

# ExtensionNet

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## It's Happening

It's happened! APEN has been born. The constitution for APEN has been lodged and we are now incorporated. We have appointed the office of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science as our secretariat. Groups of people are starting to form interim regional chapters. The South Australians have met and there was a meeting of interested people in Launceston in Tasmania on July 27.

John Lacey and Peter Davies are looking for interested and enthusiastic people in New South Wales to form chapters there. Bruce Frank and Claire Holsinger are trying to instigate regional chapters in Queensland. We rely on Alan McRae in New Zealand, Tom Price in NT, Horrie Poussard and Warren Straw in Victoria, Ross Andrews in the ACT, and Peter Nash in WA to do the same.

If you are interested in helping to start a chapter in your region please contact

these people (they are listed at the back). I will send out a draft letter to them for (interim) chapter committees to request permission to form a chapter from the core working group. This procedure is required by our constitution.

The core working group believes that chapters will form naturally. Individual members will decide the chapter boundaries by nominating which chapter they wish to belong to. The core working group also believes that it should not set boundaries, this is much better sorted out locally. Extension professionals are used to forming groups of clients to facilitate the sharing and generation of knowledge. This is your chance to do it for yourselves. It should be easy.

Once these chapters have been formed, we need to look for ways to help our members outside Australia and New



By  
**Terry Makin**  
*Chairman  
Interim Steering  
Committee,  
APEN*

Zealand. We need volunteers to do that! Please contact me if you are interested.

This newsletter contains a subscription form for everybody to put their money where their mouth is. This is the critical time. We need your money now to get a viable organisation up and running. Please help to enlist other members who may not know what we are trying to do. It is important that we continue to see APEN as a broad organisation that is concerned with change and learning, not just production agriculture.

So let's do it.■

## DO WE NEED AN EXTENSION NETWORK IN TASMANIA?

**Amabel Fulton and Frank Walker,**  
Department of Primary Industries  
and Fisheries (DPIF).

**A**re you living in Tasmania? Are you involved in: technology transfer; extending research results; working with groups; advisory or consulting work; social research; communication; project management or agricultural education?

Are you interested in: improving your extension skills; raising the profile of

extension; sharing your extension knowledge and experiences with others; forming networks with extension people in other states; and finding out the latest about extension methods and approaches?

Then you may be interested in the outcomes of a meeting for the formation of an extension network in Tasmania held on 27 July, at the Mt Pleasant Laboratories conference room. Frank Walker, Extension Co-ordinator, DPIF, opened the meeting and Terry Makin

outlined the background, purpose, structure and function of the extension network and explained the constitution. This was followed by a discussion of the possibility of forming a Tasmanian Chapter(s) of the extension network and determining the steps to be taken to achieve this: what will be done, who will do it, and when it will be done by? A list of possible activities for the Chapter was then established. Please contact Frank Walker or Amabel Fulton for further details.■

# The Adoption of New Technology in the Wool Industry

Michael O'Keeffe and Nicki Marks,  
Agribusiness Research Unit,  
Monash University, Caulfield, Victoria.

**T**he returns to R&D investment in agriculture are a function of:

- (i) the size of the industry;
- (ii) the magnitude of the benefits or cost savings of the new technology; and
- (iii) the level and rate of adoption.

Thus, for any given industry and new technology the return on investment of R&D expenditure will depend upon the level and rate of adoption.

In the case of new farm products and practices there is little doubt that we have a poor understanding of the adoption decision, the barriers to adoption and ways of overcoming these constraints.

It is generally recognised that adoption behaviour is a function of the interaction between:

- The individual decision-making unit - in this case the woolgrower and the family;
- The innovation and how it is marketed; and
- The social system and word-of-mouth communication processes (Midgley and Dowling, 1990).

Bass (1969) maintains that potential adopters of an innovation are influenced by two means of communication - mass media and word-of-mouth. There are essentially two key groups of farmers that are influenced by these factors - the innovators and the imitators. The innovators exhibit the characteristic of independent judgement-making. They seek out information from mass media and base adoption decisions on this information. Imitators are more likely to be influenced by word-of-mouth

communication and tend, on the other hand, to wait until a new product is trialed in the local area.

