

Planning a Community Fair Booth

A PACIFIC NORTHWEST COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PUBLICATION
OREGON STATE COLLEGE • UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO • STATE COLLEGE OF WASHINGTON



You're Elected

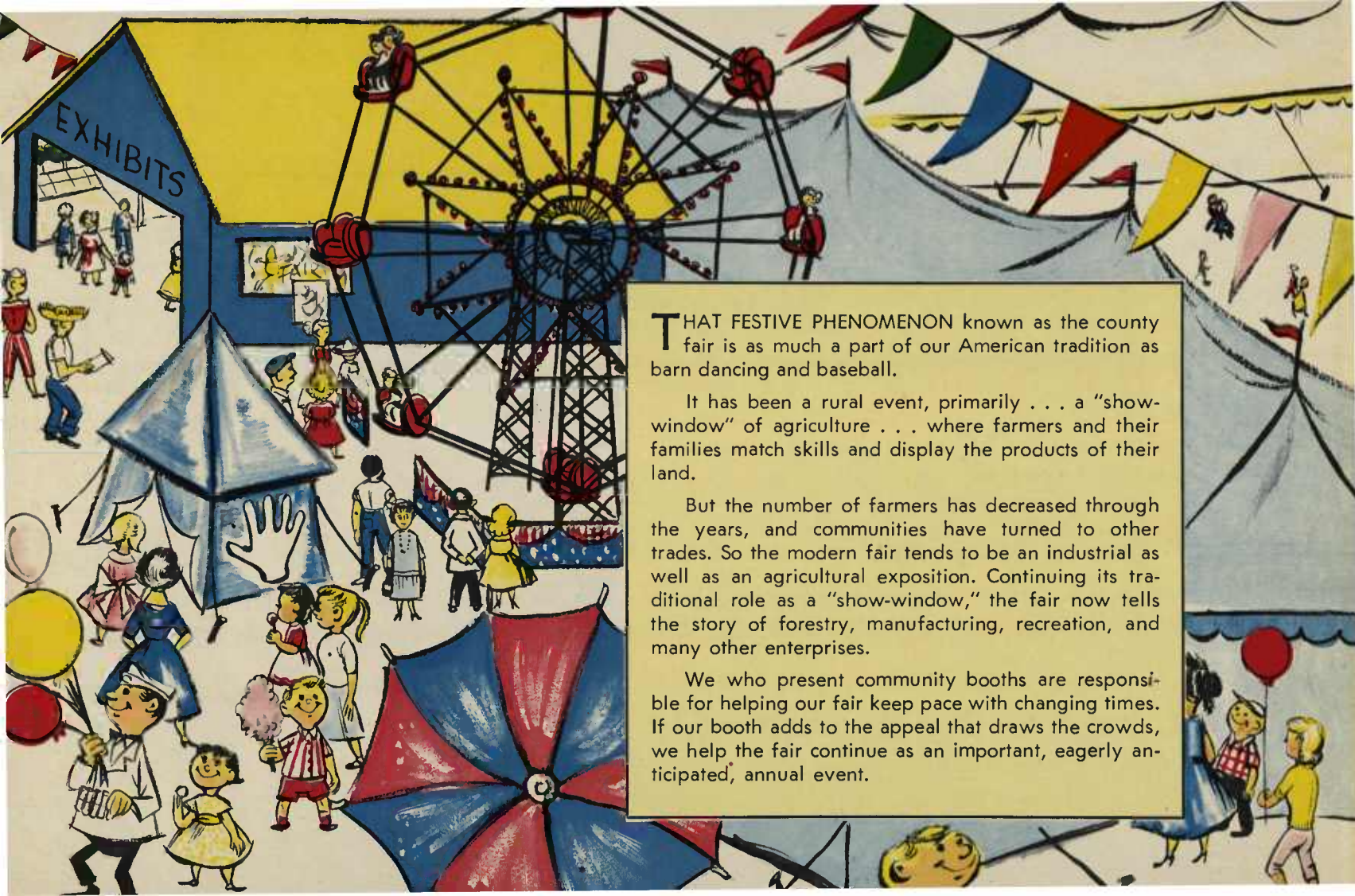
WHEN YOU HAVE a committee job to do in planning and building a community booth for a fair, you'll find that the hardest part is worrying about it.

