

Rural Library Service Newsletter

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Lessons and Responses to the Farm Crisis
Voiced in Omaha

"...it is important to recognize that while the farm problem has been called a crisis, it is necessary to recognize that it is a chronic condition. Normally, crises are defined as short-term, traumatic events, contrary to the long-term problem that we face today. Already the farm crisis has existed four or five years, and recent estimates project that it will continue for another four or five years. It is quite likely the events we have called farm crisis may last a decade or more, which suggests it may become a chronic problem. As a result, intervention strategies must be able to respond both to immediate, short-run needs that develop as well as to the longer term problems that emerge."

Paul Lasley & Rand Conger, "Farm Crisis Response: Extension and Research Activities in the North Central Region", North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1986.

On May 3-5, one hundred and eighty-five rural service providers and users gathered in Omaha, Nebraska to attend the conference, "The Unsettling of the Midwest: Education's Response to the Rural Crisis". The conference showcased programs that have addressed the rural crisis. It also provided many lessons to those who serve rural communities. Service providers should: first, know their organization, secondly, know other agencies in order to

form partnerships to meet mutual goals, and lastly, service providers need to learn how to adapt their programs and services to encourage and aid economic development in the rural community.



Nora Kingrey, Converse County Library, Douglas, WY prepared a slide show on ICLIS (Intermountain Community Learning & Information Services) for the Omaha meeting. ICLIS, a Kellogg funded project, provides rural communities computer assisted information delivery systems, publicly assessable computer and software programs, learning center technologies, & adult learning & referral services.

David Longanecker, Executive Director, Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board, led off with one of the first of the fifty presentations given during the three day conference. He reminded the audience that (service providers) can't be all things to all people because there are many issues and concerns that could be addressed."... before we begin (new services or programs) we need to answer a number of criteria. Does it, the activity we are to do, make sense philosophically?. Does it meet our basic mission? Will it be cost effective? Will it be worth our effort? Can partnerships be encouraged and once formed can they receive the community's continued support?" He also cautioned the audience not to erode those programs that have been successful by pursuing other interests.

rural infrastructure block grants which would help fund rural road and bridge construction, utility extensions and the development of waste disposal and water supply facilities. Other funds would support education and training programs and counseling services for rural families.



Don Reynolds, Associate Director, Central Kansas Library System, Great Bend, KS described his library's Rural Resource Manual at one of the Conference's concurrent sessions. The manual includes information on mental health, legal and financial assistance, credit, legislative issues, career options, & listings of organizations/agencies serving the rural resident.

Paul Lasley, Associate Professor of Sociology, Iowa State University, described a number of lessons that rural people should learn from the present crisis. Farmers need to be aware of the vulnerability of specialization and the need for diversity. He also said that the farmers of the seventies in making their financial decisions overreacted to short term optimism. Today, we also need to be careful about overreacting in making our decisions. What we need is better precision in evaluating and analyzing. The professor also cautioned that the restoration of rural profitability based on

Douglas Treadway, President, Southwest State University in Minn., echoed Longanecker's need for partnerships suggesting that faculty should get sabbatical and release time to work with community leaders in developing joint projects and planning. Representative Tom Coleman (Rep.) Mo. spoke on the need for economic development. The Congressman used the conference as an opportunity to announce the Rural Development Initiative which he has described as a blue print to rebuild rural America. At the center of his proposal are programs aimed at encouraging economic development in small towns. Economic development would come from federal grants which would provide seed capital to encourage private industry to locate in rural communities. There would also be rural set-asides for department of defense and other federal procurement programs to encourage the use and/or development of rural procurement sources for federal agency contracts. Other areas of development would be in

agriculture may not help all rural communities because many rural communities are non agricultural. What we do need according to Lasley is cooperation and collaboration because tough times still lie ahead and to survive we need to take charge of our own agenda.

Many in attendance shared Lasley's sentiments. A common expression repeated during the conference was "Grown in, not flown in". This means leadership has to be assumed at the local level and that local communities have to find solutions within themselves and their local resources.