The results of a recent study for the Australian Wool Research and Promotion Organisation showed that innovators and imitators do respond and behave differently to new wool production technologies.

In general terms, the results indicate that innovators, compared with imitators, are more likely to:

- use mass media as a source and to rate it more highly;
- adopt new products earlier than imitators;
- imagine new products or practices working for them;
- trial new techniques more readily;
- place more emphasis on a new product or practice being effective and easy to apply; and
- they are less likely to completely reject new technology.

These results also lend support to the importance of 'search' and 'experience' communication attributes of new technology. New products, such as a new chemical, are conceptually easy for wool producers to imagine working on their property and generally have high 'search' attributes. Industry experience indicates that successful new products, such as CLOUT and IVOMEK, have rapid rates of adoption, diffusing quickly through the population.

New practices, however, often have high 'experience' communication attributes and do not lend themselves to word-of-mouth communication. For example, it is not easy for a wool producer to

observe the benefits of a new practice by looking over the fence. They have to trial the practice for themselves and 'experience' the benefits.

While this research went a long way to developing our understanding of the adoption of new products and practices and ways of overcoming the constraints, further research is needed to answer the following questions:

- Why do producers talk about some new practices and not others?
- What is the role of discussion groups, retailers, consultants and advisers in stimulating word-of-mouth communication between innovators and imitators?
- Can extension and marketing strategies influence the perceived level of 'search' and 'experience' communication attributes?■

## REFERENCES

- O'Keeffe, M and Manifold, F (1994), 'The Adoption or Rejection of New Wool Production Technology'. Australian Wool Research and Promotion Organisation.
- Bass, F M (1969), 'A New Product Growth Model for Consumer Durables', *Management Science*, 15, 215-27.
- Midgley, D F and Dowling, G R (1990), 'A Predictive Test of the Impact of Innovative Predispositions and Contingent Factors on Adoption Behaviour', Working Paper 90-031, Australian Graduate School of Management.

The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network appreciates the sponsorship from:

**THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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QUEENSLAND**

This is the Newsletter of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (INC), incorporated in Victoria.

For further information, please contact the acting chairpersons of the APEN chapters in your area. For administrative matters, please contact the secretariat (see back page).

# NOTES FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

Bob MacAdam, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.

**M**y four months sabbatical in the System Department at the Open University in the UK is drawing to a close. The locals think Australians are taking over - Ray Ison is the new Professor of Systems and David McClintock is doing his PhD. Ray and David worked together on the CARR Project at Broken Hill (Community Approaches to Rangeland Research). Ray is projecting his interest in action research and participative learning for rural development into the research agenda of the Department.

The issue of community participation in decision-making is a major one in the UK, but does not appear to enjoy the same level of bipartisan political support evident in Australia. I attended a World Environment Day Symposium on 'Values for a Sustainable Future' in London. At this symposium David Marquand, the Professor of Politics at Sheffield University, highlighted 'reductionist individualism' as a set of values and assumptions at the core of what he sees as a crisis in the politics of most advanced societies.

Within this set of assumptions there are only two ways of living together in society: the command mode, or the

exchange mode. Society is either a kind of hierarchy held together because those at the bottom obey those at the top, or it is a kind of market held together by the calculating self-interests of its members (the latter seems to me to be the basis of 'Thatcherism' - still very evident here).

Marquand suggests that if we abandon the 'reductionist straight-jacket', a third option becomes possible, what he calls a 'preceptorial mode'. In this, change comes neither from commands nor exchanges, but from persuasion, discussion, indoctrination, conversion. People change because they have learned to see the world and themselves in a different way; in some measure they have become different people.

It seems to me that the emergence of Landcare and the growing emphasis on regional development in Australia is consistent with Marquand's preceptorial mode. (A colleague here says it won't take off until he comes up with another title). The interest in action learning, action research and process management among extension practitioners is also consistent with this mode. Ever the optimist, I came away from the Symposium with a sense that the world is in the early stages of a revolution in

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social values. This will result in profound changes in our institutional structures.

