

International Agricultural Research Center Director Preferences for an Information Department Head*

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Profile of information head preferred by international center directors: Ph.D., educated in developed country, technical or agricultural journalism training, international experience, agricultural experiment station editorial experience, under 40 years of age, bilingual.

The above profile summarizes responses from international agricultural research center directors who were asked to pick between pairs of choices in factors relating to qualifications of an information department head. Nine directors responded to the questionnaire in 1978.

The directors preferred a Ph.D. over a lesser degree holder, even when the latter individual had considerably more experience or had training more specific to the center program. A degree in technical or agricultural journalism was preferred over one in the natural sciences. Preference was also for an editor trained in a developed country. Directors chose an editorial orientation over an audio-visual orientation.

The respondents also indicated a preference for agricultural extension experience over farm magazine or newspaper experience. Their highest rating went to editorial experience with an agricultural experiment station, however.

Responding to choices related to age and experience, the directors preferred a 30-year-old candidate with five years of professional experience over a 50-year-old candidate with 25 years of professional experience. Five years of experience at an international center rated better than 10 years of experience as an agricultural extension editor in the United States. Dis-

regarding experience, an editor under 40 was preferred to one over 40.

In addition, responses indicated a clear preference for an information department head with competence in more than one language. A bilingual editor with "good" English rated higher than one with "excellent" English as the only language.

*Everett Metcalf
Washington State University*

Radio Tape User Survey

Texas A & M University distributes information on audio tapes to 59 radio stations, to which the material is mailed on a regular basis. Each station can request to receive any combination of subject matter: agriculture, "urban" agriculture, home economics (family living), and 4-H. In addition, many stations receive Spanish language material.

The tapes are sent automatically to radio stations on each distribution list. Each station also receives a weekly tape listing from which it can request any other tapes that might be of interest. A similar list goes to county agents who have radio programs, but who do not receive tapes unless they request them.

About 50 stations that receive tapes regularly and 19 county agents who get the tape lists were surveyed by simple response card to measure frequency of usage and get comments on the tape service. Forty stations and all the county agents responded.

In brief, 15 stations said they used three-fourths or more of the tapes they received. Another seven said they used about half, and 18 stations said they used a fourth of the material or less.

Both the stations and the county agents were asked, "What is the most appropriate length for your use of a tape?" Nearly half the respondents (28) said they preferred segments of two to three minutes. Fourteen said one to two minutes, and the other respondents preferred segments ranging from less than a minute to more than five minutes.

Some of the most useful (and most interesting) information provided by the survey came in response to the

open-ended request for general comments:

"Much of it is too long and dull, some of it appeals only to a very narrow audience! Would like to see more programs on simple lawn and garden techniques. Thanks for some excellent features."

"Would like to see a little more variety of personalities, but having worked with that bunch, I realize the bulk of Extension-sorts just aren't that willing to cooperate...we appreciate your service."

"Cuts of one minute or less would be very useful on news programs. Material is sometimes dated when we receive it."

"We have no criticisms. We do not use all of each selected program, however. When appropriate, we use 30- to 45-second excerpts. Our format does not allow for two-minute programs."

One consistent theme among the comments was a suggestion that professional broadcast staff members do more voicing on the tapes, perhaps voicing the short tapes entirely and using an interview format on the longer ones. Monologues by specialists generally were not favored.

Tardiness of timely material, always a concern, did not surface as a general problem. One county agent complained, however, that tapes "come after an event or entry due date. I have not received one tape early enough to use it, and I order promptly."

And one of the simplest comments was perhaps the most encouraging of all: "Our audience has made no comment except when program did not play."

James F. Whitman
Texas A & M University