The conference was a testimony to the many examples of where communities and their local social and health services, educational institutions, libraries and other local service agencies have responded and demonstrated local leadership. Nearly 100 presentors described successful hotlines, community development projects, health or social services or library programs directed at the rural crisis. Many of these model projects are included in the publication, "The Unsettling of the Midwest: Education's Response to the Rural Crisis: Model Programs Midwest States." The author of this publication and the host of the Omaha conference is the Midwest Regional Initiative Action Agenda for Rural Adult Postsecondary Education, Manhattan, Ks, Sue Maes, Project Director.

The publication, "the Unsettling of the Midwest" is currently being revised. When the revisions are completed, it will include descriptions of model projects from the following states: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Oklahoma. Under each state chapter, there will be a listing of about 10 programs. For each of these, there will be a brief description of the project plus the names, telephone numbers

and addresses of the service providers. To receive order information on this publication or on the Omaha Conference proceedings, you may write Sue Maes, Director, Action Agenda Project, 306 Umberger Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506. Expected publication dates for these two publications is Fall '87.

IOWA LIBRARIES TALKING UP RURAL LIFE

Drawing upon the success of the Iowa Humanities Board (IHB) "Let's Talk About It in Iowa Libraries" reading discussion program on the family in libraries across the state, Michael Martone, associate professor of English at Iowa State University, & staff from the State Library of Iowa will organize a program that will explore five books focusing on rural & small town life & values & take it to ten of Iowa's small town libraries. Humanities scholars will lead these programs & also give lectures for the general public. To aid libraries and groups who wish to have their own reading & discussion programs, the IHB will also prepare & distribute a packet containing a study guide, scholarly commentary, & suggestions relating to the planning, recruitment, and management of a reading & discussion series. A guide to self-directed reading will also be distributed widely for those unable to join a reading group.

Iowa Humanities Board Bulletin
Summer, 1987

WHAT IS A RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY?

We define it as a library which serve fewer than 10,000 people & is located in a county which either has fewer than 150 persons per sq. mile or has over 80% of its farm land in farms. We welcome comments on the adequacy of this definition (410 DKH, 1407 W. Gregory Dr., Urbana, IL 61801).

--Herbert Goldhor, Dir., Library Research Center, University of Illinois, Urbana - Library Journal
July, 1986.

Libraries and Extension Services Partners in Information

"Partners in Information: Libraries and USDA Cooperative Extension Services Working Together to Meet Rural Information Needs, " was a rural libraries program presented at the American Library Association Conference (ALA) in San Francisco on Tuesday June 30, 1987.

"The cooperative extension service programs throughout the United States have dropped 'agriculture' from their titles and are becoming information agencies responding to rural revitalization issues," according to John Christenson, chair of the Rural Library Services program committee which developed the ALA program. "Extension has identified several fundamental elements associated with its role in the area of revitalizing Rural America and it is seeking linkages with other organizations responding to community needs. Libraries can collaborate, rather than compete, with the Cooperative Extension Systems in stimulating interaction of community economic development, rural family cultural change and local problems solving."

The "Partners in Information" program highlighted several cooperating library and extension linkage's projects. Donna Whitson spoke on libraries and extensions joining forces on ICLIS (Intermountain Community Learning and Information Systems.) She began her remarks with the statement, "if one uses a pitchfork to empty out the water in the Potomac, no additional effort will help. To accomplish this task you need to change your methods, tools or ways."

She went on to explain that hard work may not be the answer for agencies to accomplish their goals but a change in their ways might be. She said the new ways include communication, cooperation and

collaboration.



Speakers at the ALA Rural Library Program were left to right Robert Lovan, James Grieshop, JoAnn Smith, Donna Whitson and John Christenson. Standing behind the speakers is Rural Library Service committee Chair, Brenda Pacey.

