

THE CHANGING DIMENSIONS OF RURAL AMERICA: SO WHAT?

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I will attempt to lay out some of the changing dimensions of rural America and the trends—demographic, economic, and selected others—as seen by others and myself. I will provide primarily national, Northeast regional, and Pennsylvania perspectives. I will lay out some policy options and finally suggest an approach for determining the situation in your case and how to implement a plan of action.

This first part is largely statistical, but rather than concentrating on the statistics, per se, I urge you to think about these dimensions and trends as they apply to your situation. Your service area is unique yet must interface with state, regional, national, and international dimensions and trends. How can you do this?

The last part of the paper—which Dr. Vavrek didn't ask for, but, I'm sure, had an idea I couldn't resist the temptation—I hope will help you put these dimensions and trends into a useful focus and can build upon the backdrop provided by Representative Wright's keynote address and feed into the remaining segments of the conference. From this perspective, let's begin.

I believe everyone would agree that rural America has weathered a series of economic and social crises in the last 20 years. This, in spite of the fact that just a few short years ago, as introduced by Beaulieu (1988) in his book The Rural South in Crisis: Challenges for the Future:

The overall health of rural America was believed to be showing signs of a major resurgence. Population growth was touching nearly all segments of the rural landscape (Beale, 1985; Brown, 1984; Lichter et al., 1985). The manufacturing, agriculture, mining, and energy-based sectors were expanding and adding strength to the economies of many rural communities (Beale and Fugitt, 1986; Martinez, 1985; Pulver, 1986). Commonly used indices of well-being (such as per capita income and persons in poverty) were beginning to provide evidence that the welfare of rural citizens was slowly improving (Henry, et al., 1986; Swanson and Skees, 1987; Winter, 1986). Surely, rural America had finally arrived.

But, the decade of the 1980s brought havoc to the rural countryside. A combination of international and domestic forces caused serious financial stress for many farm operators (Economic Research Service, 1985; 1986a; 1986b). While the Midwestern farm belt initially commanded much of the attention, it subsequently became all too clear that the "farm crisis" was more than a Midwest phenomenon, but a nationwide dilemma. Several reports put us on notice that farm-dependent communities were experiencing severe fiscal stress as a consequence of the troubled farm economy. Unfortunately, strains also were being evidenced by rural localities having little dependence on agriculture (Hite and Ulbrich, 1986; Lawson, 1986; Mueller, 1986; Petrusis (et al., 1987; Reeder, 1987; U.S. Senate, 1986). Such stresses were being prompted, in large part, by a retrenchment or discontinuation in the activities of their manufacturing industries (Henry et al., 1986; Martinez, 1985; Wilkinson, 1986). Thus by the mid-1980s, it became all too evident that the crisis enveloped many sectors of rural society beyond agriculture.

In many respects, the economic and social hardships that have made their presence felt across rural areas of the U.S. in recent years have forced rural development issues to be placed on the priority list of items being debated at the federal and state levels.

Let us examine these items in more detail, beginning nationally and working our way to Pennsylvania.

Nationally--What Happened To the Movement of People?

A significant event called "the population turnaround" occurred in the late 1960s. It became most evident and measurable in 1972. For the first time in more than 160 years, the population growth rate was higher in rural areas than in urban areas, despite a decline in the national birth rate (Beale). The reasons for that phenomenon are still being debated by demographers. The population turnaround in the 1960s did result in a rural population growth of 4.4 percent. Between 1970 and 1980, this climbed to 15.4 percent, with a rural population increase of 8.4 million (Office of Rural Development).

This growth, however, was not uniform across the United States. Four factors seem to have influenced this unevenness most. These were the growth of the extractive industries, expansion of the resort industries, the relocation of persons of retirement age, and/or the location of a four-year college or university.

