

ITEMS OF IMPORT TO PRACTITIONERS

"Unpleasant realities" are feared more than sex, violence or dirty language. National Council of Teachers of English surveyed efforts to censor reading materials. Unbelievably, most of pressure is directed not at Playboy but at Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report. "Parents want to protect kids from unpleasant features of the world. These magazines deal with unpleasant realities every week." Most objectionable books -- again unbelievably -- are not latest sex thrillers but Catcher in the Rye, 1984 and the Grapes of Wrath -- three modern classics.

Both Jimmy Carter (in person) and Pope John Paul II (by satellite) will address Religious Communications Congress, set for Nashville in May 1980. Religious Public Relations Council & other groups are organizers. Scheduled for program are dramas & multi-media, as well as satellite transmission, revealing communications leadership of religious practitioners.

Knight-Ridder pilots delivery of newspaper-style info into homes via tv. Six-month test will begin mid-1980, involve about 200 Miami families. Like Viewdata in England, VIEWTRON will offer comprehensive news coverage: local, national & international; weather; sports; movie & theater schedules; local calendars of events; test ads. Viewers may be able to communicate with system a la Qube -- by pushing buttons to register opinions (see prr 7/10/78, 8/21/78, 2/12/79; t&t, 1/1/79).

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. Elaine R. Pitts, vp-corp rels, Sperry & Hutchinson (NYC) receives 1979 Matrix Award. Sponsored by N.Y. Women in Communications for noteworthy contributions in pr area.

VICE PRESIDENTS. Michael G. Carberry, exec vp, Henry J. Kaufman & Assocs (D.C.) ... Barbara Keebler, Public Communications (Chi.) ... Eric Ellenbogen, vp corp plng & dev, ICPR Public Relations (L.A.) ... Jim Cusimano, R.C. Auletta & Co. (NYC) ... Gilda Yolles Mintz, sr vp, Ruder & Finn (NYC) ... Louis C. Williams, Jr., exec vp & gen'l mgr, (Chi.) and Laura J. Weill, Harshe-Rotman & Druck (NYC) ... Robert L. Way, Jay DeBow & Ptnrs (NYC) ... Dean A. Dranias, Financial Relations Board (Chi.) ... Greta DeBofsky, vp & dir-corp/business div, Margie Korshak Assocs (Chi.).

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ACCOUNT SUPERVISORS. Linda Edwards and Ben Dunn, Harshe-Rotman & Druck (NYC) ... Fred R. Zosel, Anthony M. Franco (Det.) ... Roger E. Yount, The John Volk Co. (Chi.) ... Carolyn Gandolfo, Frank Filtsch, Marshall Bucci and Leonard Stein, N W Ayer ABH Int'l (NYC) ... Patricia A. Newlin and Thomas B. Ryan, Robert Marston & Assocs (NYC).

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES. Nancy F. Elmont, sr ae, Kenneth L. Donoghue, Creamer Dickson Basford/New England (Providence) ... Joanne Delaney, Creamer Dickson Basford (NYC) ... Paul D. Feldman, Gail Peters, Harshe-Rotman & Druck (NYC); Stuart Greenblatt, David S. Bassin and Matthew D. Smith (Chi.); Courtney Lockwood (L.A.) ... David Berwick and Patricia Foran, Richard Nicolazzo & Assocs (Boston) ... Donna Brehm, Concept One (Minneapolis) ... Amy J. Falk, Aaron D. Cushman & Assocs (Chi.) ... Patricia A. Martin, Welch Assocs (Ridgefield, Conn.) ... Victor D. Wortman, Simon/Public Relations (L.A.) ... Carole A. Mackin, Bernard E. Ury Assocs (Chi.) ... Beth S. Jerde, William Kostka & Assocs (Denver) ... Mary Kaye, Ruder & Finn of Mid-America (Chi.) ... Daniel G. Stanowick, Edward Howard & Co. (Cleveland).

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UNIVERSAL AUDIENCE MAKES HOSPITAL PROGRAMS  
STUDY GUIDE FOR ALL PRACTITIONERS:  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS THEIR FORTE, PIGGYBACKING POSSIBLE

Hospitals are society's most universal public service organization. You may not attend church or have kids in school (or be taking courses yourself). Aside from paying taxes, the majority of citizens rarely have personal contact with government. Many don't even vote. But everyone uses, or expects to use, their hospital at one time or another.

Past decade has seen a) increasing use of public relations professionals by hospitals; b) recognition by boards and administrators of the necessity for pr; c) upgrading in status & capability of hospital practitioners. Tho' problems still exist -- it isn't easy working in "the medical model" -- top hospital programs rate attention of all practitioners because of the universality of their audiences. Also, other organizations can cooperate with hospitals or piggyback on program.

Mountainside Hospital (Montclair, N.J.) carries on four activities that would be considered successful for any type organization. Primary is annual pr program tied into trustees' 5-yr plan.

Quarterly magazine, Focus, serves both internal and external publics. Replaced newsletter in '73 due to felt need for "doing more externally," dpr Helen Cheadle told prr. While keeping community aware of hospital activities, primary goal is to address larger healthcare topics. Winter issue covered family practice, spring focuses on cost containment. Controversy is not shunned, neither is presentation of basic information.

At first each issue treated one subject in depth, e.g. emergency medicine, trusteeship, HMOs, death & dying. Readership survey by outside pr firm found preference for shorter articles. Therefore, current format treats one theme via several shorter pieces. Design & layout receive major attention. Survey showed readers felt mag is credible source, image of hospital as portrayed is accurate.

