

13.

Research in the Future

THERE HAS BEEN A REVOLUTION in farming since 1940. Bigger farms, new machinery and new methods have made enormous changes. A good farmer of 1940 who left Iowa, went to California and came back to Iowa to farm again in 1960 would be baffled by many of the things he would have to do.

In this period of rapid change on the farms, have farm publications changed? Critics insist that the farm paper of 1940 is almost the same as the farm paper of 1960.

We use larger type, more and bigger pictures, and grow breathless in pursuing the latest developments from college experiment stations and from the experimenters of commercial concerns. Have we changed enough?

The evidence is that farm publications still hold farm interest. The series of "InFARMatIon Please" reports, prepared by the Statistical Laboratory of Iowa State University, indicate that farmers still rely heavily on the state farm paper as a source of information.

Other surveys show much the same thing. Glenn Johnson of Michigan State reports on sources of information by 1075 farmers in seven Midwest states. (1)

Information on Prices

	No. of mentions
Farm magazines	856
Publications of farm organizations	160
Newspapers	664
Radio	635
Television	145

Information on Production

Farm magazines	513
Publications of farm organizations	75
Newspapers	195
Radio	196
Television	57

Information on New Technology

Farm magazines	242
Publications of farm organizations	24
Newspapers	89
Radio	72
Television	29

In the opinion of these farmers, what are the "most important" subjects?

	No. of mentions
Prices	352
Production method	325
New technology	64
Human information	79
Institutional	92
Couldn't rank first	8

On production, the bread and butter of the content of farm publications, the high standing of the farm press seems clear. On prices — and price prospects — newspapers and radio are pushing up. On new technology, the farm press leads. Yet it should be noted that new technology ranks low in prestige compared to production and prices.

Why are farm papers, even if relatively unchanged since 1940, still doing so well in their traditional role? It might be noted here that every editor will probably say that his farm paper has changed since 1940; it is the other papers that have not changed. Most outsiders looking at the issues of the two dates would say, "Yes, some changes. But a reader of 1940 would still feel at home with the paper of 1960."

One reason for the continued strength of the farm press is probably just habit. Probably every farmer in Illinois grew up in a home where *Prairie Farmer* came regularly. To a degree, the same is true of the *Wisconsin Agriculturist* in Wisconsin and *Wallaces Farmer* in Iowa.

The stock remark of an older subscriber is often, "I did my first reading in your paper. Looked at the livestock pictures and puzzled out the words alongside."

Over the years, too, each farm paper has been able to do something useful for most subscribers. Another stock remark: "You had a piece in the paper 10 years ago that I tried out and it worked. I figured it paid my subscription for 20 years."

A Starch report in *Wallaces Farmer* (March 5, 1960) asked the question: "Have you ever made use of farming or homemaking ideas (including recipes) reported in *Wallaces Farmer*?" Of the men, 65 per cent

said "Yes" about farming, and of the women, 68 per cent said "Yes" about homemaking.

The reverse is also true. A farmer who didn't buy an extra 80 in 1940 because of the paper's conservative warnings may calculate how much he lost by not gambling on a rise in prices during the war boom. A Republican farmer who voted for Hoover in 1932 might be critical of a paper's support of the New Deal's farm program.

On the whole, however, the farm publication is an old friend, or if not an old friend, at least an old and familiar enemy. There are always subscribers who open the paper eagerly to "see what this blankety-blank-blank is going to say this week." And even one of these subscribers may add, "This guy is crazy on politics, but he does know something about corn and hogs."

But is familiarity with the product always an asset? Perhaps there are young farmers who think the familiar paper is too old-fashioned and "says the same thing over." The young farmer is geared to television, to more general magazines, to more farm papers, to more time on the road and in town and less time in a chair by a reading light. This is an additional reason for a continued check on the reading habits of young farmers.

Add to this the fact that there are more kinds of folks in the country than there used to be. There are residential farmers, who live on 10 acres and have a horse and a few chickens. There are retired farmers. There are part-time farmers who keep some stock and do a little farming on week ends but whose main income comes from a job in town. In the ranks of commercial farmers, there is a great difference in interests

between the man with a gross income of \$5,000 a year and one with \$40,000 a year.

Farmers were more alike in the old days than they are now. The 1960 census raises the question of the nature of the farm audience. Will editorial copy that registers with the 6.7 per cent of Iowa farm operators who are part-time farmers also register with the 4.6 per cent who take in \$40,000 or more?