If these were the trends during the 60s and 70s, what are the current trends? Richter reports that non-metro growth has slowed considerably while

metro growth increased; thus, ending the urban to rural population turnaround. He further notes, however, that amenities and recreational characteristics of non-metro counties contrived to attract migrants. He asserts that preferences for rural areas remain as an important reason for moving. Murdock et al. and Lichter et al. indicate that noneconomic factors have become increasingly important mediators of age-specific migration and that nonmetro population growth during the 1970s is largely in rural, not urban, areas. Furthermore, the USDA/ERS Study, Rural Economic Development in the 1980s: Preparing for the Future stated "Rural population trends during the 1980s have returned to the generalized declines of the 1950s and 1960s. Almost half of all nonmetro counties (1,160) lost population during 1983-85, or 2.5 times the number (460) during the 70s. During 1985-86, rural areas experienced a net outmigration of 632,000 people."

Population decline and outmigration are concentrated in the Plains and Western Corn Belt, but have recently spread to the lower Great Lakes region and parts of the South.

Slow population growth and outmigration, though indicating decline in the performance of rural economies, do not necessarily mean that the remaining population is impoverished or that communities lack essential services and facilities. In fact, in some areas, those who stay behind may be better off and the communities may have an oversupply, rather than a lack, of public facilities (Brown, 1987b).

Nationally--What Happened to the Composition of People?

Population change in size and geographic distribution is but one aspect for consideration by persons providing services to rural areas. Another significant aspect is the nature and structure of this population. Today, one in every four Americans (or 57 million people) lives in nonmetropolitan areas (Office of Rural Development). Twenty-eight percent of the American population 18 years of age and under lives in rural areas (Stern) as does one-third (11 million) of the nation's total elderly (Herbert & Wilkinson). Rural persons continue to lag behind urban persons in years of formal education. High school dropout rates are higher in rural areas. Finally, out-migration was heavy for high school graduates and for persons with four or more years of college in nonmetro areas (Hesley and Price, 4).

Regionally--What Happened?

Beginning in the 1960-70 period, the Northeast region's nonmetropolitan areas experienced larger net migration rates than that reported in its metropolitan places. Thus the region led the nation in the dramatic population reversals by at least one full decade (cf. Brown and Wardwell, 1980; Luloff and Steahr, 1970; Hawley and Mazie, 1982; Sofranko and Williams, 1980). This pattern of differential population increments with the nonmetropolitan areas growing more rapidly, and to some degree at the expense of the region's metropolitan areas, continued into the 1970s and first half of the 1980s (Steahr and Luloff, 1985; Lancell, 1986). This nonmetro growth is unique to the Northeast region in the 80s as it was in the 60s.

The Northeast generally had a higher proportion of older persons in 1980; however, it was clearly not the region with the largest increases in elderly population for the decade of the 70s. A further evaluation was that changes in the number of elderly varied by their type of residence (Crawford et al., 1987).

Percentage distribution, 1980, and percentage change, 1970-1980, in proportion of population 65 and older, United States and Northeast, North Central, South, and West regions of United States.

Population-change categories	Total U.S.	Region			
		Northeast	N.Central	South	West
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Total United States					
Persons 65 and older, 1980	11.3	12.3	11.4	11.3	9.9
Change, 1970-80	27.9	17.3	17.3	41.1	39.5
Metropolitan counties					
Persons 65 and older, 1980	10.7	12.2	10.2	10.4	9.8
Change, 1970-80	28.1	15.3	19.3	45.8	38.3
Partially-urban nonmetro counties					
Persons 65 and older, 1980	12.8	13.4	13.7	12.8	9.8
Change, 1970-80	31.4	38.4	17.8	36.6	50.8
All-rural nonmetro counties					
Persons 65 and older, 1980	14.3	14.9	17.1	13.2	10.6
Change, 1970-80	7.9	-3.2	-1.4	19.8	13.5

Source: Clifford, William B. et. al., 1985.

Pennsylvania's Population

The overall population number remained relatively the same for the 1970-80 decade at about 11,900,000 persons for Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has the largest rural population in the nation (about 3,600,000). In addition, it has a continually aging population. Those 65 years of age and older increased by 2.1 percent between 1970 and 1980 (Census Update, 1). Of particular impact to rural libraries is the fact that Pennsylvania ranks fourth nationally in illiteracy rates according to the State Secretary of Education, Thomas Gilhol (The Daily Collegian, 6). While speaking at Penn State, he stated, "Literacy in Pennsylvania is far from what it should be and programs throughout the state and [Penn State] University are being implemented to help this problem" (ibid). He should add "and at Clarion University of Pennsylvania." According to the 1980 Census, 61 percent of the population is 25 years of age and over; more than 2.5 million Pennsylvania residents (35 percent vs. 58 percent for the nation) 25 and over have not completed high school and of that population, 52 percent (1,331,659) have completed 8 years or less of formal education (Department of Education). Furthermore, the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State University, estimates that about one-third of the population in Pennsylvania is functionally illiterate (Askov).