This publication suggests a step-by-step method of planning your community booth. It discusses the characteristics of a good community booth and presents a score card for judging it. You'll also find some basic principles of design, and information on materials for building the booth.

This is *not* a book of blueprints and pat ideas. You won't find a detailed drawing of the booth you want to build. After all, your community booth—if it's a good one—will be so original with you and so representative of your own community or organization that only you and your committee could possibly have planned it.

You are elected to do the job; don't beg off. Accept the challenge. Call your committee together and start planning the prize-winning booth at the county fair!





THAT FESTIVE PHENOMENON known as the county fair is as much a part of our American tradition as barn dancing and baseball.

It has been a rural event, primarily . . . a "show-window" of agriculture . . . where farmers and their families match skills and display the products of their land.

But the number of farmers has decreased through the years, and communities have turned to other trades. So the modern fair tends to be an industrial as well as an agricultural exposition. Continuing its traditional role as a "show-window," the fair now tells the story of forestry, manufacturing, recreation, and many other enterprises.

We who present community booths are responsible for helping our fair keep pace with changing times. If our booth adds to the appeal that draws the crowds, we help the fair continue as an important, eagerly anticipated, annual event.

The Community Booth

LET'S SAY a community booth is any display that tells the passer-by something about a particular county, community, or organization; for example, Mason County, Fairview Grange, Hillcrest Farm Bureau, Happy Hollow 4-H Club, Central City FFA.

The successful community booth (or any display for that matter) is attractive. It tells a story. The story is told simply and effectively. A booth without a message is like an empty picture frame . . . visible but meaningless.

The successful community booth:

- ▶ Stops the viewer
because it attracts his attention.
- ▶ Holds his attention
because the exhibit is interesting.
- ▶ Gives him a lasting impression . . .
because the message is convincing.



Planning Your Booth

SOME COMMUNITY BOOTHS are planned the day they are built. The committee gathers with hammers, saws, paper, fruit, vegetables, and sheaves of grain. Somebody has an idea. Maybe it isn't the best idea. But no one else has a suggestion, so the committee goes to work.

Get your committee together at least a month ahead of fair time. Give each person a chance to express his ideas so he feels he is participating in the planning. Proceed by considering each of these steps in turn:

Step 1: Whom are we talking to?

Who will see our community booth?

Will the majority be city folks? Or mostly rural people?

Is there any reason for planning our booth to appeal to a particular kind of viewer . . . homemakers . . . farmers . . . prospective FFA or 4-H Club members?



Step 2: What do we want to tell them?

Our only purpose for building a booth is to tell about ourselves or our products. So our booth must have a message. Otherwise it will just fill space.

What do we want our booth to say to people walking by?

Let's assume we are the Fairview Grange and we decided in Step 1 that our booth should appeal to consumers of products our Grange members produce.

Members of our Grange grow lots of things. Dairy, poultry, and apple production are the major enterprises.

But let's not talk about all three. How about taking apples this year, and plan to feature the other enterprises in years to come?

Why do we want to limit our message?

If we stick to *one single subject* our message will be simple, direct, and more convincing . . . it's also easier to design an exhibit about one specific subject.



Step 3: Putting our message into words.

We've decided what to talk about—*apples*—and whom to talk to—*consumers*—so now let's put our message into words.

How about, “We grow apples for the nation’s fruitbasket” . . . or, “The apples we grow bring health to you.”

This is what we want our community booth to say, remember. These words need not appear as part of the exhibit.

But once we put our message into words, we can visualize that message. We are ready to throw our imaginations into gear and come up with an “idea” for our community booth.



Step 4: Crystallizing the “idea.”

Let's say we decided on this message: “Eat our apples for health.” We turn our imaginations loose. After swapping suggestions back and forth someone comes up with this idea:

How about using the theme, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”? Our booth would be a huge calendar showing every month of the year. Each month would be labeled, and instead of numbers, we'll place an apple for each day of the month. We could have apple trees for the background.