The census figures on economic class indicate how income groups line up in the two states:

	Iowa		Wisconsin	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Class I (sales of \$40,000 up)	8,110	4.6%	1,010	0.7%
Class II (\$20,000 to \$39,999)	21,579	12.4	4,221	3.2
Class III (\$10,000 to \$19,999)	48,045	27.5	23,750	18.1
Class IV (\$5,000 to \$9,999)	47,408	27.1	43,523	33.2
Class V (\$2,500 to \$4,999)	23,537	13.5	28,324	21.6
Class VI (\$50 to \$2,499)	5,655	3.2	5,868	4.5
Part-time operators, etc.	11,660	6.7	16,392	12.5
Retirement, etc.	8,701	5.0	8,114	6.2
	<u>174,695</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>131,202</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Do we want to put out a farm paper that appeals to all these folks? It is possible, but it has difficulties. The part-time farmer and the big commercial farmer are both interested in rural schools, in the social problems of country living, in flower gardens and lawns. But the description of an automatic feeding set-up wouldn't mean much — except as a curiosity — to farmers below the gross \$10,000 level. To include farmers above that level would mean an audience of around 44.5 per cent of the Iowa total.

From the business angle, all of these people are a market for consumer goods — overalls, shoes, groceries, household gadgets, etc.

Would it make more sense to aim a farm paper at the better commercial farmers? If we aimed at the interests of those with \$10,000 or more, this would be 44.5 per cent of the census total in Iowa and 22.1 per cent in Wisconsin. If we stretched it to include those with an income of \$5,000 or more, this would be 71.6 per cent in Iowa and 55.3 per cent in Wisconsin.

There is another way to deal with this problem, of course. Shift to the vertical approach. Get out a farm paper devoted exclusively to dairying, or to hog raising or to poultry raising. Yet in the Middle West, most of the farmers have more than one major interest.

These are policy questions for the publishers and the editors. But the questions may get better answers if more research is carried out. Just how does our circulation now break up? How many are part-time farmers, how many are town people who own farms, etc?

What kind of copy are the bigger farmers reading? What kind is read by smaller farmers? So far our investigations show that production copy gets much the same kind of response from big and little farmers. But how many readers do we lose when we talk about a problem that affects only the top 10 per cent of our farmers? How many do we lose when we talk about a problem that means something only to the lower 10 per cent of our readers? We need to continue investigations in this field.

In checking on the appeal of vertical publications, we need to know the readership habits of farmers who sell 150 or more hogs a year and of farmers who milk

30 or more cows. We have a good deal of information in this field, but it should be kept up to date.

Editorial style is related to these other policy decisions. Will it be useful to follow the lead of *McCalls*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, etc. and run less copy in very big type? How reconcile the interest of the man who wants a detailed technical article with the interest of the man who prefers only a 200-word summary?

How important is the slick paper, four-color format to subscribers? (We know already that it is important to most ad agencies.) Our slick paper, four-color inserts give us a chance to compare the appeal of this kind of advertising copy with the appeal of run-of-the-book ads. We have no way at present to use splits to check editorial appeal of the two kinds of presentation. Experiments by others indicate that four-color layouts do not always help readership.

Another problem deals with the farm woman's interest in the paper. At present, we get fantastically high readership scores on Home Department copy and good scores for women on copy aimed primarily at men. Farming is, in many cases, a family affair. Women participate in decisions. With more education than men, they often point out to husbands articles they should read or ads they should notice.

Yet in the business field farm papers lose ground in advertising directed to farm women. Farm women use lipsticks, and only a fraction of the farm audience takes any one women's magazine, yet cosmetic advertising misses farm papers. Farm women buy groceries for hearty eaters in big families, yet food advertising is light.

Is the answer to forget about farm women and aim copy only at farm men? Or is it to continue to appeal to farm women and hope that we can get more information on the farm women's market to the agencies? This question is also related to the question of dealing with commercial farmers only or with everybody living in the country. All women living in the country have similar problems — in gardening, in canning and freezing and in relation to rural schools.

Every publisher and editor should probably devote special time to a consideration of the death of *Country Gentlemen*, *Cappers Farmer* and a score of other farm publications. What killed them? Is there any chance that we have the same disease?

That is one good reason for more editorial research and for more thinking about the results of editorial research.

More emphasis should undoubtedly be given to pre-testing new subject matter and themes the publication has never used. To rely exclusively on earlier readership surveys is to be chained to the past.

Farm publications may be tied more to the past than other magazines. For them, the argument is even stronger for using pre-tests of subject matter as described in Chapter 10.

