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Inside Information

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USDA TELECONFERENCE CENTER PROPOSED

USDA agencies have been surveyed concerning a proposed department-wide teleconferencing center for USDA.

Recently, Larry Quinn, head of the Video and Film Division of USDA's Office of Information, took part in an audio teleconference with agency information heads attending the weekly USDA Public Affairs Council meeting to discuss the proposal.

Quinn, vacationing in New England, used the opportunity to illustrate, with help from USDA's Extension Service, how a central teleconferencing center could work and help USDA communications efforts.

VETERAN COMMUNICATOR TO RETIRE "AGAIN"

Walter John, executive director of the Organization of Professional Employees of the Department of Agriculture (OPEDA), plans to retire at the end of this year.

John retired once before (7 years ago), as information director of USDA's Extension Service.

His second retirement will wind up about 50 years of service in and around government and he thinks it is about time to relax a bit.

Prior to being named Extension Service's information director, John served for a number of years as the deputy information director for USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

He had also headed the USDA regional information office in Chicago for a number of years before moving to Washington, D.C.

During John's tenure with OPEDA, the organization's membership reached record highs and communications were opened on many fronts, including those with the Secretary's Office of each administration.

FEDERAL PRINTING SHOPS TO BE REDUCED

The federal government said last week it will close or downgrade 130 printing and duplicating plants across the nation within a year to save \$30 million.

An estimated 1,000 employees will be affected, with about half expected to lose their jobs.

The U.S. Government Printing Office and the Office of Management & Budget said the action stemmed from a survey identifying more than 130 unnecessary printing and duplicating facilities in federal agencies that could be closed before Sept. 30, 1984.

Twelve printing facility closures already underway include 3 operated by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service in Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco.

Earlier this year, the Agricultural Marketing Service closed the regional information offices located at the same locations.

USDA's central printing plant in Washington, D.C., operated by USDA's Office of Operations, is also in the process of being downgraded to a smaller installation with less staff.

"COMMUNICATIONS" IS THE TREND

"Corporate Communications" is now the favorite title for public relations departments in FORTUNE 500 companies.

According to the new O'Dwyer's Directory of Corporate Communications, the number of "public relations" departments among the FORTUNE 500 companies declined considerably from the previous year, dropping to second place as the descriptive title.

The third most popular term now in use by the corporations is "public affairs."

Maybe it should be noted that the corporate "communicators" are just following a trend set by government and institutional communicators.

For example, when information directors of State Departments of Agriculture formed a national organization several years ago, they called their group the "Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture" (COSDA).

When the Federal Editors Association and Government Information Officers joined a few years back to form a national organization for federal, state and local government public affairs people, they called their association the "National Association of Government Communicators" (NAGC).

More recently, agricultural editors, information specialists and other communicators at land grant universities and USDA agencies changed their organization's name to "Agricultural Communicators in Education" (ACE).

And, probably many can remember when USDA changed its "Office of Information" to "Office of Communications" many years ago. Later it was incorporated into the new "Office of Governmental & Public Affairs."

Currently, at least 5 State Departments of Agriculture have either offices or directors of "communication."

A number of land grant universities have changed their editorial or information offices to "communications" offices.

The first use of the phrase "public relations" apparently was made by President Thomas Jefferson in 1807.

While drafting his "Seventh Address to the Congress," he scratched out the words "state of thought" in one place and wrote "public relations" instead.

MISSOURI EXTENSION HAS JOB OPENING

The Missouri Cooperative Extension Service has an opening on its staff for a person to provide information support to the University of Missouri 4-H youth program.

Duties will include editing publications, writing news and feature stories, taking news photographs, developing audiovisual and instructional materials, and providing campus and area Extension Service faculty communications training.

An undergraduate degree in journalism and/or communications is required. A master's degree is preferred (candidates without an M.S. or M.A. would need to earn such a degree in 4 years).

Closing date for applications and resumes is Dec. 1.

