**Ag communications expands**

**Agriculture's cultural influence**
- European influence until the 19th century
- America diverged
  - Needed suitable implements
  - Societies lobbied for government agencies
- Government policies pushed
  - Growth
  - Land settlement
  - "Manifest Destiny"

**More land, more publications**
- Land opened in the Midwest and West
- Number of farm magazines and newspapers increased
- Circulation jumped even more quickly
  - 157 in 1880, 1 million circulation (1 in 4)
  - 400 by 1920, 17 million circulation (2-3 each)
Why the growth?
- Healthy general economy
- Higher farmer incomes
- More accommodating to advertising
- Less resistance to “book farming”
- Magazines had more sources
  - Land-grant colleges
  - State and federal departments of Ag
  - Grange and Farm Bureau

Editors’ roles changed
- Early editors were subject matter authorities
- Later editors were more information movers
  - Specialized pubs needed specialized knowledge

Publications’ focus shifted
- Publications address family life issues too
- Used third person, more objective style
- Printing advances allowed illustrations, cartoons
Depression

- WW I created high demand
- Left farmers overextended
- Land prices dropped
- Input prices jumped
- Other industries boomed
  - Automobile
  - Road construction
  - Building construction

Income gap

![1929 Per Capita Income Chart]

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Depression

- Farm publishing held steady
  - Number of publications dropped
  - Circulation grew to 22 million by 1940
- Subscription rates were low
  - Free, controlled circulation publications began
  - Other magazines printed less frequently
Radio

- Big impact on rural audiences
- Radios ran off batteries
- Entertainment
- Information
  - Weather
  - Markets
- Replaced newspapers and telephone for weather info

1921, WHA, Madison, Wisconsin
- First weather broadcast
1923, 117 general broadcasting stations
1930s and 40s, better weather reports and some frost alerts

Market reports were critical in the 20s
Early reports were telegraphed
WLB, Univ. of Minn., Broadcast first market report, Feb, 1921
By 1922, 35 stations were licensed to air market information
By 1925, more than 500,000 farmers could received market info by air
1926, 500 stations -- 1 million farmers
Radio

- 1920s – Ag colleges began broadcasts
- Advertising became important too
- Entertainment as part of the mix
  - Music
  - Celebrity guests
  - “Fibber McGee and Molly”
  - Religious programs
  - Politicians

Radio

- USDA and farm programs
  - 1933, radio first used to describe farm programs
  - Most farmers heard about program from radio
  - Introduce new agricultural agencies

National Association of Farm Broadcasters

- Professional organization
- About 100 members
- More than 850 attend their national meeting
- “Trade Talk”
Television farm reports

- Moderate success
  - U.S. Farm Report
    - Orion Samuelson
    - Max Armstrong
    - Early Saturday mornings

- Some early morning or noon local shows
  - Weather
  - Markets
- Coming ag events

Continuing growth

- Farm magazines thrived along with radio
- More specialized publications
- Fewer farms, more output per farm
- WW II, post-war relief, Korean Conflict
- Advertising included consumer goods and farm inputs

Changes in the 1950s

- Advertising wanted focused, qualified audience
  - Direct Mail
- House organs
  - Jumped by 50 percent
  - Company-produced magazines
  - Public relations
- Company-published bulletins
Magazine concerns

- House organs taking over?
- Circulation declined
  - Reduced staff
  - Reduced pages
  - Increased subscription rates
- Offered more services to advertisers
  - Split print runs

Magazines adjust

- Specialized by
  - Subject Matter
  - Geography
  - Reader buying power
- Free, controlled circulation sped specialization
- From 1950 to 1970, number of specialized farm pubs tripled

Ag media sophistication

- 1950 to 1970
  - Improved quality from universities
  - More researchers and Extension specialists
  - 1970s Prosperity led to more publications with higher subscription rates
    - Average farmer received 7 farm periodicals
### 1970s to 1980s
- High commodity prices pushed up land prices
- Farmland was greatly overvalued
- High inflation
- 1980s farm crisis
  - Farmers left agriculture
  - Publications lost subscribers
  - Advertisers suffered from lower buying power
  - More free, controlled circulation publications

### How much has changed
- 1800s, 70 percent of population worked on farms
- 1990s, less than 2 percent
- Major metropolitan dailies dropped farm coverage
  - Switched to environmental and consumer viewpoints

### How much has changed
- Number of medium-sized farms declined
- Corporate farms
- Hobby farms
- Segmentation in farm publishing
Internet beginnings

- Just before 1970, Pentagon’s Advanced Research Projects Agency
  - Began linking or networking computers
- 1986, National Science Foundation
  - NSFNET
- In Switzerland, Internet protocols were being developed