

Agricultural Communications: Changes and Challenges

Tracy Irani
University of Florida

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Agricultural Communications: Changes and Challenges

Abstract

Book review of *Agricultural Communications: Changes and Challenges*, by Kristina Boone, Terry Meisenbach, and Mark Tucker.

Agricultural Communications: Changes and Challenges.

Kristina Boone, Terry Meisenbach
and Mark Tucker.
Iowa State University Press.
ISBN 0-8138-2157-6 Hardcover.

In their preface, the authors of this new agricultural communications textbook mention that their idea for the book came about in reaction to the difficulty in finding teaching materials for use in agricultural communication and agricultural journalism courses. In responding to this need, the authors have done a good job of providing information on the history, current practice and future challenges of the evolving Ag Communications discipline—and, as such, have done a service for teachers of agricultural communications everywhere.

The text's five chapters are arranged to move the reader from the historical underpinnings of the field to the current changes facing the discipline. In Chapter One, "Agricultural Communications Across the Ages," the text traces the history of Ag Communications from its origins in the 1785 founding of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and the early agricultural journals (such as the *American Farmer*, *the Plough Boy*, and the *New England Farmer*) through the present day.

In Chapter Two, "The New Age of Agriculture," the authors delve more deeply into how agriculture has changed in the post-World War II era, citing the effects of changing farm policy, demographics, and emerging technologies.

Chapter Three focuses on marketing and mass media, as well as a discussion of the effect of electronic media and the Internet on agricultural audiences.

Chapter Four, "The Age of Discovery: Research in Agricultural Communications," gives readers background information designed to help them connect Ag Communications with research streams in the social sciences. In addition, the text

includes some general guidelines that can be used by both students and professional communicators alike to evaluate the quality and usefulness of research.

Throughout the book, the authors use the device of “nexus points”— sidebar quotes and commentaries by distinguished academicians and industry professionals. In the final chapter, “A Nexus of Ideas,” the writers offer a set of ten of their own “nexus points” in the form of questions and answers designed to capture ideas generated by their reading and thinking about the book’s contents. This seems to be an attempt by the authors to situate more clearly Ag Communications within the academic disciplines, as well as to provide food for further thought and discussion in classroom situations.

In general, the book makes a good attempt at defining and describing what the authors acknowledge to be a field in transition. Although not an in-depth analysis, its clear, easy-to-understand style and inclusion of tips and information for students seeking a career in Ag Communications makes *Agriculture Communications: Changes and Challenges* a good choice for those seeking a textbook introduction to the field.

Tracy Irani
University of Florida