Information about the position may be obtained from Richard Lee, Director, Extension Information, 1-98 Agriculture Building, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. Lee's electronic mailbox is AGS1355; his telephone number is (314) 882-2480.

FEDERAL PUBLISHING STUDIED BY COMMISSION

The President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, better known as the Grace Commission, studied publishing by federal departments and agencies and found it wanting.

The commission's report calls for tighter control of publishing and copying, more emphasis on new publishing technology (including micropublishing), more consolidations of federal printing plants, consolidation of mailing lists, improved mail handling and a new system of user fees for publications.

According to the Grace Commission study, the proposed improvements would yield cost savings and revenue increases of \$1.7 billion in 3 years.

In only one of the communications areas studied, audiovisual production, did the commission find reason to praise.

The group's report said that audiovisual expenditures were less than had been "widely conjectured," and that these activities are being managed effectively.

The commission's report also asked the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to "develop a job classification system that gives greater recognition to the professional qualifications of agency publishing professionals."

HOW TO MAKE MOST OF A TRADE SHOW

Exhibit Surveys Inc., a firm which has specialized in the evaluation of trade shows and exhibits for 20 years, is offering a free guide called "Marketing with Exhibits for Success and Profit."

The booklet provides a practical and cost effective approach to exhibiting based on the knowledge the company has gained from researching and analyzing over 4,000 individual exhibits.

For a free copy of the publication, write to Exhibit Surveys Inc., P.O. Box 327, Middletown, NJ 07748.

DID YOU KNOW? A single \$4 silicon chip, which fits easily inside a bottle cap, has twice the computing power of huge 15-year-old second generation machines!

"INSIDE" ELECTRONIC MAILING RESULTS

While some folks check their electronic mailboxes often (at least once a day), others probably check their EM boxes less often than their regular postal mailboxes.

At least that's what seems to be the case in a check of the electronic distribution of the last issue of "Inside Information."

Users of the Dialcom EM system can request an "acknowledgement received" automatically from the receiver when the message is "read," by entering .AR before the .S (send) command is given at the end of the message.

At least two receivers were reading the first page of the Oct. 24 "Inside" before the final 3 pages were sent.

Lorraine Kingdon, head of the University of Arizona's agricultural communications office, read the first page at 11:07 a.m.--less than 2 minutes after it was sent from Washington, D.C.

Raymond Carr, regional information director for USDA's Forest Service at Missoula, Mont., read the first page at 11:10 a.m.

Within an hour of the electronic transmission of the 4-page newsletter, 6 other recipients had read "Inside Information."

By the end of the first day, 40 offices had pulled the newsletter from their EM boxes. The last acknowledgement of the day was registered at 7:41 p.m. Washington, D.C., time (from the University of Nevada).

Several EM users check their mailboxes in the morning, as was evidenced by the 20 who pulled "Inside" from their mailboxes before noon the following day.

Another 10 got their newsletter before the end of the second day, or within about 30 hours after electronic transmission.

Now, for the not-so-good news.

Eleven offices did not pull "Inside" from their EM mailbox until the third day.

Another 6 did not pull until the fourth day (actually sixth day because of the two-day weekend).

Then there were 3 who read the newsletter one week later. (No, we will not mention any names!)

And, finally, there are a few who to date have not pulled the Oct. 24 "Inside Information" from their assigned EM mailbox.

After this issue, we will check with those offices to see if their EM mailbox has been changed or closed.

NEW TWIST ON COMPUTER MEDIA

First, there was a wave of new publications just about computers. Now, there's a new publication just about computer publications!

THE MICROMEDIA GUIDE, a reference guide to microcomputer media, has recently been published by Michael Tchong of Scholastic's FAMILY COMPUTING magazine.

The publication costs \$35 and will be updated quarterly.

If you're interested in a copy, write to Michael Tchong, P.O. Box 6373, New York, NY 10150.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to the Deputy Director for Current Information, Room 458-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or to AGRO02 mailbox on the Dialcom electronic mail system, or call (202) 447-7454.