

Use of Slide-Tape and Video Cassettes in County Extension Office Self-Teaching Centers*

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Researchers wanted to find whether self-teaching centers using video cassettes or slide-tape projection systems would be an appropriate way to disseminate information to people using the services of county offices of the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service.

Four groups of counties were selected for the study, representing about a third of the counties of the state. Each group included large, medium, and small counties, defined by population. One group received both slide-tape and video cassette projection systems to present "Select-A-Fact" programs. Another received a slide-tape system only, and a third received a video cassette system only. The fourth group received slide-tape programs but no new equipment.

A control group was randomly selected from county Extension offices not in the project. These counties could obtain the "Select-A-Fact" programs by ordering them individually as they traditionally have done with other programs.

Topics for "Select-A-Fact" programs were selected through a pre-test survey. Twenty-one programs were used, ranging in length from 12 to 15 minutes. Topics included five related to horticulture, three to production agriculture, eight to home economics, two to youth programs, two to energy conservation, and one related to home repair.

Portable self-teaching centers were erected in each county office in the project, in a location where they were clearly visible and easy to use without interfering with traffic patterns. Questionnaires were collected from people using the centers over a two-year period beginning in February, 1978. These asked questions on program selection and suitability of viewing systems.

County staff members also filled out questionnaires relative to staff time spent on the teaching centers.

A total of 786 questionnaires was collected from center users. However, only 253 of these were used in the final analysis because the others indicated group usage. The study was only interested in testing the merit of self-teaching centers used by one or two people at a time.

Responses were highly favorable, with 81 percent of the users rating the self-teaching centers as a "good" or "above average" way to present information. About the same number rated the information they received as "above average" in usefulness or "very useful."

When given a choice of projection systems, 90 percent of the users chose the video cassette system. A third of the viewers said the main reason they used the center was to learn a process. Participants spent an average of 10 to 15 minutes using the centers.

The study indicated that three variables were significant in determining the degree to which clients will use self-teaching centers in county Extension offices. Twenty-six percent of the variance could be attributed to county populations and traffic flow in the Extension office, while 28 percent was attributed to publicity alone. The two counties with the most regular publicity and promotion effort had the largest number of center users. Radio, newspaper, and newsletters were the most common vehicles for promoting the programs.

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Use of Agriculture News by Metropolitan Newspapers

News has been defined in many different ways. It is a relative concept, changing with time, place, and social conditions. The importance of farm news was obvious when a majority of the people of the United States made their living from agriculture. Today, with only a small percentage of people living on the farm, agricul-