



# Local Communications

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*Grass-roots A.T. groups and other community organizations wishing to share their successful ideas with a larger audience will be faced with the problem of how to make this information available in a low-cost, understandable form. The books reviewed in this chapter should be helpful in choosing ways to present information effectively and at low cost. **Experiences in Visual Thinking** shows how most people can use sketching as a tool for developing ideas in the problem-solving process. **Visual Literacy in Communication** and **Communicating with Pictures** are concerned with finding drawings and pictures, especially those based on common local images, that can be effectively used to communicate ideas from one community to another and among illiterates. **Illustrations for Development** provides lessons for improving drawing skills. **Visual Communication Handbook** and **Screen Printing** offer many ideas on low-cost visual communications media that can be produced in small communities. **Rural Mimeo Newspapers** looks at one particularly promising low-cost print technology. **Print: How You Can Do It Yourself** gives an overview of the low-cost print technologies as they now exist in the developed countries. **Basic Bookbinding** provides the necessary information for small-scale hand bookbinding; also useful to a library or information center. **How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers** gives some valuable guidelines for newspaper writing, editing, and organization. (**Rural Mimeo Newspapers** also does this well). And **The Organization of the Small Public Library** can be valuable for any group with an information center or local appropriate technology library. **Grass Roots Radio** provides the basic outlines for the low-cost production of radio programs in rural communities for broadcast throughout a region. Here is an approach for two-way communication, in which rural people can seek technical help and discuss their own successful technological innovations.*

*The techniques described in this section are but a few of the possible tools of a grass-roots based communications strategy. Such an approach will also involve close collaboration between researchers and beneficiaries, and mechanisms to ensure that technical support for problem-solving can be provided when requested by villagers.*

*Visits by individuals from one community to another, technical data banks responsive to rural requests, and low-cost catalogs covering a broad range of topics (like the Liklik Buk) also have a place.*

**Experiences in Visual Thinking**, MF 31-752, book, 171 pages, by Robert McKim, second edition 1980, \$33.25 from Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 511 Forest Lodge Road, Pacific Grove, California 93950, USA.

“‘Visual Thinking’ is used to describe the interaction of seeing, imagining and idea-sketching” This is a book on thinking about design, and how sketches and other representations of design ideas can be a great aid to releasing the creativity of the reader as a designer. The reader is taken through a series of small problems to develop the understanding of many different ways in which "visual thinking" can aid in design work. The author has drawn from a wide literature on creativity, mental processes, and the history of great inventions.

"Unlearn the stereotype that places drawing in the category of Art .... Drawing, most of all, stimulates seeing .... Almost everyone learns to read and write in our society; almost everyone can also learn to draw."

"Graphic ideation is not to be confused with graphic communication. The former is concerned with conceiving and nurturing ideas; the latter is concerned with presenting fully formed ideas to others. Graphic ideation is visually talking to oneself; graphic communication is visually talking to others .... The graphic ideator ... can sketch freehand, quickly and spontaneously, leaving out details that he already understands .... He feels free to fail many times on the way to obtain a solution."

This is a valuable tool for strengthening the design and problem-solving abilities of individuals and groups. It could be used for a short course for members of an appropriate technology unit.

Highly recommended.

**Visual Literacy in Communication: Designing for Development**, MF 31-760 book, 144 pages, by Anne Zimmer and Fred Zimmer, 1978, \$15.00 postpaid from International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods, P.O. Box 13145-654, Tehran, Iran.

This is about how to communicate effectively with drawings and pictures. It is intended for use by artists and most development workers (good English language ability required). The author presents a systematic strategy for improving the effectiveness of drawings, with a lot of examples.

Many posters and drawings fail to communicate what is intended. Partly this is because "most communication theory as we know it today was developed in the industrialized West .... It takes little notice of the kinds of communication visual and otherwise—that have been important in spreading and maintaining traditional ... cultures." Foreign methods of visual presentation can be as hard to understand as a foreign language.

"The first job of the visual communicator is not to draw pictures. It is to find out what visual communication is already going on among the people he wants to reach, and to get the other information he needs in order to design materials that communicate properly. To do this, he makes a collection, called a 'visual inventory'. Instead of putting together elegant designs from all over the world, he samples the visual communication his intended audience already sees. Then he

finds out how—and whether—these examples communicate by asking questions ...."