Step 5: Sketch a plan

Time taken to sketch the “idea” for our community booth will pay off in time and materials later on.

The sketch is the plan which guides us in building the booth.

Let’s sketch different possibilities before settling on the one the committee likes best. We won’t need an artist to make a sketch. Stick figures for people, circles, squares, and other simple outlines are enough to indicate where everything is to go in the booth. More important than a fancy, finished drawing is a sketch that puts our ideas on paper and helps us plan what we’ll need to carry out the idea.

But before the plan takes final shape, let’s be sure

- ▶ Of the dimensions of the booth
- ▶ That materials we plan to display are available
- ▶ That any art services we’ll need are available, and
- ▶ That the plan will fit our budget.

The discussion of design which follows will help us develop our plan.

Design

DESIGN ATTRACTS the viewer to your community booth and guides his eyes to what's important in the exhibit.

START WITH A CENTER OF INTEREST

A good design has a focal point called "a center of interest." In a community booth, this center of interest is the heart of the message. Every other object is secondary to the center of interest.

In a display of flags, for example, the American flag is dominant—the center of interest. State flags are secondary—supporting the center of interest.

In our apple display, the prescription is the center of interest. The calendar and everything else help tell the story and lend line and color to the display.

How do we establish a center of interest? The important object we choose for our center of interest may be

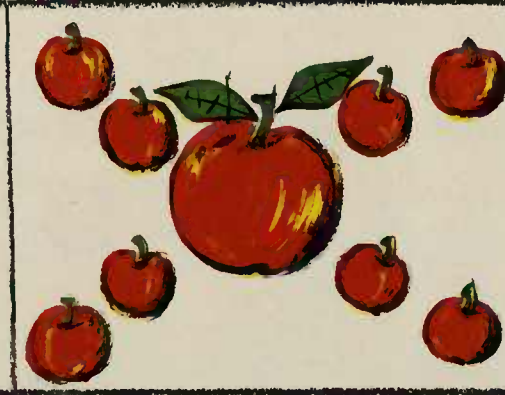
- ▶ Placed in a prominent position
- ▶ Much larger or much smaller than other objects
- ▶ In a contrasting color to other objects
- ▶ In motion
- ▶ Unique or out of the ordinary.

Start with the center of interest. Then place the other objects in the exhibit to make a good design.

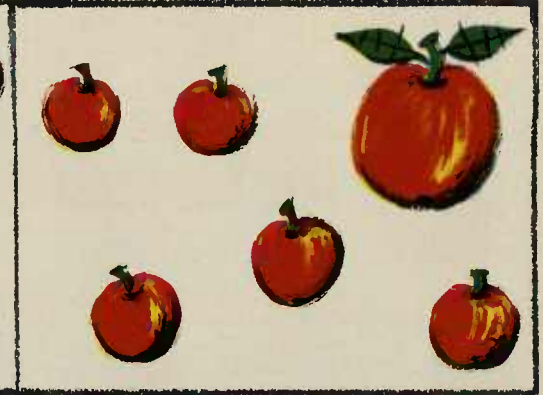
No center of interest



Center of interest in center



Center of interest at one side



COLOR

Choose a color “scheme” for your community booth. A color “scheme” is a combination of two or more colors

- ▶ That go together, and
- ▶ Are appropriate to the subject.

Dark, rich colors are appropriate for industry; light, feminine colors for most homemaking subjects; yellows, greens, and browns for most agricultural subjects.

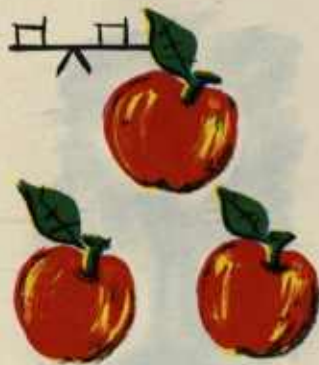
Some colors are “warm,” aggressive, stimulating: yellow, orange, and red. Other colors are “cool,” retiring, tranquil: violet, blue, and green.