I hate to think about what the future holds if I am wrong. The vocal minority of 'eco-fascists' at the Symposium would impose draconian measures to protect the environment. The free-marketeers would carry on regardless (they were not evident at the Symposium). John Wybrew, the Planning and Public Affairs Director of Shell UK, advocated a systemic learning approach and maintained that this is growing within industry. (*Parts of Shell have worked closely with Peter Checkland, as is shown in the case study in chapter 9 of Checkland and Scholes' Soft Systems Methodology in Action, Wiley, 1990, which is worthwhile reading, Editor.*)

I subsequently attended the Third World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management at Bath from July 6-9. A feature here was the large Australian contingent: Pam Swepson, Ron Passfield, Bob Dick, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt from Queensland, Zelma Bone, Paul Forbes and Joe Zarb from NSW, Richard Wheater from WA, and Yoland Wadsworth from Victoria will be known to rural extensionists.

An unfortunate aspect of the Congress was the emphasis on semantics about what constitutes action research. However, there were some excellent small group sessions where it was apparent that Australians are playing a leading role in developing participative approaches to working with community groups. ■



## Australia-Pacific Extension Conference

### FULL PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE NOW

All three volumes of the Proceedings of the Australia-Pacific Extension Conference are now available from the Book Distribution Centre, Department of Primary Industries, Queensland, GPO Box 46, Brisbane, Qld. 4001

**COST IS \$75 PLUS MAILING COST**

They include the address by Michael Patton and other keynote speakers and a unique overview of what is happening in Extension in Australia, New Zealand and other countries.

Any profit from the sale of the proceedings will go to the Network, courtesy of the DPI.



# Information Centres Becoming a Reality in the South Queensland Region



**Gary McKenzie,**  
Regional  
Information  
Officer - South  
Queensland.

## Why Information Centres?

**W**e all find it difficult to access the right information at the time we want it - which for most people is NOW! Most of us work within Departments that have large amounts of information on a very broad front, and most of us know ways of getting access to it. But just think for a while how daunting this must be for a farmer or other client.

In the past, contacting extension officers was their main access. However, because of dwindling numbers and changing roles of extension officers, clients find that this way of accessing our information is becoming difficult, to say the least! So to maintain and improve access, not only for farmers but for the wider community, the concept of Information Centres was born.

Information Centres will be focal points in a wider network of an information service. They will be clearing houses for information that can be accessed directly by clients. New information will be produced by extension officers and marketed to the wider community.

Additional links with agribusiness, schools and shire libraries will greatly improve our networking capacity. We prefer our clients to access information from sources other than DPI offices or Information Centres, such as a counter at the local Stock and Station Agent or Shire Library.

## What Has Been Happening?

In South Queensland we have been concentrating our efforts in the following areas:

### 1. Developing Information Centres in five major locations.

**Toowoomba** - The Regional Information Centre will co-ordinate information throughout the Region, and specialise in Information Educational Packages, poultry, pigs and native wildlife information.

**Dalby** - We are developing a Broadacre Farming and Grazing Information Centre, with the highlight being an industry-funded Grains Information Service.

**Applethorpe** - A temporary Temperate Horticultural Information Centre has been established. We also conducted a Rapid Rural Appraisal in this area. The recommendations from this are currently being implemented in the form of a Granite Belt Information Service.

**Roma** - An Information Centre specific to local client needs has been linked with the Property Management Planning Centre.

**Warwick** - An Information Centre specific to local client needs has been established.

All centres will be stocked initially with the following:

- 150 self-help information folders that cover a wide range of topics (including DPI notes, Agfacts, Crop Notes, reports, booklets and other extension articles).
- A complete range of DPI videos for hire and viewing in the centres.
- A computer with CD-ROM for decision-support demonstration and information accessing.
- A collection of weed, pest and disease identification reference books.

The major centres of Toowoomba and Dalby will initially be staffed on a part-time basis with the expectations of industry co-funding and revenue from fee-for-service activities topping up these positions in the longer-term.

Other centres will operate with existing Corporate Service staff, with input from casual assistance and extension officers when necessary.