"The message is: read your own culture and understand your own visual language as you design visual messages for use in your particular cultural setting."

**Communicating with Pictures**, MF 31-751, booklet, 56 pages, by UNICEF Nepal, 1975, available on request from UNICEF, P.O. Box 1187, Kathmandu, Nepal.

This booklet is a summary of a full report also obtainable from UNICEF in Nepal. The booklet describes the results of a study that was undertaken to discover how effectively pictures could be used in communication.

"Is it possible to communicate ideas and information to villagers by using pictures only? Probably not. In the course of the study, over 20 pictures intended to convey ideas (rather than just to represent objects) were shown to villagers. Many (but not all) of the villagers could recognize the objects shown in the pictures. But the ideas behind the pictures were almost never conveyed to the villagers. For example, one picture was intended to convey the idea that people who drink polluted water are likely to get diarrhea. It was shown to 89 villagers, and only one of them understood the message behind the picture."

The reasons for the failure of pictures to convey ideas are thoroughly discussed. Many different types of pictures (illustrations, sketches, photos, and other graphics) were used: the disadvantages and advantages of each type are covered. The effects of colors are mentioned too.

"People are interested and attracted to pictures, even though they may need help to interpret them .... During the study one picture was taken to six villages and shown to over 100 people. In five villages, none of the villagers who saw the picture could understand it. But in the sixth village, many villagers could explain exactly what the picture meant. They could understand it because five months before, some health workers had visited their village and talked about TB, and had shown them this picture."

Anyone attempting to use pictures to communicate ideas and information would find this booklet useful.

Highly recommended.

**Illustrations for Development**, MF 31-762, book, 69 pages, edited by G. McBean, 1980, new edition may be available from AALAE, P.O. Box 72511, Nairobi, Kenya.

Artists, would-be artists, and the people who publish drawings to communicate with village people will find this a valuable manual. The authors summarize recent findings from research about how drawings are perceived by rural people, and go on to provide lessons to improve drawing skills. Basic drawing tools are presented along with some good advice about pursuing a career as an illustrator.

"Close up illustrations which cut off any part of the body (e.g. head or hands) are difficult to comprehend. Full-figure drawings are usually understood, and provide a useful starting point for educating and introducing an audience with a low visual literacy level to picture communication."

**Visual Communication Handbook**, MF 31-759, book, 127 pages, by Denys J. Saunders, 1974, Teaching Aids at Low Cost, out of print.

The author does an excellent job of explaining how to use a great variety of inexpensive visual aids, including paper pictures, posters, flannel boards, and puppets. This book would be useful to anyone trying to carry out an education program as cheaply as possible.

A simple device (a pantograph) is shown which can be used "to make enlargements up to eight times the size of the original. By means of a screw you fix the pantograph to the table or the drawing board. With the pointer you trace the lines of the original picture and a pencil draws the enlarged picture on another sheet of paper."

**How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters, and Newspapers**, MF 31-755, booklet, 176 pages, by Nancy Brigham, 1982, revised 1991, single copies \$14.95 (bulk discounts available) from PEP Publishers, P.O. Box 24888, Detroit, Michigan 48224, USA.

This booklet provides guidelines for the small community or neighborhood newspaper. Includes suggestions for the effective design of leaflets, the scheduling of a newsletter or newspaper, how to determine the "look" of the newspaper, the techniques of layout and paste-up, obtaining and presenting information, and editing. Briefly covers the low-cost print technologies and the use of computer generated type from both Macintosh and IBM-compatible personal computers.

While this booklet is intended for use in the United States, the language is quite easy to understand and it may be useful in other areas.

**Women and Graphics: A Beginner's Kit**, in **The Tribune**, Newsletter No. 21, MF 31-761, 60 pages, 1982, International Women's Tribune Center, New York, out of print.

Though directed at, and most applicable to, women's groups, this packet of techniques for media outreach and education is an informative and stimulating resource for community groups and organizers. Includes tips for lettering, graphics, and communicating by simple yet effective means. With bibliography. Other issues of this newsletter, covering a wide variety of topics related to women in development, are available from IWTC.