Note that colors never clash in nature’s “color scheme.” Nature’s colors are “softened” by mixing with brown. “Soft” greens, blues, and browns appear in large masses in nature. Bright, intense colors dot the landscape in small masses.

Use “soft” colors for backgrounds and large masses in your booth. Use bright, intense colors for the smaller masses, and possibly for the center of interest.

The right colors, used in the right way, can turn a drab, uninteresting booth into one that attracts the crowd.





Formal



Informal

BALANCE

Arrange the objects in your community booth so the design is balanced—neither lopsided nor top-heavy.

Balance can be:

- ▶ Formal
- ▶ Informal

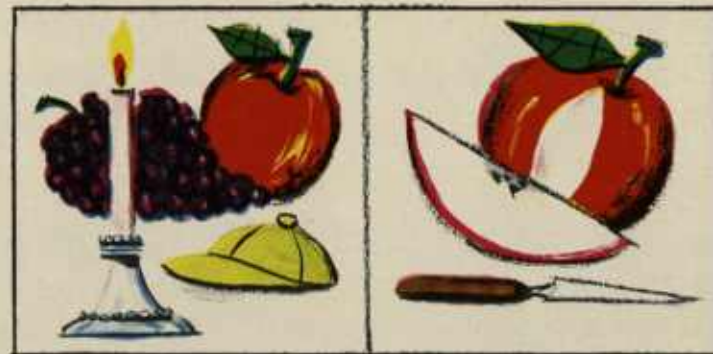
Informal balance is usually more interesting.

UNITY

Stick to one idea; don't wander away from the message. This is unity of purpose.

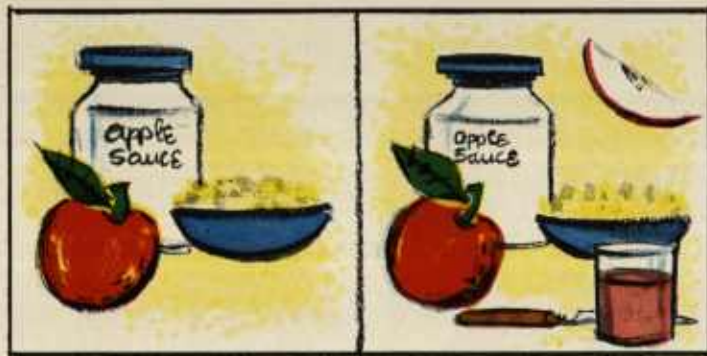
Choose objects to display that go well together; not only color-wise, but in size and shape. This is unity of design. Wagon wheels go well in an exhibit with livestock and flowers; not so well with kitchen appliances. Light, feminine-looking letters are appropriate for food displays; heavy letters for displays of farm machinery.

Your own judgment and good taste will tell you whether an object has unity with the rest of the exhibit . . . whether it belongs or doesn't belong at all.



No unity

Good unity



SIMPLICITY

Before you jam your community booth to the rafters with armloads of this and that, take note of this point: there's nothing wrong with empty space. The less in the booth, the more likely the viewer will see what you really want him to see. If your booth is cluttered like a fruit cellar, the viewer has so much to look at he sees nothing at all.

If five jars of peaches can make the point as well as 15, settle for five. If you can tell the story of dairying in your community just as well without displaying trophies won by your 4-H Dairy Club, leave them out. Before putting an object into the booth, ask yourself "Does it help tell the story?"

A SCORE CARD

Your community booth has a better chance to win the top award this year if you know what appeals to the judge, and what doesn't. Sometimes the judge has one concept of a "good" community booth, you have another.

Suggestion: arrange to meet with the judge before you make your final plans. Ask him to explain how he makes his judgments.

The following is a score card for judging community booths, adopted by the Oregon Fairs Association and under consideration in other states.