2. **Packaging information and trialling new information delivery systems, for instance the production of a series of audio tapes and delivering information via fax.**
3. **Developing a contacts and information database to support enquires, (an Enquiries Management System) for Toowoomba, to be adapted for district use.**

A challenge has been put to us to find new and more effective ways of delivering information. It requires a change in the way we do things, but the pay-off will be worth it.■



**Self-help information.**  
Toowoomba  
Information Centre.

# DAIRY 'ISSUES' PROJECT

**I M Gibb, Farmanco Pty Ltd.**

*(The author is a specialist dairy farm management consultant based at Kyabram in Northern Victoria).*

**W**ith most of agriculture in the doldrums, it would be reasonable to expect that people in dairying, which is not doing too badly at present, would be pretty happy. This is not the picture we got from the dairy 'Issues' project.

The aim of this project was to investigate the major issues facing the dairy industry in Northern Victoria and Southern NSW, with a view to using this information in a regional strategy. It was commissioned by the Research Committee of the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria in response to concerns expressed by people within the industry. The University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury (UWS), provided academic support and the Dairy Research and Development Corporation provided funding.

The core team consisted of representatives from various sectors of the dairy industry and UWS staff. We used 'Action Research' within an 'Appreciative Systems' framework. This involved focus groups and numerous interviews to collect data. The data was sifted, analysed and agonised over before we got to the stage where we were able to take some of the information back to various groups for comment and further discussion.

What we found were a series of issues relating to an industry in good shape but a lot of the people within the industry facing a crisis. Our interpretation was that this pressure related to a challenge to traditional values and culture for the people within the industry as a result of reaching a transition point in the development of their businesses. The key transitional issue was employment of labour. Pressure resulted from factors like the merger of business and family,

self-image, work role, lifestyle and leisure time. The availability of, or adoption of, technology was not seen as a significant barrier to development. This was very interesting in light of the traditional view that extension has failed if farmers do not adopt what appears to be appropriate technology.

We developed a series of models to explain the transition point, growth within businesses, and the farmer's perception of diminishing lifestyle. These models were tested by exposing them to groups and individuals. The response we got was instant recognition. Farmers related very easily to the models and were able to add to and enhance them. They used the models to explore and explain their own situation. The project team is now much better informed about the barriers facing people within the dairy industry. Dr Robert Woog, our collaborator from

Hawkesbury, told us at the outset that outcome and action would result from community involvement in, and ownership of, the project, rather than the formal report. We are seeing this already. The project report has not been released but there are already a series of activities in the region which will directly address what we identified as 'issues'.

For those of us who believe that effective extension has very little to do with the traditional top-down model of technology transfer, the project was confirmation. It would appear that our finding (that dairying is at a critical point which involves a change from a primary to a secondary mode of operation) could just as easily apply to most other agricultural industries. This has all sorts of implications for rural areas which could be loosely grouped as 'adjustment issues'. ■

## 1994 COMEX FORUM PROGRAMME

**VENUE: DOWNTOWNER MOTEL, CARLTON, VICTORIA**

### TUESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 1994

- 9.00 am **Registration**
- 10.00 am **Introduction**  
*Terry Makin*
- 10.15 am **Syndicate Sessions**  
*Who are we, what can we achieve?*
- 10.45 am **Plenary Session**  
*Who we are*
- 11.15 am **Syndicate Session**  
*Identifying the major issues in achieving best practice in Communication and Extension*
- 12.30 pm **Lunch**
- 1.30 pm **Reporting Session On The Major Issues**  
*Evaluating Extension Programmes*
- 2.15 pm *Information Needs of Advisers*
- 2.45 pm *Adult Education and Extension*
- 3.15 pm **Afternoon Tea**
- 4.15 pm *The Media and Information*
- 4.45 pm *The Client Perspective of Communication*
- 5.15 pm *Priority Issues for Communication and Extension in Agri-Industry*
- 7.00 pm **Forum Dinner**

### WEDNESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 1994

- 8.00 am **Syndicate Work**
- 9.00 am *Report back on Priority Issues for Communication and Extension*
- 9.45 am **Plenary on Priority Issues**
- 10.15 am **Syndicate Sessions**  
*Workable Solutions (includes morning tea)*
- 11.30 am **Report Back on Workable Solutions**
- 12.15 pm **Lunch**  
*Evaluating Existing Programmes Which Are Working*  
An opportunity for selected participants to present an outline of their programmes and evaluate it in terms of the Forum's conclusions on Priorities and Solutions
- 1.30 pm **Afternoon Tea**
- 3.00 pm **Plenary Session on Solutions and Actions**  
*Allocation of tasks and Responsibilities to help address Solutions*
- 3.20 pm
- 4.00 pm
- 4.30 pm **Forum Close**

For Registration information contact APEN Secretariat on (03) 347 1148 or by fax on (03) 347 1792.