**The Copy Book: Copyright-Free Illustrations for Development**, MF 31-769, book, 125 pages, by the Association of Illustrators et. al., 1988, £10.95 from ITDG.

This book contains a wide variety of line drawings that can be adapted to illustrate many development topics, such as food, water, health, shelter and work. Included are instructions on how to copy, adapt and enlarge these drawings. Artists are encouraged to test their drawings on a sample audience to determine whether the intended message is being understood.

**Rural Mimeo Newspapers**, MF 31-758, booklet, 42 pages, by Robert de T. Lawrence, 1965, UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France; out of print in 1981.

This is a low-cost printing scheme for small communities in developing areas. Describes a successful project in Liberia, in which 30 mimeo papers grew up within a year, a number of them spontaneously. Small mimeograph machines are lightweight and easy to repair. They can be purchased for as little as US \$40-50. "On the basis of the Liberian experience, it is estimated that a paper could be established with an initial outlay of as little as \$100, and that it could provide a

living for its owner/editor from the outset."

Part II, on organizing a rural newspaper program, gives suggestions on how to plan, staff, publish, and assist low-cost newspapers in rural communities of developing countries.

Part III, on how to publish a low-cost community newspaper, gives hints on writing, editing, printing, and distributing a rural newspaper. It is suggested that sponsoring agencies adapt this section to fit local conditions and publish it in pamphlet form.

**Low-Cost Printing for Development**, MF 31-763, in four booklets, 104 pages total, by Jonathan Zeitlyn, 1982, 1988 edition £6.95 from ITDG; also available from TOOL.

To minimize the costs of printing posters, flyers, community newspapers and booklets, it is important to understand the various simple printing technologies available, and the appropriate uses for each in terms of quality, numbers of copies and cost. The author of these four booklets has summarized this information and provided additional details to allow readers to make their own simple printing devices and deal more economically with printers. The final volume discusses the requirements for setting up a small printshop. These volumes have more of a developing country focus, but are otherwise similar in purpose and scope to **Print: How You Can Do It Yourself** and **How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers**.

**The Photonovel: A Tool for Development**, MF 31-765, booklet, 105 pages, by Daniel Weaks, 1976, available free of charge to Peace Corps volunteers and development workers from Peace Corps; also available from NTIS (accession no. PB86 119518).

The photonovel is similar to the comic book, but with pictures in place of drawings. It "fills a special need felt by those who lack reading material written at a level that they understand. To fill this demand, photonovels are found in every country of Latin America and many cities of the U.S."

This is a good introduction to the production of photonovels.

**Print: How You Can Do It Yourself**, MF 31-757, booklet, 96 pages, by J. Zeitlyn, 1975, £3.95 plus postage or US \$7.00 from InterChange Trust Ltd., 15 Wilkin Street, London NW5, United Kingdom.

This is a good overview of low-cost community-level print technologies. While most relevant to groups in developed countries, it does give a good idea of the operation of spirit and stencil duplicators, offset presses, and silkscreen techniques.

**57 How-to-Do-It Charts on Materials and Equipment and Techniques for Screen Printing**, MF 31-753, paperback book, 63 pages, by Harry L. Hiatt, 1980, \$8.95 from S. T. Publications Inc., 407 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, USA.

Screen printing (also called "silk screen printing") is an excellent way to print pictures and words on leaflets, posters, clothing and other materials. The methods of screen printing are thoroughly described in this book. There are a large number of illustrations.

Highly recommended to anyone looking for information on screen printing

as a means of cheaply and efficiently producing high quality graphics.

**The Sten-Screen: Making and Using a Low-Cost Printing Process**, MF 31-767, booklet, 13 pages, by Ian McLaren, 1983, £3.95 from ITDG; also from TOOL.

"The Sten-Screen process is a hybrid duplicating and printing technique. Basically it combines stencil duplicator stencils with the screen process. This enables one to create legible and compact printed matter, using equipment which one can make oneself out of readily available items. The process does not require electricity. These instructions give guidance on how to build and use the equipment. The screen uses a simple rectangular frame with textile stretched across it. This is used as a support for stencil duplicator stencils. The text and images which are required to be reproduced may be either typed, handwritten or drawn upon these." Photographs can be reproduced if an electronic stencil cutter is available to produce the stencil.