	Points
1. Choice of message	30
(Does the booth have a specific message for an intended audience? Does the message give the audience a better understanding of, and appreciation for, the resources or services of a community—of a county or organization—or a particular agricultural or industrial enterprise of that community?)	
2. Visualization of message	40
(Is there a center of interest? Balance? Unity? Simplicity? Effective use of color?)	
3. Quality of products	20
(If perishable agricultural products are used, are they of top quality?)	
4. Originality	10
(Is the booth original in its basic concept?)	
Perfect score	100

Building Your Booth

YOU CAN CHOOSE from hundreds of materials to build your booth and visualize your idea. Wood and wood products provide the basic structure. Paints, papers, and fabrics cover the surfaces. Sand, glass, brick, soil, metal products, lamps, recorders, motors, and a score of other products and devices provide atmosphere and special effects.

WOOD PRODUCTS

Plywood: Light weight, easily cut, best for covering large surfaces, easily painted.

Upson board: A fabricated product made of paper board that's even more versatile than plywood; already sized for painting; other materials can be glued to it; soft enough for thumb tacks; can be bent around corners and to produce curved surfaces.

Hardboards: Fabricated from wood fiber and sold under many trade names; harder surface and more permanent than Upson and plywood; more expensive, too, but provides very attractive surface.



CARDBOARD, PAPERS, AND FABRICS

Corrugated cardboards: Effective for making pedestals and covering bases or backgrounds; available in colors and in widths from 30 to 72 inches.

Wallpaper: Cheap, easy to use, and decorative.

Seamless display paper: As good or better than cardboards and wallpaper in covering surfaces.

Fabrics: A number to choose from . . . oil cloth, imitation leather, burlap, monk's cloth, cotton duvetyne . . . to cover surfaces and provide special effects.

PAINTS

Water-soluble paints: Not inflammable and easy to use because brushes, buckets, hands, and clothing can be cleaned of paint with water. Suggest you buy quantity of white, then mix in show-card colors or other pigments to produce the color you want, or your paint dealer will mix up the right color for you.

Oil paints: Not generally recommended because of fire hazard; not as easy to use as water-soluble paints.

ADHESIVE MATERIALS

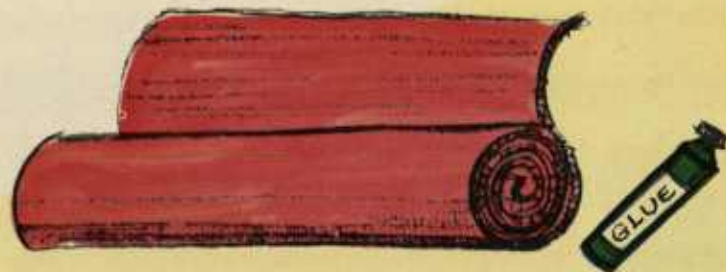
Casein glue: Probably most convenient and economical glue.

Rubber cement: Best for mounting photographs, paper, or thin cardboard; cut-out letters mounted with rubber cement can be removed easily and used again.

