat'l. Schools Public Relations Assn., Washington.

PROMOTING READERSHIP OF THE REPORT

There's a real investment in a city report. Whether it costs a penny a copy or a dollar a copy, time, creative effort, and plain hard work goes into the reporting process.

And whether this investment of money and brain is worthwhile depends partially on getting the citizens to read what has been prepared for them.

In a little town of 400, the mayor, a retired businessman, "promoted" the town government report in a thoroughly personal way. He walked around town, handed out reports to every business establishment and to people he met on the street, urged them to read it and to stop by his office and tell him what they thought. This is PROMOTING readership of the report.

In metropolitan New Orleans, on the other hand, a handsome and costly printed report captures public attention because of careful, professional promotion.

At the close of the year, opinion leaders (business, civic, professional people) are invited to a special session of the City Council where the mayor delivers his annual address. He covers city government highlights of the year and personally presents the published report to council guests.
Two metropolitan newspapers are provided with pictures and copy, well in advance of the report-publication date. The newspapers give this material good space and layout.

Television stations work with the city's Office of Public Relations on a filmed report which they carry at the close of the city's year. Six area radio stations carry the mayor's verbal report (live broadcast, or they record portions of it for later use).

The small village promotion and that of New Orleans are specifically suited to the respective community size and character.

These two examples indicate ways of directing public attention to the city report and promoting readership (or listentership!) of it.

A report-promotion plan, developed for the City of Kingsport, Tenn. (population 25,000) includes some of the more traditional ways of promoting a report as well as less orthodox methods. This sample promotion may stimulate new ideas on the part of promotion-minded city officials.

NEWS RELEASES

TO: City Manager and Associates

FROM: MTAS Adviser, Municipal Information

SUGGESTIONS to publicize issuance and promote readership. Kingsport Report-to-Citizens

1. News story for both Kingsport Times and News on issuance of the report (releases enclosed).

2. Presentation ceremony at first council meeting after publication. (Suggested program, attached).

3. Mailing reports to citizen leaders. Presidents of local civic and service clubs, top officials in local business and industrial firms should get a copy of the report with a brief, friendly cover letter, signed by the mayor (for the Board of Mayor and Aldermen) and by the city manager.

4. Display of citizen reports (with appropriate "forward look" symbols).
   (a) Models in J. Fred Johnson Department Store display window -- each with a Kingsport report -- open -- in his or her hand. Theme: "Everybody's reading THE FORWARD LOOK, your city report... (and these clothes have THE FORWARD LOOK... )"
   (b) Display at the library, (possibly with other library-loan materials on Kingsport, city government, citizen responsibilities, etc.).
   (c) Display at local banks
   (d) Copy on bulletin boards of local industries, with notation urging that report be read.

5. "Let's talk about reports." City officials -- who hold membership in various luncheon and civic clubs -- should be given a specific responsibility for being present at the first club meeting after report-publication, making a one-minute announcement about the availability of the report, mentioning "high points" it covers, and urging readership by every club member.
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6. **Radio promotion of report**
   
   (a) 15-minute (suggested format attached).  
   (b) Spot announcement (attached).

7. **External publicity** (of secondary importance because what you want to do is to get your own people to read and understand the city government operations described in the report); send copy of report to editors of the municipal publications in which you have an interest, such as Public Management, American City, National Municipal Review. Be sure to attach a brief description of how the report was prepared (via the committee), how distributed, how promoted, and cost.

* * * * *

**NOTE:** This is a new lead and suggested headline for the morning newspaper.

**TO:** Kingsport News (for use morning Times Story)

**FROM:** Office of the City Manager

**New Format, New Presentation, New Style**

Mark Kingsport City Report to Citizens

Kingsport city officials are reporting on their "stewardship" of the city government for the past two years, January 1954 through December 1955, and are taking notice of the current year and the future via "The Forward Look," a page publication which goes to every household and business establishment today. City Manager D. W. Moulton says that the new report was prepared, under direction of his assistant, Charles Marsh, by a committee including: City Librarian Kenneth Duchac, Chairman and author of the report.

Mr. Moulton thinks the publication "reflects the progressive spirit of Kingsport." Editor Duchac, says that "Mr. Marsh and my committee frankly copied 'the forward look' design and idea used by a leading automobile manufacturer, because we felt it typified the activities of the city. Everything that has been done recently is focused on the future."