**Basic Bookbinding**, book, 136 pages, by A. Lewis, 1957, \$3.50 from Dover Publications, 31 East 2nd Street, Mineola, New York 11501, USA.

This book provides step-by-step instructions with many illustrations for the essential operations involved in the binding of books by hand in cloth and in library style. "Sufficient detailed information is given to enable a student, working on his own, to do so with success"

Materials used are carefully explained. All the tools necessary are relatively simple ones. The descriptions and illustrations of the tools needed are sufficient for the draftsman to make them him or herself.

**The Low-Cost Wooden Duplicator**, MF 31-764, booklet, 19 pages, by David Elcock, 1984, £3.95 from ITDG; also available from TOOL.

Detailed construction drawings and step-by-step instructions are provided for a hand-operated stencil duplicator made mostly of wood.

"From one inking you can, with practice, produce over 200 copies of good quality print. The quality of the print is nearly as good as that from much more expensive machines."

**Small Technical Libraries**, MF 31-768, booklet, 40 pages, by D.J. Campbell, 1979, \$6.00 from UNIPUB.

In this valuable little book you will find lots of good ideas that will prove very helpful in organizing and effectively operating a small technical library to support the work of a small research institute or a technical information clearinghouse. The author emphasizes frequent meetings with the research staff to better understand and provide for their information needs, and make them aware of newly arrived reference materials of possible interest.

Recommended.

**The Organization of the Small Public Library**, MF 31-756, booklet, 66 pages, by I. Heintze, 1963, out of print in 1985.

This booklet "has been written specifically for people without previous training in librarianship who are faced with the task of running small public libraries and need guidance .... In a simple and practical way, with many illustrations, it gives the reader the basic information he needs .... Intended primarily for the rapidly developing countries" but the principles are universally applicable. May be useful in the organization of a library of A.T. materials.

**Grass Roots Radio: A Manual for Fieldworkers in Family Planning and Other Areas of Social and Economic Development**, MF 31-754, book, 66 pages by Rex Keating, 1977, \$6.50 (contact if you have currency difficulties) from Distribution Department, International Planned Parenthood Federation Publications, P.O. Box 759, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4LQ, England.

"Rural broadcasting, as practiced in most developing countries, is a one-way line of communication, the specialist or government official instructing farmers and other members of the rural community .... But any form of adult education yields its best results when the communication is two-way and this is the secret of the Farm Forum success ...." By 1974, most villages in Senegal were listening to farm forum broadcasts, many of them holding organized discussion groups. Members of the broadcasting team "are always on the move, systematically covering the countryside, and in each village they hand over their microphone to anyone willing to use it. The program's producers insist that 3/4 of the time on the air, in the three weekly programs, is devoted to what the villagers have to say .... The broadcasts embrace all aspects of the rural scene, from animal husbandry and crop production to public health and prevailing market conditions. (This broadcast) has brought about a better mutual understanding between farmers and the officials who run the technical services of the countryside."

This manual is intended to introduce the techniques of successful low-cost production in rural areas of taped interviews and scripts for broadcasts. The reader is expected to be a development fieldworker who through the use of this book will be able to produce good quality tapes on topics in his or her area of activity. Written primarily as a guide for use by family planning workers, it has a bias towards information dissemination from a central authority rather than grass-roots information sharing.

Central to the production of low-cost grass-roots radio programs is the use of cassette recorders, which are now available at reasonable prices and capable of excellent performance. Steps for the operation of these recorders for best results are presented.

The author offers some ideas that will help the fieldworker make interviews and scripts appealing to the listeners. He suggests how to organize discussions and news shows.

The language used in this book is sometimes difficult, and will pose problems to fieldworkers. Some of the suggestions for script writing and interviewing are relevant primarily in the English language.

**Plain Talk: Clear Communication for International Development**, MF 31-766, book, 75 pages, by David Jarmul, 1981, VITA, out of print.

Much of what is published about development is hard to understand, especially for anyone reading in a foreign language. This book has twelve rules for simple writing that will help you write more clearly. A system for measuring the difficulty of text is described. The effective use of drawings is also discussed.