Vavrek (1980) reports that nearly 1.25 million rural residents in Pennsylvania were served by fledgling or substandard libraries or were unserved by any library. Approximately another 93,000 were served by libraries with service populations under 5,000 (565). Certainly, these factors highlight the absolutely critical role of rural libraries in trying to reconcile the need for rural education with the level of current services.

Jones (1988) postulates that Pennsylvania's population is becoming more settled vs. mobile in that there are more families with two members of the household having careers.

Again, let me turn to the Rural Economic Development in the 1980s: A Summary for a clear and concise treatment of this dimension of rural America. Economic Situation Nationally

While growth and economic vitality were the dominant rural themes in the 1970s, structural change and economic dislocation have become overriding rural issues in the 1980s. In recent decades, the rural economy has shifted from heavy dependence on natural

resource-based industries to more reliance on manufacturing and services industries, much of it in low-wage, low-skill jobs. This industrial restructuring has left rural areas open to rapid shifts in production technologies, which appear to have reduced their competitive position in the national and international economy. At the same time, the rural economy has become more closely tied with national and global economies, making it more sensitive to changes in macro economic policy, business cycles, and global competition. These events, combined with longstanding weaknesses in the rural economy, have lead to significant problems in some areas, raising questions about the ability of rural areas to adapt.

In the 1980s, downturns in several industries important to rural areas (agriculture, mining and energy, and manufacturing) coincided, turning what would normally be local or regional problems into a widespread rural decline of national proportions.

Slow Rural Job Growth and High Unemployment. Rural employment growth since 1979 (the peak of the last business cycle) has been slower than urban employment growth: 4 vs. 14 percent. Slow growth is concentrated in the natural resources and goods-producing industries. Counties depending on mining and energy extraction actually saw their total employment decline by 9.5 percent, while agriculture counties showed virtually no growth and manufacturing counties grew by only 2.7 percent.

Stress in the rural economy is indicated by high unemployment rates. More than 1,000 rural counties had annual unemployment rates of 9 percent or higher in 1986. High unemployment rates are concentrated in the manufacturing counties of the South and East, and the mining and energy counties of Appalachia, the Gulf Coast, and scattered areas of the Northwest. Though lower in agricultural areas, unemployment rates, for technical reasons, are not a good measure of economic stress for these areas.

Economic Situations--Regionally

Here I turn to Luloff et al. (1986) for this dimension of rural america. The region's share of total U.S. employment declined from 30 percent in 1962 to 23 percent in 1978. Similarly, the region's share of national manufacturing employment fell from about 34 percent in 1962 to 25 percent in 1978 (Fuller, 1982). While the region has not been characterized by a dominant agricultural and other extractive industry labor component, jobs in these areas declined during this period, with growing dependencies on non-farm sources for economic support (cf. Deavers and Brown, 1984; Report of The Northeast Rural Development Program Steering Committee, 1984; Schmidt et al., 1985). The

region has a relatively greater share of its employment force in manufacturing, finance, insurance, real estate, and service than the nation, with a less than national average share in agriculture, forestry, fishery, and mining. The region's former reliance on nondurable goods production has dramatically shifted towards the manufacture of durable goods. Accompanying this internal redistribution of employment concentration is the increasing share of rural women in the labor force, with continued regional levels higher than national rates. Presently, the six New England states region is among the top nationally in rate of unemployment (New Hampshire is Number 1 with 2.5 percent) and, in fact, Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey join these six states in experiencing less than 6.0 percent unemployment.