PUBLIC MISUNDERSTANDING

Mountainside's Helen Cheadle lists these health issues public doesn't yet understand:

1. "How new things come along in medicine...that our product is different than corporations'. They want the best of health care but don't want to pay for it."
2. "Role of the community teaching hospital. They don't understand that medical education is built into the cost."
3. "Third party payment of hospital bills."

Only noticeable difference in quality from mags of major corps. is that Focus is b&w. Four pgs. in back are given to very brief notes & sidelights about staff. 7,000 copies are mailed -- to gov't officials at all levels, other hospitals, donors list, discharged & current patients.

Single-sheet newsletter, News scan, is published between issues of Focus. Each issue in colored ink on different colored stock. Typewriter type -- but set heads and careful design. New services, activities are emphasized. Dual theme: 1) hospital is interested in meeting community needs, 2) public understanding of medicine & health care issues is essential.

Speakers' bureau staffed by doctors and hospital personnel provides 31 topics from "Putting Your Best Face Forward" (maxillofacial surgery) to "Alcoholism: A Family Disease." Ten specific headings: sexuality, surgery, diet, gastroenterology, disease detection/prevention, special disease problems, rehabilitation, coping emotionally, cancer, Mountainside. Folder, designed to double as poster, is titled "The Mountainside Hospital Speaks Out on Today's Health Care Issues." Public relations office manages bureau; nurses, physicians, social workers, dentists, administrators, other health professionals give the speeches.

Began with mailing inviting civic organizations, church groups, service clubs to hold meetings at hospital. Come at noon, get sandwich lunch, program, tour. Response "more than gratifying."

NASA USES FACTS & FIGURES TO EASE SKYLAB FEARS

High tech era spawns still another pr problem. In early July Skylab will reenter earth's atmosphere, burn and scatter debris along path that covers 90% of world population. Media are already beginning to track story. Front page article in recent Sunday ed. of The Detroit News carried head "All Earth's a 'Target.'" Situation raises tough questions for practitioners.

Does repetition of same message desensitize & defuse threatening news? Are statistics calming? What purpose, if any, do phrases like "remote possibility" serve? Messages can inform, question, persuade or calm. Latter by far most difficult to achieve.

William O'Donnell, NASA's chief media srvs, is seemingly unflapped by task. "We will never get to a situation when we know exactly where orbiting objects are coming in," he told pr reporter. "Sometimes even when something has come in, we can't confirm it. Most things are never observed."

"Tell It Like It Is"

Approach to Skylab descent is to provide straightforward information. Narrative prr got: Skylab will break into hundreds of pieces. Most consumed during reentry. Some quite large (2700-5000 lbs), most less than 10 lbs. Reach earth at speeds of 30-260 mph. 75% of earth's surface is water so 75% chance will come in over water. Other odds agency puts out:

- chances of getting hit 3,000 times less than being struck by lightning on any given day
- 1 in 150 odds that one person somewhere in world could be injured by piece of debris
- in 21yrs of space program, never injury from debris
- risk about same as being struck by meteorite in given year. Between 1200 and 7500 meteorites hit earth annually.

Can't Forewarn, Must Respond

Strategy for reentry day is to be prepared to respond to whatever arises. Can't have "sensible alert system of local officials." NASA will get maximum two hrs advance warning. Even then scientists won't be able to predict actual touchdown location with error margin below 20% -- which means difference of thousands of miles.

Space agency is pulling together coordination center to handle activities. Reps. from State Dep't will take care of liaison with foreign countries; Agency of Federal Preparedness, state & local officials. Defense & Justice dept's also on team. NASA's pub affrs dep't will handle media relations.

Team will be located together, receive info directly from North American Air Defense Command, agency tracking Skylab. In event of accident "assistance will be available thru appropriate agency." Special teams alerted to go wherever necessary. Unlike Three Mile Island, plans should provide One Clear Voice.

Recent press coverage is "balanced," O'Donnell feels. Agency issues weekly update to wires, networks, other interested media. Will increase frequency as day draws near. O'Donnell believes NASA has established high level of credibility with press over years. This, he sees, as agency's "most valuable asset" in easing public concern.

TECHNIQUE: FORD PUTS COSTS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT TO EASE PRICE FEARS

\$1-a-gallon gas isn't the disaster it seems. Fuel costs for average driver are less than four years ago. Owners of new cars can get as much as 65% more travel from hour's pay than in '75. So states Ford Motor by comparing fuel prices, income levels & mileage ratings of '75 and '79 cars.

Message to public is that prices may be higher -- but cost is cheaper. Problem is one of people comparing gas prices (only) to previous times. Ford's solution is to carry comparison all the way.

Note: One full-size car from each auto maker was tested. Ford's Mercury had a 65% gain. Even the lowest still had a 15% gain.

GAS COSTS IN PERSPECTIVE

	1975 Averages	1979 Averages (Projected)
Unleaded gas/gal.	60.3¢	83.5¢
Hourly wage, industrial workers	\$4.83	\$6.71
Hour's wages bought	8.01 gals.	8.04 gals.
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Full-size car got	11 mpg	18 mpg
Traveled, per hour's wages	88 miles	145 miles (65% gain)

What do you think?...Do statistics like NASA's calm? How about Ford's strategy? Are stats more effective when used to create anxiety (e.g. risks of lung cancer among smokers, drugs & birth defects, etc.)? Share your views, experiences on calming...statistics...with prr for symposium.