

IDEA FARE

Includes descriptions of evaluations and tests of information methods conducted by ACE members (1-3 typed pages).

On Dead Trees & Smudgy Ink

The following article was drawn from comments made during the opening panel discussion of a Public Affairs Workshop held May 18, 1978, in Washington, D.C., under co-sponsorship of ACE D.C. Region. Panel members were David Broder, *The Washington Post*; John Hart, *NBC Nightly News*; and Hugh Sidey, *Time*.

Some day your home television set may bring you the morning newspaper as well as your evening television news. A bit farfetched perhaps, but technology may allow you to "punch up" whatever story you're interested in and let you read as much as you want to know about it right on your home television screen.

If this alarms you, don't worry. David Broder, associate editor, *The Washington Post*, says the "...newspaper of the future is way off in the future...and that for the next 25 years or so people will be getting *The Washington Post*, at least, in very much the same format as it now comes, on dead trees and smudgy ink, the same way that you've all grown to love it."

The point is, society is changing and so is communications. The media may remain the same, but the methods and messages will be different. What does that mean to the communicator?

"Going back over the fundamentals seems to me something we don't do nearly enough of in daily journalism," Broder said. "I am concerned that we have not gotten into the heads of fairly intelligent readership the kind of basic information in many areas that they need to have if they're going to be able to play their part as functioning citizens in a society that's got some fairly difficult and complex problems to resolve."

Since television has emerged as the basic source of news and information for the largest number of American people, Broder says newspapers have tried to adapt to what is, in many respects, a secondary role.

"Those papers which have survived best are those which have adapted most successfully to this changed role and are managing to provide something of an enriched diet for the television viewing audience that goes beyond what they've gotten on the nightly news," Broder explained.

Newspapers that have distinguished themselves in this period of change have been ones that Broder says have been willing to commit some of their resources and space to background and in-depth reporting.

While newspapers are accepting the presence of television and adapting to it, television is taking stock of its own shortcomings.

John Hart, weekend anchor, NBC Nightly News, says, "I'm not sure that our failures...really stem from the 22-minute limitation on the nightly news entirely. There is increasing evidence...that the old-fashioned commitment, which some of us thought we saw, to a responsibility to this country for just plain old news-gathering and information-delivering has kind of been dissolved in this vat of competition over the rating."

Another fault that Hart finds with network television news is "Hollywood fever." He advocates that we break down this fascination with celebrity and resist the attitude that "...invites people to think that what is really going on around them in the world is really for their diversion on the dinnertime tube."

"It has always been my belief, and is now more than ever, that reporters really belong on the sidelines and not on the playing field insofar as it's possible," Hart said. They should be doing their jobs as reliable, fair, detached witnesses and not mix in with the events **themselves**, he continued. Hart believes that this approach allows reporters to "...aim more attention to the message, as imperfect as that may be, than on the medium."

"I really think we all know how to communicate. I don't think the question is how to communicate. The real problem is what is to be communicated," Hart said.

Magazines are also finding the question of what to communicate a difficult one to answer. Hugh Sidey, Washington contributing editor, **Time**, said, "I think it's tougher to get the news. The news is more complex. It takes more study to understand it."

Sidey sees a trend in the magazine business to reporters having fewer stories to do allowing more time to prepare them with the end result tending to be longer, more in-depth stories.

"There are more magazines being started right now, more newsletters, more new ideas in the periodical publishing field than ever before," Sidey noted.

"The fact of the matter is that our readership...grows every year.

There are more people reading magazines. There are more people reading books. I'm also inclined to believe from rather sketchy surveys of readership that they linger longer, and they absorb more than they ever did," Sidey reported.

Sidey admits that magazines claim a diminishing percentage of the news world, but feels their impact is intense and that they set the tone frequently followed by television or other parts of the media.

Sidey urges communicators to develop tolerance and understanding of human weaknesses and a larger view of the "creative anarchy" which exists in this country and out of which comes some notion of what is right and what should be done.

If society is changing and communications is changing, and if we, as communicators, haven't preceded the other two, we'd better run to catch up.

—Larry A. Quinn, Head Television Service, USDA, ACE Director-elect, D.C. Region

Keeping Pace with Exhibits

In years past displays were usually heavy and bulky and tended to be over-worded. They tried to tell viewers too much, often more than they wanted to know, at least more than they wanted to read on their feet.

