

Take Another SLR Look

John Philpot

The time has come to say something about shooting slides (35mm transparencies to you Tech. Photogs.). Slides and slide presentations are some of the most useful and inexpensive communications devices we have at our disposal. Everybody shoots slides and many people are doing it wrong.

With the coming of television the old-time dictates of photography have changed; and, as I look back I'm not sure they were right in the first place. In days of old the rule was "fill up the frame" right out to the edge. Another rule was "if your subject is vertical, turn the camera up on its side and shoot it vertical."

A television screen has a three by four horizontal format. It is three high and four wide whether you are measuring in centimeters, inches, feet,

meters, whatever. Naturally, when a vertical format slide is projected through a television system the sides of the screen are black and the top and bottom of the slide are cut off.

Now, you may say, "but I'm not shooting it for television, it will be used only in a slide presentation." Even though this is your intention, there is always a possibility that any slide might appear on television. But, even if it is used only in a slide presentation, the same situation applies. In the average presentation most of the slides are horizontal. Let's say in setting up your slide projector you fill the screen with a horizontal format slide. Then, down into your presentation, along comes a vertical shot of the president of your land grant university. His head is projected onto the wall behind the screen. Now, you must apologize to your audience unless you are relatively sure they can recognize him by his navel.

Here's my point on this horizontal/vertical business. Probably the most vertical shot in the nation would be the Washington Monument. My advice is to shoot it horizontal even if you have to back all the way to Ohio.

There is another characteristic of television that a buuuunch of people need to know. It's a thing called "cutoff." When any video material is transmitted through a television system 10% to 15% is cut off of each of the four edges. If you fill up that slide right out to the edge, some of your material will be lost in the transmission and often your entire visual message is lost. Loosen up on that shot; make that material a little smaller on the slide and keep it away from the edges. Allow at least 10% along each edge for cutoff.

Since it is hoped that a lot of people besides just us will read this epistle, I will take off on another little problem. I suppose there are those with even less audiovisual presentation capability than we have. These people probably need and love that infernal slide change "bleep" on the audio tape accompanying a slide series. To those organizations producing slide/tape presentations for mass distribution could you please make the master audio available to us minus the audible tone? The bleeps are distracting and quite unnecessary to those of us who plan to sync the changes on a Wollensak 2551 or some other slide/sync programmer. If the bleep is recorded full track along with your audio message, we can't get your bleep off.

Sophistication in audiovisual communication continues to increase at an accelerated rate. This presents a challenge; but, from my observations, most of our guys are "keeping up" very well. It is disconcerting, to say the least, to find that the foundation under our AV edifice has shifted and we have to re-evaluate our basics.

Reminds me of the tractor driving contest at the Four States Fair in Texarkana. I was Assistant County Agent in Miller County, Arkansas; and, the Bowie County, Texas Assistant Agent and I had to work up the written exam every year. It was a drag, so we used the same questions from last year and just changed the answers.



John L. Philpot is Assistant Extension Editor in Arkansas. He has been in television, or radio and television most of the time since he graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1957 with a BS in agriculture. He was a county Extension agent for three years before going to Shreveport, La., where he worked for five years as a radio/television farm director. Then he returned to the University of Arkansas for three years as Radio/TV editor. After an international assignment in Morocco as an agricultural communications specialist, he worked for a year as an account executive for an advertising agency in Shreveport, and returned to the Cooperative Extension Service in Little Rock as assistant editor/television in 1970.