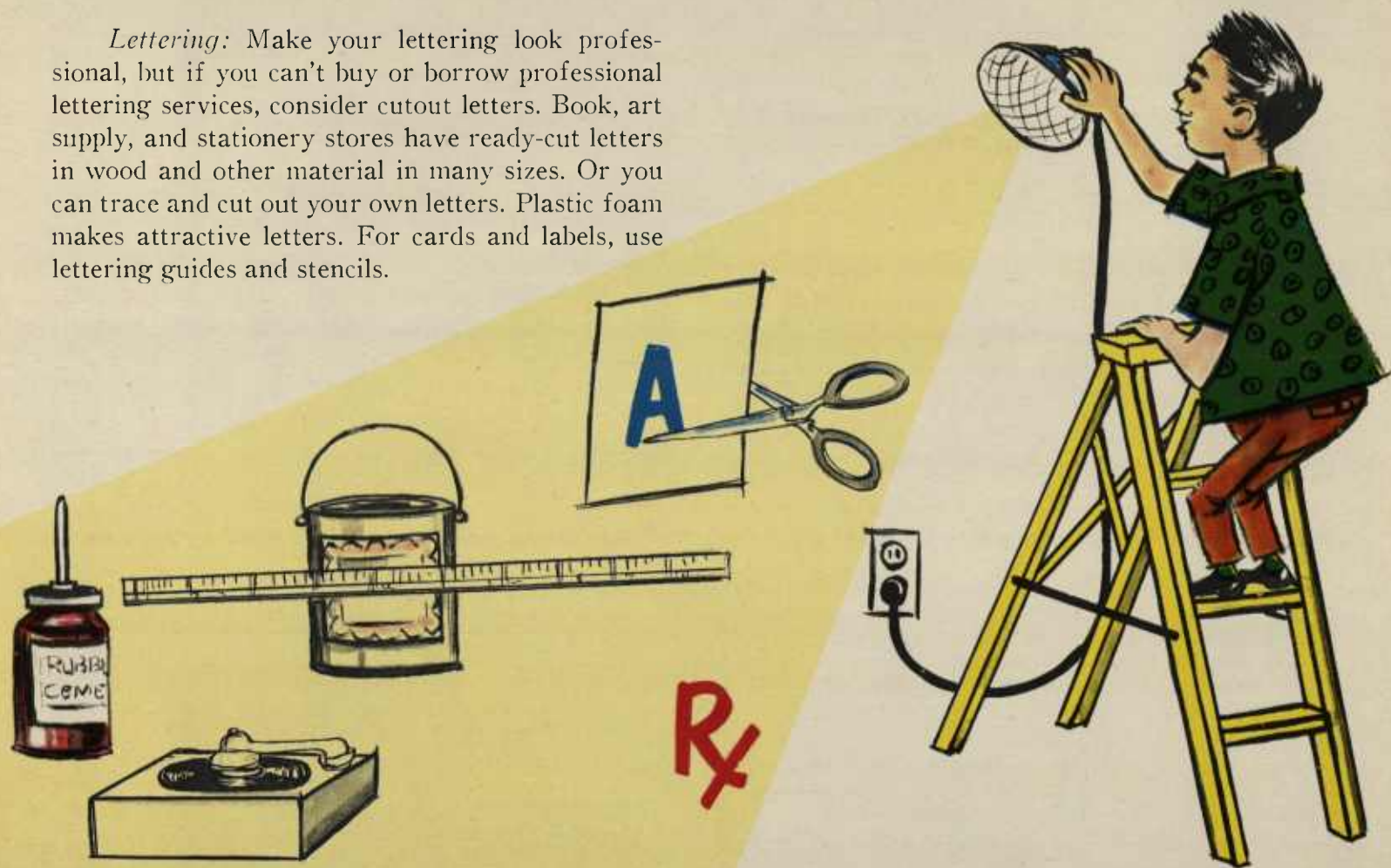
Paper hanger's paste: Best for applying wallpaper, other papers, and cardboards to large surfaces.

OTHER TIPS

Photographs: Photographs of faces or figures can be pasted on plywood or other board and cut out with a jigsaw. Enlargements of scenic photos make fine backgrounds.



Lettering: Make your lettering look professional, but if you can't buy or borrow professional lettering services, consider cutout letters. Book, art supply, and stationery stores have ready-cut letters in wood and other material in many sizes. Or you can trace and cut out your own letters. Plastic foam makes attractive letters. For cards and labels, use lettering guides and stencils.



Lighting: Proper lighting can make all the difference in the appearance of your booth. Ordinary fixtures—overhead, or concealed behind part of the exhibit—provide general illumination. Small spotlights that fit ordinary sockets can “highlight” important areas of your community booth.

Sound and motion: Attract attention to your booth with sound and motion (used sparingly). Recordings, Swiss bells, and other devices provide sound; turntables made for displays, converted record-player turntables, or a reciprocating motor provides motion. Color slides, shown by an automatic projector, and motion pictures may have a place in your community booth. These should be an integral part of your exhibit—not an afterthought.

This bulletin was prepared by Dwight Fairbanks and Curtis Reid, visual instruction specialists, Federal Cooperative Extension Service, Oregon State College, in consultation with Extension staffs at the State College of Washington and the University of Idaho.

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The last word—

Safety First!

Your fair management will appreciate your concern for preventing fires in and around your community booth.

DON'T overload your electrical circuits.

DON'T place burning bulbs where the heat they generate will ignite paper and other flammable materials.

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