A growing nonmetropolitan population and changing industrial and labor force compositions have immediate impacts on the natural resource base. Significant land use changes, from agricultural and forest production to expanded and/or new residential, commercial, and industrial development have occurred. The density of the region's population, coupled with highly integrated transportation and communication networks, have contributed to the development of the nonmetropolitan periphery of the Northeast. Unlike the North Central and Southern regions, continued decline of agriculture in the region has created alternative schemes for the preservation of land in farming including purchase of development rights, use value assessment, and zoning, while the national trend has been the reverse, namely the idling of land (Ishee, 1980; Luloff and Frick, 1986; Roberts, 1982). One reason that the current rural crisis has limited impact from farming is that there was little or no high priced land available for farming, or, if so, it often can be sold for development at a profit if the farm "goes under." The region also is marked by its large number of nonindustrial private forest land-owners (=1.8 million) who account for the vast majority of forest holdings in the region (Forest Statistics for the United States, 1977).

Changing uses of land and the increasing pattern of nonmetropolitan industrialization also contribute to the degradation of the region's natural resource base. The problem of disposal of solid wastes and the sludge from municipal waste water treatment plants is compounded by the presence of large metropolitan centers which, like their nonmetropolitan counterparts, have found

it difficult to locate and build new landfills to replace those currently being phased out. Compounding this situation is the leaching of heavy metals and other contaminants into groundwater used for municipal and individual water supplies. The identification of several of the nation's worst hazardous waste sites in our region highlights the growing public concern over external associated with industrial expansion and development. Industrial contamination, especially from the Midwest, is also impacting the region's natural resource base in the form of acid precipitation. Many of the lakes in the Northeast have suffered serious losses of plant and animal life as a result of decreasing pH levels, and increasing evidence is being compiled which suggests altered growth and yield cycles for the forest resource (Dochinger, 1983; Hutchinson and Havas, 1980; Burges, 1984).

All of these changes and pressures of growth are coming at a time when there has been decreased availability of federal revenues. The loss of certain categorical and block grants, and the decline in importance of a national rural agenda, have created additional burdens on the region's small and rural communities (McDowell et al., 1985). With new citizens and different demographic profiles, local municipalities are facing increased demands for new and/or expanded governmental services. The growth of communities in the periphery has also highlighted the need for better mass transit systems. And because of programs of deferred maintenance, much of the existing highway, road, and bridge infrastructure of the rural Northeast is in disrepair. Based on these and other factors, the Northeast region is experiencing a rural crisis.

Poverty--Nationally

Underdeveloped Human Resources. A disproportionate share of rural population has been poor throughout the century. The 1985 poverty rate of the nonmetro population was 18.3 percent, compared with 12.7 percent of the metro population. The metro poverty rate has been falling during the recovery from the recession of the early 1980s, but the nonmetro rate has not (Brown, 1987b, 5).

By comparison with urban residents, the gap in average per capita income narrowed slightly in 1965-73, but it widened during 1979-84.

A greater number of people falling below the poverty line live in rural areas

than in the United States as a whole (14 percent vs. 11 percent) and more are "the working poor." In 1985, the rural poverty rate was 18.3 percent vs. 12.7 percent for metro areas. The metro rate has fallen since the last recession, while the nonmetro rate has not (USDA/ES). Furthermore, statistics gathered in 1979 placed 21 percent of all nonmetropolitan individuals over the age of 65 below the poverty level. Only 13 percent of metropolitan residents in that age group suffered a similar fate.

Characteristics of the nonmetro poor differ from those of the metro poor. Nonmetro poor are more likely to be elderly, white, and reside in the South. Work effort is much higher in poor nonmetro families than among other population groups. Over two-thirds of poor nonmetro families had at least one worker and a fourth had two or more workers. As a result, the structure and performance of rural labor markets have an important bearing on rural poverty (Brown, 1987b, 5).

The urban-rural gap pervades all aspects of a rural resident's life. Across America, researchers have found higher infant and maternal mortality rates in rural areas. In addition, 39 percent of all substandard housing can be found in these parts of the country, which contain only 34 percent of the nation's population. Rural elderly occupy a disproportionate share of the nation's substandard housing. Ten percent of all nonmetro counties (242) are categorized by the federal government as persistent poverty counties (Lawrence, 3).