TODAY'S PROBLEMS

Exhibit designers and producers today face odds that are much worse than in the past. If it weighs over 15-20 pounds, the customer complains. And often the carrier vehicle is a tiny import.

We used to build exhibits for display areas such as store windows, bank lobbies, grange halls and county fairs. Now, we find our exhibits used in shopping malls, that are so vast that card-table-sized exhibits simply go unnoticed.

In exhibiting, we face tougher visual competition in the malls and shopping centers than we used to face in the store windows and bank lobbies. Today the competition is bigger, brighter, more colorful and more graphic. There also is so much more of it.

How do we overcome some of these requirements demanded of our exhibits today? Well, for sure we can't fit a sixty-foot exhibit into a briefcase, but with modern technology and lots of ingenuity on our part we can overcome many of these problems.

SOME CURRENT APPROACHES

Here are some of the approaches that we have found successful in Pennsylvania:

1. **Build large exhibits in sub-sections.** The "break down" idea, uses a number of smaller pieces that fasten together to form a large unit. An example is the "Tinker Toy" display where a framework is built from spools and dowels (or metal rods) and photos and charts hang from this framework. Other types include clever fasteners that are used to couple lightweight panels.
2. **Folding or collapsing panels.** We recently purchased corrugated cardboard units through USDA that formed a triple stack of triangle-shaped panels. These sections all fold and collapse and fit into a small flat shipping carton. Many of our exhibits involve hinged panels (the hinge made merely by scoring the panel material) so it can be folded for storage and shipment.
3. **Lightweight panel materials.** Lightweight plywood paneling framed with pine make rigid, durable panels. Since the front of a sheet of paneling has grooves, select sheets on the uniformity of the backside of the sheet. The grain can be filled, or simply sanded and painted several coats. Posterboard can also be used for exhibit panels. It is available in several thicknesses and many colors, but it is usually necessary to support it with backing or a framework. Corrugated board is inexpensive and is available in many sizes if you can locate a source. It can be shaped to stand without additional support, but its brown color almost always needs to be covered with paint. We use latex paint, then unwarpage the panels by wetting and weighting the backside.

A popular panel material for today's exhibit builder is Fomecore. This consists of two heavy layers of paper on each side of a sheet of foam. It is available in several thicknesses and sizes. We generally purchase a carton of 25 sheets, one-fourth inch thick, four feet by eight feet in size. The surface on both sides has a smooth white finish, and this material is easily cut with a mat knife. By cutting through all but one surface layer we can bend and hinge this board to form many shapes, and it is stiff enough to stand.

4. **Packaging.** Limited storage space and smaller auto sizes increase the necessity for designing exhibits that squeeze into smaller packages. Some recent exhibits

fasten flat together for storage and shipment. Some are made of foam and paper products and pack into flat corrugated cartons or "envelopes."

Much of the transporting can be avoided by producing exhibits on a county or regional basis, rather than having them picked up and returned to the state office. Of course this means producing a great number of units, and with the financial limitations we face, that means using less expensive paper products and silkscreening for reproduction. In Pennsylvania, we have produced a tabletop exhibit, with instructions on building the backdrop, for all 67 counties. We have produced a number of complete exhibit units for regional use.

HOW TO COMPLETE

The stiff visual competition that we face requires some "extra-punch" for exhibits to be noticed. After all, the audience must see the exhibit to get the message.

Actually, there is no single formula to use in adding punch to displays, but the use of several of the following "attractants" can help considerably:

1. **Size.** Keep visuals and graphics large. Copy size and style should be such that they are easily read at 20 feet. Some folks argue that viewers can come close and read much smaller type. But will they? Using larger copy increases the audience to include those viewers who walk by at some distance. Using larger type also means using fewer words. Research has shown that increasing the amount of copy decreases viewing time and learning.
2. **Shape.** A contrasting shape within an exhibit adds pulling power. If the basic panel shape is rectangular, a round or unusual shape can break the monotony and add interest. A three-dimensional effect also can help attract attention. Design the basic unit for various levels and depths with some panels nearer and some farther away. Don't be afraid to place them on varying angles.
3. **Color.** Use a simple color scheme of one or two related colors for the backdrop. Use brighter or contrasting colors in a specific area to draw attention. But too many colors or too much bright color often detracts from the message.
4. **Textures.** If most of the panel areas have smooth surfaces, add a contrasting textured area such as Velcro or Hook'n Loop fabric. These materials allow flexibility

later, because the visuals are merely fastened to these surfaces with "hook tape" and are easily removed and replaced. Other textured materials include burlap, netting, corrugated paper and rough or weathered boards. Sometimes latex paint applied with a roller adds a pleasing contrast to slick paper surfaces.

