

What's Disney Got That We Ain't?

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WHETHER YOU LIKE IT or not, every popular or technical manuscript you publish has to compete for readership (or lookership) with some mighty talented producers of literature and other forms of entertainment. Like maybe TV. Given a choice, any red-blooded, full professor worthy of his LLD would pick a Walt Disney production over a bulletin on the Revision of the Genus Picalili. Even if you had edited the latter yourself and it was great.

So if you can't beat 'em, run a close second rather than drop out altogether.

You're aware that any scientist is obligated to do considerable reading whether he wants to or not. Much of the time he doesn't want to, and he especially doesn't want to after dinner at the time the best TV entertainment is offered. This is like taking some bitter medicine instead of dessert. So why not slip this medicine into a sugar-coated pill? Put your technical papers on video tape cartridges he can play on his TV set.

No, you can't do this right now but the person who follows your successor will probably do it, and maybe right now is the time to get ready.

Time magazine for August 10 reports that about a dozen companies are developing video tape cassettes that can be plugged into home TV sets and played (both picture and sound) like the present cassettes in tape recorders. When these will be perfected and widely distributed is problematical, but the time is coming. CBS, Sony, Avco, and others aren't putting out that kind of money for nothing.

Thing BIG for a moment. When the scientist of the future gets his lab apparatus set up, he'll call your office and let you

know. Then you'll send over your portable TV camera, sound equipment, lights, etc., along with a cameraman and an editor or writer. This latter will interview the investigator who can explain just what he is trying to accomplish with the experiments and how he hopes to go about it. The apparatus can also be explained.

Then periodically, as the experiments progress and possibly expand to other locations (like field plots) the camera and sound follow along to the point of "Summary and Conclusions."

Raw film and sound tape are then edited and combined; a one-minute (no longer) summary is spliced onto the start of the tape and the whole thing is packaged in a cassette.

The title, using computerized key words for easy retrieval, and the abstract are put on paper and sent to libraries and abstracting services. Enough copies of the entire cassette are made to cover expected foreign and domestic demand (maybe a dozen or so would do it) and you're in business.

The Revision of the Genus *Picalili* is sugar-coated and ready to compete for the professor's attention on a more nearly equal basis with Disney than was previously the case.

Any questions? Yes?

Where are you going to find cameramen, editors, etc. who can handle assignments like this? You've got some years in which to train them. Better get at it.

Will these pictures be in color? Probably. Black and white is on its way out and color is getting cheaper and better.

Why only a dozen or so copies? This assumes that by the time you are ready for the program the world's library situation will have improved to the point where there is an international loan service that really works. That's a big assumption but it is fairly certain that by then there will be more information centers where cassettes can be seen by interested persons. You might need to print 50 copies, but they would take up much less space in your mailing room than several thousand 32-page bulletins.

How are we to know at what points we should be called in to tape these experiments? That you'll have to work out with the investigator, but it is assumed (from considerable experience) that once the investigator realizes how much pain and travail of writing he's being saved, he'll keep in touch with you. In fact,

your problem might be to cool him off when he hasn't anything to say or show—the sort of thing he now includes in his written manuscript that you have to fight to throw out.

Where are you going to get the money to do this? That'll be your successor's problem.

Could this be applied to popularized reports of research aimed at growers? Probably a waste of money. The professor *has* to put your show on and watch it to keep up with the literature. The farmer doesn't, so John Wayne (who will presumably still be making pictures then) would beat you out every time.

If you're so doggone smart, why aren't you rich? Inflation.