# TASMANIA'S TOP PROGRAMME IS ON TARGET



**Ruth Nettle,**  
Dairy Adviser,  
Department of  
Primary  
Industries &  
Fisheries,  
Launceston,  
and TOP  
Programme  
Co-ordinator.

A statewide programme aimed at assisting dairy farmers to improve profitability through setting and achieving farm productivity goals has been running in Tasmania since July 1993. Currently 70 per cent of Tasmania's 803 dairy farmers are participating.

The 'Targeting Our Productivity' (TOP) programme involves farmers receiving monthly graphs of their production in milksolids (milksolids = fat(kg) + protein(kg)) per hectare per day. Comparisons can then be made with productivity targets set for that month. TOP uses this feedback to provide information on individual farm productivity, district and state average information, as well as the average productivity for the top 10 per cent of district farms.

The programme is supported by extension activities including a bi-monthly newsletter, discussion groups, field days and 'Feeding for Profit' courses, which focus on management to achieve profitable high milksolids production per hectare.

The 70 per cent involvement shows that Tasmanian dairy farmers are committed to pursuing their goals to improve productivity. Many farmers are well above the targets they have set. Eighty per cent of those involved have targeted productivity increases of five per cent or more over the previous year. The productivity of the district top 10 per cent of farmers is creating a lot of

interest. It is something that individual farmers can strive to attain knowing it's been achieved in their district.

Sponsorship for the programme comes from the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, the Commonwealth Development Bank and other commercial sources, and involves all dairy industry sectors working together. The aim is to achieve the involvement of 90 per cent of dairy farmers by the end of the final (third) year of the project and the programme is well on target.

Two Tasmanian dairy farmers in the top 10 per cent of their districts are enthusiastic about the benefits of TOP.

Wayne Hansen, in partnership with Duncan Sadler on his 98 ha property at Flowerdale in North West Tasmania, says 'TOP graphs are good for setting goals and working towards achieving them. If you are in the top 10 per cent there is an incentive to stay there!' Wayne is aiming for over 6 kg milksolids/ha/day after achieving close to that last season.

Wayne believes that the secret to achieve maximum pasture utilisation is the combination of high stocking rates (3.4 cows/ha), high fertiliser use (50 kg elemental P/ha), and strategic use of concentrates. It is also important to have cows in excellent condition at calving



**Wayne and Joanne Bowen**



(condition score 5.5), to keep a close calving spread (6 weeks), and to ensure that heifers are over 300 kg liveweight at mating.

Wayne Bowen, dairying in South Springfield in North East Tasmania, believes TOP graphs are a great discussion starter at group meetings and help boost confidence in management decisions. Wayne has seen a 27 per cent increase in production this year after increasing herd size from 180 cows to 220 cows and experimenting with higher

rates of concentrate use (from 0.1 to 0.5 t/cow).

With 77 ha of fully irrigated rye-grass/clover pastures, his TOP graphs showed him producing over 5 kg milksolids/ha/day. Higher stocking rates, higher fertiliser use, changing the herd from Jersey to Friesian, and using grain strategically, are Wayne's philosophies

on higher production per hectare for profit.

Goal setting is part of both farms' normal management.

Both Waynes are confident of Tasmania's dairying future and are enthusiastically supporting the TOP programme.

A key to the TOP programme is the use of feedback as a motivator.

Feedback has several functions:

- It indicates if deficiencies exist in past performance.
- It enables future responses to be modified to improve subsequent performance.
- It creates confidence in actions that result in a successful outcome.
- It helps promote thinking 'beyond' the way we do things 'round here!■



## The South Australian Chapter – Where To From Here?



*John Bourne,  
APEN Steering  
Committee  
Member, SA.*

An initial interest meeting of a small group of people was held in April to look at ways to initiate APEN activities in South Australia. The meeting involved representatives of tertiary institutions, consultants, the Cooperative Research Centre for Soil and Land Management, and the Department of Primary Industries.