5. **Motion.** Motion attracts the viewer's attention. Animation motors and devices are often discarded from commercial displays and can be had for the asking. Electrical products distributors can order specific r.p.m. gearmotors that can be adapted to your needs. Live animals (and plants) can give exhibits tremendous pulling power.
6. **Light.** Make sure your display is well lighted. One **150-watt floodlight for each linear feet of exhibit area** will provide adequate lighting. Lights also can be used behind translucent title boards or panels and behind transparencies. Various types of psychedelic lighting displays are extremely effective in attracting viewers.

—*Harry A. Carey, Jr., Exhibits Editor, Pennsylvania State University*

National ACE Media Sessions

Radio and Television Session

Gordon Webb of Cornell said his new and successful approach to radio included news actualities, radio PSAs and a manager campaign to promote the new consumer news services. Those attending also were urged to take advantage of these golden opportunities in reporting research. Extension radio and TV specialists nationwide need to establish themselves as "best news contacts," for resource information and assistance. **Personal contact with commercial news departments in every state is of utmost importance.** Clarification and consultation is available on request from John Philpot, committee chairman. In Arkansas several of the radio and TV media session members have volunteered to avail themselves to travel to other states. Plans are underway to develop a broadcast media relations handbook.

—*John Philpot, University of Arkansas-Little Rock*

Publications Session

Claron Burnet presented the new clip art book four. States are encouraged to distribute the brochure promoting the clipart book. In some states, area and county offices use them and they provide an income. Those at the publications media session voted for simplified practical guideline for style and asked the publication technical committee to explore the possibilities of developing it. They made three suggestions for the critiques and awards program in publications: 1. select judges to evaluate only the areas of their expertise—content, layout and design, or production—and total such scores for composite evaluation; 2. have all publications judged at one site by one set of judges rather than in separate states—one for each category; 3. consider dividing each category into single color publications (less expensive) and multicolor publications. Chester Unruh, Kansas, incoming chairperson of the ACE technical publications committee, asked the members send him suggestions of activities or services they feel should be provided by the committee. He also asked for ideas for media topics and the names of national leaders to present them at the Delaware meeting in '79.

—*Garth Ketemer, Chairperson, University of Ontario, Canada*

Graphics Design Session

At their first technical session the graphics design committee presented results of a survey of ACE members involved in graphic design nationally. It showed that professional treatment status and titles are important to those in design. The group requests ACE as a whole to support upgrading of the professional status of graphic personnel by officially supporting a move to change penalty mail laws to allow credit to designers and illustrators in publications and by urging communication division heads to support:

- travel funds for graphic designers
- professional status on staffs
- and those meaningful titles.

Graphics people should send suggestions for the 1979 program to Ruth Thompson or Richard Kipp.

—*Ruth Thompson, Louisiana State University*

Reuben Brigham Award Committee

The committee called for more stimulation of good nominations. They especially feel the electronic media have been neglected.

—Henry W. Corrow, Jr., Chairman, University of New Hampshire

Visual Aids Committee Report

Chairman will prepare a rough draft of visual standards and recommendatins so graphic materials can be used in any state. The draft, together with its rationale and ideas on color combinations will be submitted to "several sale specialists" for comments and suggestions.

Concerned regarded the "proliferation of visual committees," the Visual Aids Committee suggests one committee on visuals be established with subcommittees for television, photograhny, graphics and others.

The Visual Aids Committee also suggests the ACE Board invest funds to provide judges who would do some real teaching at the national meeting together with judging the contests. To keep costs down, one year all visual classes could be judged—the next, all publications, for example.

—Bill Fowell, Pennsylvania State University