Something might be said here about the claim that "you can't edit a paper with a slide rule." Some folks worry about editors being influenced by experiments like ours to the extent that individual initiative, intuition, and possibly genius, will be stifled. (2)

There is some risk here, but I doubt if it adds up to much. A very few editors may decide that the results of

a readership experiment (not always statistically significant) should be followed blindly. Far more will disregard such experiments and be guided, as usual by their own hunches, by habit, by the examples set by their contemporaries and by a few letters from subscribers.

Both extremes are foolish, of course. Anyone who has read this book this far will note how tentative many of our conclusions are. Many experiments do no more than provide the editor with a hunch. But a hunch of this origin may have value.

I remember the comment made by one eminent statistician when I was worrying over tests of significance. He said, "Let's suppose this experiment doesn't have results that turn out to be statistically significant. Still it is all the evidence you have to go on. If the cost of making the change indicated by the experiment is small, better go ahead and make it. And then run some more tests."

Figure 13.1



The Giant of the Line ...

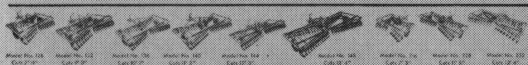
The New *Kewanee* 6 ROW DISK

■ This is model 99. The newest and the giant of the Kewanee line.

Model 99 cuts 20' 2" - 8' full corn rows. You should see it go thru cornstalks!

If a 99 is larger than you need to your farm there are 16 other Kewanee Wheel-Mounted Disk models for you to choose from. And any one you select will have all the features which have made Kewanee disks the first choice of farmers everywhere.

Ask any farmer who has a Kewanee disk who he prefers it. Among the reasons he will give you are these: Kewanee pioneered the wheel-mounted disk—has made and sold more of them than any other company. Kewanee does a better job of disk-har-ing; do it quicker, pull easier, last longer. They have higher trade-in value. They are the only disks with Wrap-Around Frame; the only disks with double tapered Timken roller bearings ... etc. ... etc. ... etc. Go ahead. Ask him. He can convince you better than we can!



A Wide Kewanee Cuts Harrowing Time in Half

■ Any farm that has enough land to warrant the use of a wide harrow has plenty of tractor power to pull even the largest 42' Kewanee. So to pull anything smaller than a wide harrow is a waste of both power and time.

A wide Kewanee does a better job of harrowing than any smaller harrow because it can follow the contour of the ground more accurately.

Cut your harrowing time in half. Use a wide Kewanee. Kewanee, one-man, wheel-mounted harrows come in 25', 30', 33', 36' and 42' widths.



Kewanee Developed, Tested and Approved by Farmers for Farmers
MACHINERY & CONVEYOR CO., KEWANEE, ILL.

January 16, 1960

WALLACES FARMER

3

Page Score

Men 54%

Women 28.5%

Who Were the Best Prospects?

This advertisement scored well. Its Read Some for men on sales copy was 27 per cent. Read Most was 19 per cent.

To which farm groups did the ad make the strongest appeal? Farmers who were young, with good incomes and on bigger farms showed the most interest.

Crop acres harvested	1-49 acres	50-74 acres	75 acres and up
Read Some	38.1%	46.9%	64.3%

Of the 98 farmers interviewed on this question, 63 had 75 acres or more. This was the biggest as well as the best market.

Wallaces Farmer, January 16, 1960



Young dairyman says —

"Records are the key to dairy success"

by Bernie Munzel

Overhead feed bin is a convenience
Paul Fowler uses to eat these tons. Periodically here, they 40 minutes. He then level those feeding, which, replace feed to sweep floor.

ALTHOUGH he's the first to admit that he has a long way to go, Paul Fowler is a young dairyman in Wisconsin county with the outstanding one of the top producers of Holstein herds in the nation. If he keeps making the kind of progress that he has in the past year, young Fowler may just reach that goal sometime.

In the meantime, he's content with getting as much production out of his 20-cow herd as possible. Paul doesn't believe in the term "pushing cows" but sees nothing wrong with any method of increasing production, as long as it's justified.

At he says, "Dairying is my only income source. I'm interested in building up my herd average."

Paul's first in the city next of his life, but he's no stranger to the farm. In the past 15 years only twice has he missed special summer of the farm.

When he took over the reins in February last, the farm owned by his father, a New York businessman, had been living money for everyone in a row.

Father-son operation

With his dad he worked out a hard-fought, long-term plan that would enable him to share profits. Then he started out to remedy the unstable situation.

