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## Communications 1990: A Report of the Future Committee; The Misutilization of Evaluation Research: Some Pitfalls of Definition; Searching for Alternatives: Public Broadcasting

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## Communications 1990: A Report of the Future Committee; The Misutilization of Evaluation Research: Some Pitfalls of Definition; Searching for Alternatives: Public Broadcasting

### Abstract

Reviews of *Communications 1990: A Report of the Future Committee*; "The Misutilization of Evaluation Research: Some Pitfalls of Definition," by Thomas Cook , Judith Levinson-Rose and William Pollard; "Searching for Alternatives: Public Broadcasting ," *Journal of Communication*.

# Reviews

Reviews are prepared by Larry Meiller, John Fett and others in the Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Communications 1990: A Report of the Future Committee**, University of Missouri School of Journalism, 100 Neff Hall, Columbia, Missouri 65211, Copyright 1980.

The business of predicting where the communications industry (or anything else, for that matter) will be 10 years from now is at best a difficult assignment. I can remember an editor telling me five years ago about new technologies that would probably be in use in 15 years—only to find these technologies rapidly being adopted today by many newspapers. Nevertheless, this publication makes a good attempt at anticipating changes likely to occur in newspapers, magazines, advertising/public relations and broadcasting.

Some of the predictions discussed include:

- newspapers tailoring editions to neighborhoods or perhaps individual tastes
- magazines doing very well through fragmentation of audiences
- advertising relying more heavily on audience research to sell products
- all media relying more heavily on journalists who have a broadly-based education.

An appendix is devoted to letters from a number of prominent communicators who comment on the future of their respective areas. Among the contributors are Norman Cousins, James Kilpatrick, Leo Bogart, Richard Salant, Eric Hoffer and David Riesman.

The report has been used at Missouri as a tool for reexamining curriculum and restructuring criteria for

faculty and students. However, it should be of interest to ACE members thinking about changes in communications.

**“The Misutilization of Evaluation Research: Some Pitfalls of Definition.”** Thomas Cook, Judith Levinson-Rose and William Pollard. **Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization.** Vol. 1, No. 4, June, 1980, pp. 477-498.

Most of us are involved at one time or another in the process of evaluating research—whether it be summarizing the work of other researchers for dissemination through extension channels or evaluating our own information programs to justify changes or increases in funding. The authors of this article present a framework for thinking about “misutilizing” findings from evaluation research.

Cook, Levinson-Rose and Pollard relate misutilization to three sets of factors: 1) those leading to the generation of inaccurate evaluation results; 2) those leading to what they call “unwarranted” interpretation of research results; and 3) those factors leading to the inaccurate dissemination of research results.

The authors discuss the honest mistakes people make in reporting such information and define what they mean by inaccurate reporting of findings. They also offer several case studies of what they feel are obvious instances of misutilization of information.

The article concludes with a discussion of ways the quality of utilization can be improved by affecting the accuracy of results, the quality of dissemination and the manner in which the research results are cited in public debate. It’s a worthwhile article for any ACE member involved in reporting research findings.

**“Searching for Alternatives: Public Broadcasting.”** **Journal of Communication**, summer 1980, Vol. 30, No. 3.

ACE members involved in public broadcasting would do well to pick up a copy of the above issue of the **Journal of Communication**, since no less than 10 articles deal with public radio and television.

Four articles deal either with programming or audiences for public TV. James Roman looks at the trends in corporate underwriting and national distribution and production for public TV programming. His research shows a decline in both local station input and influence in programming. David LeRoy discusses the typical audience for public TV and substantiates what has generally been felt--that the public TV audience is a well educated, affluent minority. In support of LeRoy, Richard Hezel notes that the selective nature of the audience it attracts puts public broadcasting in the uncomfortable position of being an information service for the already informed. These articles certainly call to question the practice of trying to reach "general" audiences with extension type materials. In the final of these four articles Carol Keegan examines audience research techniques in public television. She says the traditional measurements of audience size and composition are fine for the commercial television industry but are not as appropriate for public TV. Unlike commercial stations, which try to attract a diverse audience, public stations are often programming for smaller constituencies whose needs and interests may not be addressed by other programming sources. She says a rating system needs to be developed which can tap a broad range of viewer responses.

In another article, David Berkman looks at minorities in public broadcasting and comes to the rather painful conclusion that discrimination in both programming and employment does exist within public broadcasting. He goes so far as to say: "I do not think it an exaggeration to state that public broadcasting may be one of the last bastions of pure, institutionalized racism in America." It's an interesting article that public TV administrators should not miss.

Donald Mullally calls public radio perhaps one of the best-kept secrets of the last decade. He offers some suggestions for solving the technical, audience and programming problems that currently exist.

In the area of technology, Don Agostino looks at the competition resulting from new innovations in cable, video recorders and the variety of innovative programming services being developed. His conclusion is that

market specific, but generally negative effects, will result from this competition.

In other articles, Robert Avery and Robert Pepper provide an institutional history of public broadcasting while Willard Rowland looks at the federal regulatory and policy making process. He concludes that "public broadcasting will continue to be influenced more substantially by the struggles among much larger political and economic forces than by the particular needs of the enterprise." Finally, Christopher Sterling offers an excellent bibliography of books, commission reports and articles relating to public broadcasting.

Most of these articles are quite frank and deal with public broadcasting issues often not discussed. You might not agree with everything said, but the ideas presented should certainly stimulate your thinking about the future of public broadcasting.

