

# What Do I Get for My ACE Dues?

By William E. Carnahan

At the 1982 ACE meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, it was voted to raise annual dues from \$25 to \$45. At that time, it was estimated that each member was costing ACE about \$34 in services. There was some discussion about raising the dues to \$50, but it was felt doubling the dues would be too much.

There was concern that a dues increase would mean the loss of some members. That happened. There also was discussion that promotional materials should be developed to tell the membership what they get for their \$45. This same material would be used for recruiting new members. Consequently, a brochure was published, and the ACE Membership Recruitment Committee currently is preparing an expanded packet.

Late last fall, I thought it might be interesting to find out how ACE compares with the other major agricultural communicator groups, in addressing the question: "What do I get for my \$45?" There are seven such groups—American Agricultural Editors Association (AAEA), the Agricultural Relations Council (ARC), the Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA), the Communication Officers of the State Departments of Agriculture (COSDA), the National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB), the Newspaper Farm Editors Association (NFEA), and ACE.

The data presented here came from answers to a three-page questionnaire which was sent to the president or secretary of each association. There are similarities among the seven. Each association has an active membership classification; each has at least one meeting per year; each has a newsletter; each has a membership directory; and each has elected officers.

ACE was organized in 1913 with its first annual meeting at the University of Illinois, and is the oldest agricultural communicators organization. It has one of the larger memberships, and has the third lowest dues. ACE is the only association to offer a lump sum payment for a life membership, and it offers the most publications—a national newsletter, regional newsletters, the ACE Quarterly, a Communications Handbook, and several Clip Art Books.

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There have been only four years since ACE was founded that there have been no national meetings. One of those years was during the depression, the other three came during World War II. The association will celebrate its diamond jubilee when it meets in Washington, D.C. next summer. AAEA, the farm magazine editors, came into being in 1921, the farm broadcasters started its organization in 1946, and ARC, CCA and NFEA all began in 1953. COSDA was organized in 1969.

In the following table, membership and annual dues comparisons are made. Its interesting to note that AAEA and NAFB have more associate or affiliate members than active members. A task force of Extension computer coordinators has investigated the possibility of encouraging this group of specialists to join ACE, because of mutual interests. If as few as 30 of these coordinators join ACE, ACE could then have the largest membership.

### Agriculture Communicator Organization Comparisons

Members—1986-87						
	Active	Assoc.	Affil.	Hon.	Life/Ret.	Total
AAEA	296	—	306	27	—	629
ACE	489	27	—	—	95	611
ARC	260	—	—	—	—	260
CCA	273	—	—	24	—	297
COSDA	49	—	—	—	—	49
NAFB	215	400	—	3	17	635
NFEA	140	10	—	5	10	165
Totals	1722	437	306	59	122	2646

  

Annual Dues				
	Actives	Associates	Affiliates	Life/Honorary
AAEA	\$50	\$50	\$50	—
ACE	45	45	—	\$100*
ARC	100	—	—	—
CCA	60	60	—	—
COSDA	25	20	—	—
NAFB	75	35	—	35
NFEA	30	30	—	15

\*One-time fee

What may have seemed like exorbitant ACE dues five years ago is now among the lowest. COSDA's annual dues are lowest at \$25 for active members and \$20 for associate members. ARC member dues are the highest at \$100. ACE is the only association with a one-time fee (\$100) for life members, who must be retired to qualify.

Each communicator group has a newsletter. Publication ranges from monthly to occasionally, and each publishes a membership

directory. The co-op editors and ACE also publish communications handbooks. In addition, ACE has the Quarterly and Clip Art books, which are now available in a number of volumes.

### **ACE Leads in Member Recognition**

ACE does very well when it comes to recognizing its members. Our highest honor to an active member is the Professional Award, and to an associate or non-member, the Reuben Brigham Award. Pioneer ACE Awards are presented to younger communicator members. Awards of Excellence, Skill Awards and special awards are presented from time to time. ACE also awards certificates for 25 years of membership and for life memberships. COSDA has no awards program and the others each present two or three awards annually.

ACE is one of four associations with permanent headquarters. Four of the seven pay a stipend to an individual to manage their organization, while three depend on volunteers. The top salary is \$1,100 per month for AAEA. ACE pays \$1,000 per month, ARC pays \$800 per month and CCA pays \$200 per month.

ARC, COSDA and NAFB offer few formal educational opportunities outside of professional improvement features during annual or semi-annual meetings. AAEA has its photo and writing workshops, ACE and CCA have regional workshops, and NFEA indicates it has self-improvement seminars.

The survey form did not ask about the use of electronic communications. However, ACE is using state-of-the-art electronic technologies in its day-to-day operations. Members of ACE can communicate with one another through an ITT-Dialcom database. This network is provided to ACE officers, if they are not linked to a university Dialcom "mailbox". And, the service is available at a small fee to other members—active and associate. Annual conference planning is partially conducted by audio teleconference—a real savings in time and money.

For the past two years the ACE board has met by teleconference in the spring and two recent past ACE presidents have "attended" regional meetings via videotape or audio-teleconference, resulting in further savings.

ACE has much to offer to its members. We have every right to be proud of ACE, and should share these facts with our co-workers, especially when they ask, "What do you get for your \$45?"

*Editor's note: ACE also has 13 special interest groups (SIG) many with newsletters, or other means of communication, covering developments in a number of areas ranging from writing and broadcasting to three newly established groups on interactive video, media relations and teleconferencing.)*