*(NOTE: From this point on, this article picks up copy used in Kingsport Times, previous night.)*

"High Points" of city action during the past two years, as reported, include: widening of Center Street to solve a "severe traffic problem," final planning for a by-pass traffic route after "the major problems which have delayed construction... had been ironed out"; annexation of "a large section of the eastern part of the city"; giving the city a population count of 25,000; visit of city officials of Singen, Germany, to Kingsport "as part of a U. S. Department of State... observation tour of American city governments"; building of Ross N. Robinson Junior High School and additions to Andrew Johnson and Douglas Schools; awarding of contract for construction of a city garage; "remodeling
6. **Radio promotion of report**

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of new buildings" in the heart of the business expansion, marking . . . "a great expansion of the retail facilities of the city"; action to eliminate sub-standard housing; and the signing of a contract for construction of the sewage disposal plant.

Unique in the new report are the financial statements which are presented in "understandable form" via charts and graphs. Report committee member Shelor, who is the assistant recorder-treasurer, says that complete financial reports for the same period, 1954 and 1955, are available to anyone interested in details. "The report committee, however, was strongly advised to make the material in the citizen report easy to understand. And the committee was convinced that this was the best thing to do in 'The Forward Look'."

Kingsport's publication rolled off the press just in time to be entered in the 1956 Citizen Report contest sponsored by the Tennessee Municipal League, (deadline is May 6). City Manager Moulton says the report will be on display at the TML convention in Gatlingburg, May 13-15, and he personally feels "it will be as good a presentation as that of any city of comparable size in the whole country." Moulton had high praise for Mr. Marsh, the Report Committee, and "especially Mr. Duchac, who gave many, many hours to the planning and writing of this report as a service to the city."

Kingsport has reported every two years since and is one of approximately 30 towns and cities in the state which makes a "periodic report" on the city officials' "stewardship of the municipal operations," Mr. Moulton says.

Advice on the format of the report and the cover design came from the University of Tennessee's Municipal Technical Advisory Service, part of the extension division. Consultant Pan Dodd Wheeler made two trips to Kingsport to meet with the committee and to assist in the report-preparation. There is no charge for MTAS services of this nature.

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RADIO PROGRAM

Participants: Mayor
Manager and/or Asst. Manager
Report author
Report Committee members
Announcer

Title: "The Forward Look"

Time: 15-minutes
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**RADIO PROGRAM**

**Participants:**
- Mayor
- Manager and/or Asst. Manager
- Report author
- Report Committee members
- Announcer

**Title:** "The Forward Look"

**Time:** 15-minutes
Why the city report has been made - Manager
To whom report is made - Mayor
Highlights covered by the report (author) and committee members -- each with a sentence or two
Promotion of the report (author and Asst. Manager)
What city government officials want citizens to do in response to the report - Mayor, Manager, any other panelists
Why "The Forward Look" - Manager or Asst. Manager or author
How to get a report (if listener failed to receive one) - announcer

CEREMONY (for Kingsport Board meeting at which citizen reports are presented)

Guests: issue special invitations to the Report Committee, key city officials, newspaper representatives, (I assume they always cover board meetings), and, possibly, (see promotion SUGGESTIONS #3) business and civic leaders to come to the council meeting.

Program: (Regular board opening ceremony)

Mayor - welcome guests, introduces manager for "first order of business"
Why the city report has been made - Manager

To whom report is made - Mayor

Highlights covered by the report (author) and committee members - each with a sentence or two

Promotion of the report (author and Asst. Manager)

What city government officials want citizens to do in response to the report - Mayor, Manager, any other panelists

Why "The Forward Look" - Manager or Asst. Manager or author

How to get a report (if listener failed to receive one) - announcer

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Program: (Regular board opening ceremony)

Mayor - welcome guests, introduces manager for "first order of business"

Manager - very briefly mentions Kingsport's record of reporting, tells why the report has been made, then calls on the assistant manager.

Asst. Manager - very briefly introduces report-author and other members of the Report Committee, describes exactly what "The Forward Look" means, tells when and how report is to be (or has been) distributed, and promoted.

Manager - hands out to each member of the council copies of the report, and others distribute to audience.

Newspaper will probably take pictures of this little ceremony.

It is possible that a tape-recording of this ceremony, (and it shouldn't take more than 10 minutes), could be successfully used for spot radio news coverage, local station.

RADIO SPOT

"The Forward Look" is a current Kingsport best-seller in the non-fiction reading field! It's a report to you about Kingsport's city government -- past, present and future. Read it ... discuss it with friends and
neighbors ... be proud of your city government and its forward look! If you failed to receive a copy, call ______, that's city hall, and a copy will be mailed to you. In Kingsport, EVERYBODY'S READING "THE FORWARD LOOK."