One of the biggest collaborative adventures currently is ICLIS. Extension offices, state and local libraries and colleges are working together to deliver services and materials to rural citizens in four states: Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. The program encourages cooperative development and sharing of educational and training resources. Efforts have resulted in the publication of bibliographies on volunteerism, the development of information and referral services, joint planning, advisory councils, and the development of community and information centers in rural communities. The funding for this project comes from the Kellogg Foundation.

JoAnn Smith, University Extension, Lexington, Ky. spoke on her institution's work with public libraries. In conjunction with her presentation, she distributed a paper called "Working Together." The document describes major areas of cooperation such as literature distribution, libraries serving as classrooms for extension courses,

continuing education workshops being developed for librarians, cooperative publicity, and joint programing such as the state's Kentucky Author series.

Future plans include the University of Kentucky opening a center in Lexington's new central public library. This facility will have computer labs, seminar rooms, and multipurpose rooms which can be used by the University. In turn library staff will be allowed to attend the University's credit and non-credit professional continuing education classes, seminars and workshops.

James Grieshop of the University of California, Davis, (Agricultural) Extension was next. He stated there's a definite need for cooperation, but obstacles remain. Extension agents don't think of the library as a resource, and they have a perception of the library as a passive organization. To correct this negative image, librarians should be responding to the rural crisis and should use extension volunteers in library programs.

The last speaker was from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and co-chair of the National Rural Revitalization Project. Robert Lovan stated that the Revitalization Project is working on several initiatives & projects: water quality, human nutrition, alternative agriculture, human capital development (& youth career development), volunteer ethic & public leadership, economic stress, resource development & maintenance. We are now living in an "information age" and we must work in a "global economy". In this information age, information has become the root of all power/money. He stated that 62% of us (Americans) live in rural areas, but only 1 in 10 are living on a farm. (Only) 13% of the 'rural' counties in the U.S. have an agriculture-dependent

economy. The goal/role of Rural Revitalization is to provide comprehensive programs to deal with a cross-section of the communities to maintain real growth. These programs are/will be information-based. Their model calls for three steps; recognition (of a problem); commitment and intervention.

At the end of his presentation, Lovan mentioned having a goal of a 'call-in' reference service with the National Agriculture Library. Public Librarians in attendance hoped that if such a service was offered, it would include them and their already well established networks and Information & Referral Services.

The American Library Association recorded the two hour program which was sponsored by the Rural Library Service Committee, Small & Medium Sized Library Section of the Public Library Association of the American Library Association.

By John M. Houlahan, Editor, Rural Library Service Newsletter and Jim Weikum, Assist. Director, Minnesota Valley Regional Library, Mankato, Minnesota.



Rural Library Service Newsletter

Editor: John M. Houlahan

The RURAL LIBRARY SERVICE NEWSLETTER is issued quarterly in February, May, August & November, by the Northwest Regional Library System, 6th & Jackson Streets, Sioux City, IA 51105. 712/279-6186.

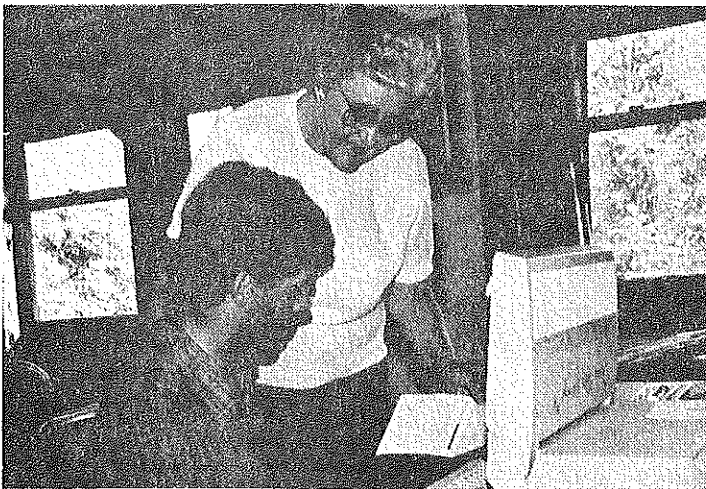
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COMPUTERS, FARMERS AND LIBRARIES

Computers, farmers & libraries have become a natural combination at Onawa Public Library, Onawa, Iowa. Computer literacy, a computerized accounting program & accounting principles are aspects of a library program funded by a

LSCA Title I grant.