In one year he's pulled the operation well above the breakeven point, roughly tripled the amount of milk sold from the herd and raised the fat average from 528 to over 600 pounds per cow.

The last monthly report from Holstein Dick Herd shows a fat average of 59 pounds per cow an increase of 16 pounds over their previous high. Figures from April 1, 1965 to March 30, 1966, the herd has an average of 16,622 pounds of milk and 497 pounds of fat per cow. Average test is 59 percent since 40 percent of the herd is Guernsey.

What's the secret of keeping a herd churning in production?

Paul believes the cows were capable of more when he took over the herd, but he now recognizes that it wasn't possible without constant supervision.

Checking over the recent books, he found now that in past years had been

dry five and six months at a time. Late most dry cows, he figures that any cow dry over 60 days is better money.

Before he gets all the credit, however, his newly acquired father enters the story at this point. Jackson, a city girl from New York, has made such a rapid adjustment in two months that she's a full-fledged farm wife by now.

In addition, to heavy child care, she's also in charge of the record department. Keeping track of breeding dates isn't new, but it's important. And that's one of the first places Paul started to improve the herd.

Every heat period is recorded. When a cow's heat, she's observed 20 days later to see if she milks. If not, she's bred again and given a pregnancy examination 35 to 40 days later.

Nightly checks on the herd is another system that has paid off handsomely in the Fowler herd.

"It's the only way to spot a cow that's lame, or one that isn't eating when she should be. If she isn't it's time to take a closer look," says Paul.

Mastitis is under control, although it was a problem during the first few months. Dry cow injections have helped clear up some problem quarters.

High-cowling has fed several times a day is another point that gets emphasis.

"Last year I cut first crop alfalfa around the middle of June. If it's possible this year, I'll move that up before the first of the month to save the protein content."

"A protein analysis of my hay last year put the matter in a dollar and cents basis," explains Paul. "Through the analysis I discovered that with high protein hay I could cut the protein in my ration from 14 percent down to 11, with a definite saving in feed cost."

The relationship of feeding to economic production is another area which gets close attention.

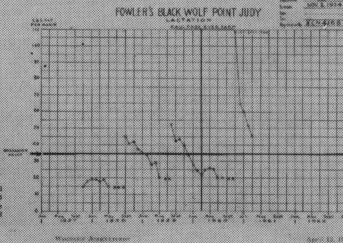
Feeds according to production

"Given a choice, I'd rather overfeed than underfeed any day," says Paul. "Feed any cow that's a good producer will get plenty to eat when I feed."

His past record gives a pretty good indication of his determination to succeed with a dairy herd. Paul is a graduate in agricultural economics from Cornell University. Before making the decision to farm, he turned down a promotion as an account executive for a well-known advertising firm in New York of a salary well above what he can expect from the farm in the next few years.

Why did Paul Fowler take up farming under these circumstances? Mainly because his only satisfaction with the other job would have been the salary, plus a small house in the suburbs and a daily commuting trip that he didn't relish.

If he builds the kind of Holstein herd that he wants, he'll realize the kind of satisfaction that every successful dairyman knows and the kind that money can't buy.



Page Score

Men 61.5%

Women 34.5%

Who Reads About Farm Records?

Younger farmers and farmers with larger incomes were more apt to read about farm record keeping than older and poorer farmers.

Read Some scores on men's age groups follow:

21-34 years	35-49 years	50 and up
75%	63%	45.3%

Here are Read Some scores on income groups:

Under \$5,000	\$5,000-\$9,999	\$10,000 and up
44.7%	69.6%	70.7%

Farmers who had gone beyond eighth grade in school were more interested than farmers whose education stopped earlier.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, April 15, 1961

The great danger in editing is not the blind following of experimental work. The great dangers may be these:

1. Doing this year exactly what you did last year and failing to test new ideas;
2. Imitating some drastic change made by a contemporary publication without testing its appeal to your particular audience;
3. Being influenced by a few letters, some from folks with an ax to grind and some by a few subscribers who are either radically for or radically against some proposal;
4. Failing to try to look five or ten years ahead, to try to see what audiences and publications may be like then;
5. Forgetting that sociology, anthropology, psychology and history are also fields in which farm editors need skills. Farm families are people as well as hog raisers and corn raisers.

* * *

Do readership surveys, pre-testing and opinion surveys help farm publication editors to avoid these dangers? I think they may. Every time a readership survey upsets a cherished belief, the editor is likely to profit.

"If I'm wrong about this," he may say to himself, "I may be wrong about something else." And he should be more able to take a fresh look at his job.