



University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center

May 26, 2015

Dear Kearney communicators of 2065,

I started at Kearney just a few days before its 25th anniversary, in May 1990. On my first day I was issued a laptop computer – certainly among the first in the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The four-inch-thick 20-pound Toshiba T1200 ran only the DOS operating system, and of course, we never heard of “the Internet.”

In the 1990s, we mainly wrote news releases, printed and faxed them to our UC sources for review, photocopied the final version and mailed them via the U.S. Postal Service to the media. The recipients would either use them for story ideas or retype them and print them verbatim in their publications.

Over the next 25 years, information technology advanced continually and rapidly. We’re now distributing our news on our own blogs, promoting them on “social media,” and emailing them to a wide range of online outlets. If the trajectory continues over the next 50 years, my communications successors here at Kearney in 2065 must be using some pretty amazing tools to get the word out about the good work of our agricultural researchers.

My imaginings are tempered by the fact that some of the things we expected in the “future” haven’t (yet) come to fruition. My son wears a t-shirt with the indignant slogan, “This is supposed to be the future. Where is my jetpack?” Maybe communicators aren’t using telepathy or implants to share agricultural news with farmers and the public in 2065, or maybe you are.

What are we marveling about in 2015? I would say the power shift of communications in general from media organizations to consumers. In the last few years, social media news distribution has exploded. Most popular, at the moment, are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Tumblr and Snapchat are gaining. Much of the traffic on “traditional” webpages is being driven from these social media platforms. They are being accessed by the public via smart phones and tablet computers, in addition to desktop and laptop computers. Smartwatches are just now hitting the mainstream, so in a few years we expect that people need not even look at a phone to get the latest updates, just glance at their wrists.

Newspapers still arrive on many local driveways, mine included. But we know their days are numbered. It doesn’t seem sustainable to print news on paper and have delivery people drive around town throwing copies at individual homes. The Fresno Bee has been getting thinner and thinner for years and the publication is openly promoting the extra features of its online version – photo galleries, videos and comment forums.

Knowing the ability of humans to adapt, it is unlikely that you miss paper newspapers and the trappings of 2015. But I feel confident that you will still be working hard in the important field of communications, using whatever wonderful tools that have been developed by human ingenuity. I send you warm wishes for peace and happiness in 2065 and hope you enjoy the University of California’s beautiful Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center as much as I do.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jeannette Warnert'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeannette Warnert
Senior Public Information Representative