The group discussed the needs that a network should address from a SA perspective, including:

- Develop more professionalism in extension - what is extension (facilitation?);
- Market what extension is and does;

- Identify 'best practice' in extension;
- Provide a repository for new advances in extension methodology - document success and failure;
- Provide skills training for practitioners - such as evaluation of extension; and
- Involvement in developing competencies for extension.

Those likely to be involved in the network could include; agribusiness, consultants, state government, tertiary institutions, and farmers. The network should not just be agriculture-related, so it could include people in health and family/community service areas. There is currently a mailing list of 200 plus of potential people interested, mainly from agriculture, compiled by Primary Industries (SA).

Links need to be made with related professional bodies including; NIES, Australian Farm Management Society, and the Rural Journalism Association. A strong link needs to be maintained with AIAS, as support from the Institute will assist the credibility of the network in the early stages. Extension issues identified by the Institute, nationally or at the state level, could be fed back to the network.

As an initial event to 'launch' the SA Chapter, the group considered a seminar focusing on current extension methods (through some case studies) that would be of use to practitioners. A programme is currently being developed by Leigh Walters and John Bourne. ■

## COMMUNICATION AND EXTENSION FORUM

Melbourne 22 and 23 November 1994

*SIMON FIELD CPAG,  
Executive Director AIAS*

ComEx, a forum on Communication and Extension in Agri-Industry, will be convened in Melbourne on 22 and 23 November 1994 by the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science in co-operation with the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (Inc).

The purpose of the forum is to bring together communicators, extension officers, advisers and consultants for an update on the current trends and issues relevant to their role in agri-industry. The forum is designed to give participants the opportunity to evaluate their own programmes in the context of the priorities and solutions identified by their colleagues.

We invite you and representatives of your organisation to participate in the forum. We seek your early involvement in the forum through completing the questionnaire which will be mailed to you with the registration form. This provides an opportunity for you to identify major issues and topics which interest you, and to mention special expertise you can contribute. If you have a programme which you would like to present, please complete the appropriate section of the questionnaire.

There will also be a session during which some participants can discuss their extension programmes or communication strategies in the context of the solutions identified by the forum.

Please return your comments, the registration form with your payment and the questionnaire by 1 October so we can consider your requirements in the final planning of the programme. Details of the forum and registration forms can be obtained from the APEN Secretariat on 03 347 1148 or fax 03 347 1792. We also welcome other suggestions for the programme.

You may also be interested in the forum 'Learning in Agri-Industry - Achievement through Co-operation' which follows the Communication and Extension Forum, again, details can be obtained from the APEN Secretariat.

We look forward to seeing you at the forum. ■

*The Forum will be eligible for the requirements of CPAG, Certified Practising Agriculturist.*

## FUNDING

Peter Van Beek, Interim Treasurer

Our budget is based on 500 paying members (\$40 each), 50 student members (\$25 each), 14 corporate members (\$250 each) and five major sponsors (\$2000 each). There are currently 520 people on the mailing list, and one sponsor. We need you to enrol members, corporate members and sponsors in the area covered by your chapter.

We estimate that this will pay for all basic administrative costs, printing, mailing and basic overheads. Any other major activity will have to pay for itself, be done on a contract basis, be funded from specially arranged funding, or be made possible by growth in our membership.

Corporate members and sponsors will get ten copies of the Newsletter addressed to nominated people in their organisation. This way we hope

to reach people who need to know what happens in extension, but are not necessarily extensionists. Sponsors will also have their name and logo in the Newsletter and are entitled to one half page 'Sponsors Message' per issue.

Each chapter will receive \$10 from the subscription of all members who nominate it as the chapter they wish to belong to. The chapter will also get \$50 from the subscription of corporate members in their area, and all or part of \$400 from major sponsorships. (The four proposed Queensland chapters already will get \$100 each from the sponsorship of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries). Your assistance in enrolling corporate members and sponsors will be vital. ■