

How the Cooperative Extension Service Uses Television

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Abstract

A 24-item questionnaire was sent to Extension communicators in 49 states to determine the extent to which portable video equipment is used by Extension personnel, and how they evaluate its effectiveness.

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A 24-item questionnaire was sent to Extension communicators in 49 states to determine the extent to which portable video equipment is used by Extension personnel, and how they evaluate its effectiveness.

Of the 35 states responding, 23 had video playback equipment available at the state level. Eight had it re-

gionally, ten had it in some counties or regions, and one had such equipment in each county.

Respondents were divided into "large" and "small" states, with 60 counties used as the dividing line.

Responses showed that color programming is more prevalent in large states than small ones, though both are using color in the 3/4-inch cassette format. Comments indicated a definite interest in adding the half-inch color cassette format where it is not in use, because of the light weight and moderate price of this equipment.

While most states purchased their video equipment over a period of five years, a significant number said they bought it all at once. The funding source used most often by small states was the state Extension budget. About equally, large states tended to use state Extension funds or a combination of state and federal funds. The most common price range reported for video equipment purchased was \$1,500 to \$2,000. The majority of respondents have used video equipment for two to five years, while 14 large states have used it as long as 15 years.

The most usual way of determining the need for video equipment was media staff analysis. Administrative staff analysis was a distant second, with only one state indicating determination of need by multi-level staff analysis.

The video equipment usually is housed in the state Extension headquarters. Some regional offices also house it.

Large states trained their staff in using video equipment mainly through demonstration. Small states relied on self-instruction, although hands-on workshops were held by many states.

Video equipment was found to be used much more frequently by county staff members in large states. Large states indicated an average 34.2 uses by county staff and 16.2 uses by specialists in a six-month period. In the small states, respective figures were 4.9 and 12.3. Few state administrative staff members use this equipment.

County personnel usually use video-taped programs produced by staff. Small states rent, borrow, or pur-

chase video tapes more often, while large states are more likely to use video for in-service training. State specialists and administrative staff use staff-produced video tapes for in-service training and some internal communications purposes.

Others who are allowed to use the video equipment usually are Extension groups, schools, and colleges. However, more large states are not in favor of letting others use the equipment. They cite maintenance and availability problems as reasons for their disapproval.

Large states definitely have more supporting services for television activities than small states. Public broadcasting and closed circuit television studios often are located at the land-grant university and are more likely to have program production funds available. Small states rely on closed circuit studios and video tape library resources.

Major problems related to the video equipment have been lack of funds for purchasing and producing programs, inaccessibility of equipment, and its weight and bulk. Small states cited lack of staff interest in using the equipment.

In summary, the study showed that Extension communicators consider television a viable communication tool. The limiting factor is available resources. Without technical backup and software availability, video equipment can have only a limited effect on stretching the capabilities of limited and diminishing staff.

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