Barbara Zastera, Project Director, described the importance of this project for their community. "Many of the farmers in this county are struggling to get by and banks are requiring better accounting procedures, so we decided to help out."



Librarian, Barb Zastera assists Onawa, Iowa farmer Dan Stanislav with one of the libraries software programs.

Bill Zastera, teacher and consultant for the project, has seen the results of a few training sessions. "Once they see what the computer can do and how it can help them, they want to do all kinds of things. The hardest part is getting them to understand debits and credits."

Onawa's project, "Computer Aid For Farmers," is designed to introduce farmers to computers and provide training sessions. Families learn how to use portable computers, the accounting software, and set up a

chart of accounts applicable to their needs.

Sometimes Bill teaches aspects of accounting, how to close out the books at the end of the month, and how to input data. The training sessions last four weeks with one meeting a week for formal instruction an additional evening session for individual help. The response has been positive. As word of mouth spreads the news about the library's program, people inquire about the training, check out computers and software, and want to know what else they can learn.

The computers being used are Panasonic Executive Partners, and the accounting program is Agriledger. Other software programs available to the farmers are Lotus 1-2-3, Supercalc 4 and a word processing program.

--adapted from Changing Perspectives, FOOTNOTES, April, 1987. By Marilyn Nickelsburg.

BOOK REPORT:

"Farmers Guide to FDIC", (by Randi Roth) has proven to be a popular one, according to Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) in St. Paul. You can get the book by sending \$5, plus \$2 handling charges to: Farmers's Legal Action Group 1301 Minnesota Building 46 East Fourth Street St. Paul, Minnesota 55101 FLAG will accept checks.

-- Iowa Farmers Today 6/20/87

ETC...

RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE
SCHEDULED IN MANHATTAN, KANSAS
OCTOBER 26 AND 27.

The Rural and Small Schools Conference at Kansas State University October 26 and 27 will focus on future of rural education. During the conference, educators, community leaders and government officials will discuss ideas, promising practices and problems in the small schools of rural America.

Keynote addresses will be given by Dr. Earl Ferguson, superintendent of schools, Klamath Falls, Oregon, Harland Priddle, Kansas Secretary of Commerce, and Dr. Paul Root, special assistant to the Governor of Arkansas.

Kansas Governor Mike Hayden has been invited to be the banquet speaker on Monday evening. The conference will also include concurrent workshop sessions, a legislative panel discussing rural education issues, and an update on rural and small school projects, services and developments.

The conference is sponsored by the Center for Rural Education and Small Schools, American Association of School Administrators, and the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory. It is hosted by the KSU's College of Education. Registration for the two-day conference is \$60. Special rates are available to groups.

For more information contact the Division of Continuing Education registration office, Umberger 317, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506, 913/532-5566 or toll free in Kansas 1-800-432-8222 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

NO GREAT IMPACT ON RURAL AREAS
EXPECTED FROM COMPUTERS AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

"The high technology of microprocessors, computers, and telecommunications will touch the lives of rural people in countless ways, chiefly as consumer products rather than production items. Microprocessors and microcomputers will help us plan better, inform us, and entertain us, but they will probably affect rural areas less than has the low technology of tractors, fertilizer, and automobiles... Computers so far seem to confer no decisive economic advantages to rural areas or cities, nor even to large farms."

Luther Tweeten offers these opinions and much more in the article, "No Great Impact On Rural Areas Expected from Computer and Telecommunication," in RDP (Rural Development Perspectives) June '87 pages 7-10.

Rural Library Services Newsletter has recommended RDP before in early editions of our newsletter. But now RDP is even a better deal. Annual subscription prices for issues has been slashed to \$5 US and \$6.25 foreign.

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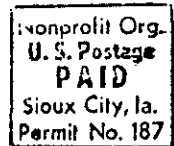


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