

Research Publications

Discussion Leader, SAM BURGESS, GEORGIA

Monday A.M., July 12, Session 1

“Mass Media Gatekeepers”

“Homemakers”

Studies indicate that research information is the prime desire of gatekeepers. If the general audience does not get the information from the gatekeepers, chances are good they will not get it. Communications with gatekeepers can be improved with bulletin plugs, i.e.: radio and television releases, news stories with pictures.

To reach the general audience, the publication must be made more readable and more attractive—written in popular form, with color used when necessary, and with information “boiled down” as much as possible to increase readability. An abstract of the research, located in front of book, would be helpful.

There seems to be a trend for editors to rewrite research reports in popular form, and to co-author reports with researchers. Another trend is to aim publication at a specific audience. If possible, first determine the needs of the audience so the proper research can be conducted. Then, in the project proposals, prepare a section on the audience, including the types of reports to be prepared and dates they will be released.

Research publication editors do have a responsibility for homemaker and consumer audiences. Several states prepare publications and reports specifically for them.

A big problem remains in getting information to the general public before the research is published in a journal.

Recommendations for doing a better job of reaching the audience.

1. Take a hard look at the intended audience. Study and be aware of the audience at all times.

2. Learn more about gatekeepers and keep them informed. Develop a system of reporting by telephone (dial-a-story). Suggest getting a number for gatekeepers to call for tips on hot research items. Information should include name and phone number of specialist for follow-up information.

3. Use some of the same techniques the sports reporters use. They do a good job of publicizing sports events.
4. In popular publications and stories, discuss only the main points in tables and charts.
5. Write publications to communicate with a specific audience rather than to make editors look good.
6. Print an abstract of all research bulletins.

Monday P.M., July 12, Session 2

“Rural Disadvantaged”

“Opinion/Policy Leaders”

Discussion centered on efforts to influence opinion leaders in our society through the medium of research publications. Consensus was that opinion leaders on state and federal level are differentiated, that this differential will become more pronounced, and these leaders require different influential approaches. Agreement that experiment station administrators are much more conscious of station image and more public relations oriented today.

Ways to reach opinion leaders:

1. “Plant” stories in special interest publications, as trade or professional journals or internal organs, or perhaps buy advertising space to promote those research publications which are basically public relation tools.
2. Send letters from recognized authorities in the field to opinion leaders and enclose research publications that are relevant to the opinion leaders’ interests.
3. Invite opinion leaders to seminars and publish proceedings as research publications.
4. Annual reports.

Consensus that experiment stations are doing very little outside the area of nutrition to help disadvantaged groups in rural and urban areas. Some administrators discourage publication of expanding nutrition program activities — here lies real opportunity to reach a new audience in our efforts to relate the college of agriculture to everyone in the state — not just farmers.

Discussion of communication program priorities revealed need for administrators to make priority decisions and issue directives to implement coordinated communication activities. Program objectives need to be set, areas of emphasis identified, method of emphasis decided, and individual responsibilities and deadlines set in order to achieve a unified communications program. Re-

sponsibility for structuring and initiating a unified program lies with administration.

Tuesday A.M. July 13, Session 3

“Agribusiness Men and Women”

“Youth”

While the group recognized the potential force of youth and its impact on current thinking, there was a general feeling that research findings from projects underway are not immediately applicable to youth. For this reason agricultural research is not a major concern of today's youth, nor are young people not yet employed a major target of experiment station information.

On the other hand, the agribusiness complex was recognized as a very important use of agricultural research. Problems and opportunities involved in research gifts and grants were discussed.

The fact that the dealer, the last man to influence the buyer, is a most influential force in decision making was stressed as an illustration of the role agribusiness plays.

When asked how research editors and their publications could be most helpful to industry, Mr. H. W. Adams of Dow Chemical Company offered three pertinent suggestions.

1. Speed up reporting. Industry requires about seven years and \$10 million to develop a new agricultural chemical. When a useful product results, industry needs to recover its costs and proceed with new research.

2. Make research reports readable. You have to fight your way through them and then apparently the author is not quite sure what he has done, nor how to report it.

3. The requirement of scientific journals for “first publication” causes industry a “deadly delay.” No solution was offered to this one — just a recognition that it seriously impedes progress.