Nonmetro residents continue to lag behind metro residents in education. The gap for high school completion has persisted at about 10 percentage points since 1960, and the gap for college completion has widened since then. The metro/nonmetro gap in education for minorities is even wider. Low educational attainment and high illiteracy and school dropout rates are especially common in the South. Low spending for public schooling in the South suggests that little progress is being made in reducing the region's educational disadvantage (Brown, 1987b, 5).

Economic Situation—Pennsylvania

Significant changes have occurred in the structure of rural communities, in the size and viability of farms, in patterns of land ownership and in the demands and priorities for uses of our natural resources. Rapid growth of the nonfarm population and concomitant shifts in the numbers of those involved in

nonagriculturally related employment in our rural communities have presented new social, economic, and political pressures. With increased growth comes increased demands for existing and in some cases, new services. Given the financial constraints under which many Pennsylvania Localities operate, it would be imprudent to try to provide all services in demand. Since different areas receive different flows of migrants and have varied sociodemographic and economic structures, needs will also differ. Not unexpectedly, these shifts were reflected in significant alterations to Pennsylvania's extant industrial and occupation profiles.

If one looks at the patterns of community growth and decline during the 1970-80 decade, the western half and the "hard coal" areas of the state had a decline of the productive age cohorts (18-64 years of age) and an increase in the 65 years of age and over cohorts. While the U.S. employment grew 7.9 percent from 1980-85, Pennsylvania suffered a net loss in jobs. This was due to declines in labor needs in heavy and energy industries. In growth communities, demands for community services and facilities, including library services, are unable to keep pace with the consumer demands. Conversely, in growth deficit communities, the challenge is the maintenance of the established infrastructure in light of declining revenue sources. Even in population growth-stable communities, consumer demands are ever-changing in these regards in the direction of more, not less, services and facilities. Jones (88) stated that in Pittsburgh health care (hospitals) is the largest employer with Universities ranking second. A startling turnaround from the steel image of a few short years ago. In Delaware, Maryland, South Dakota, and California credit card processing is the fastest growing industry (Fravel, 88).

Percent distribution of non-agricultural wage and salary employment by economic sector in PENNSYLVANIA and the UNITED STATES, March 1980-87.

Economic sectors grouped by national growth rate (1980-87)	Percent distribution of total employment			
	PENNSYLVANIA		UNITED STATES	
	1980	1987	1980	1987
VERY FAST GROWTH				
Services	20.1	25.8	19.5	23.6
FAST GROWTH				
Finance, insurance, real estate	4.9	5.9	5.6	6.4
Wholesale & retail trade	20.6	22.9	22.3	23.4
Construction	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.5</u>	<u>4.6</u>
Sub-total	29.1	32.7	32.4	34.4
SLOW GROWTH				
Government	15.5	14.4	18.3	17.2
Transportation, public utilities	<u>5.6</u>	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>5.3</u>
Sub-total	22.1	19.4	24.0	22.5
SLOW DECLINE				
Manufacturing	28.7	21.5	23.0	18.8
FAST DECLINE				
Mining	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.7
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: (3, 4, 7, 8)

Economic development and services provisions have largely been tied to various tax structures. An interesting aspect to taxing was reported by Shaeffer and Sander (1988). They state:

Taxes that support education increase employment growth. Other taxes have a negative effect. Therefore, higher state and local taxes funding redistribution programs or other nonproductive expenditures may result in lower rates of job growth. This does not mean that welfare programs lack merit. The point is, simply, that there are negative consequences for employment growth if welfare programs are funded by state and local governments. Federal financing is more efficient.

The negative tax result also implies that subsidies to industry, financed through higher state and local taxes, may result in lower employment growth. Although the subsidy may directly create jobs, it may indirectly destroy jobs via higher taxes or lower investment in education by diverting tax revenues from schools.

The benefits of spending on education spill over into other geographic regions. States and larger urban areas seem better able to capture the benefits of more education, probably because their labor markets are more diverse. Higher education levels in small, semi-urban counties did not lead to increased employment growth.

While education had a positive effect on employment growth in state and large urban areas in the study, this result must be interpreted with care. Employment growth is only part of successful economic growth. The quality of jobs gained, in terms of wage rates, job security, and so forth, should also be figured into returns to public spending on schools. Neither do the results imply that spending more on schools guarantees an improved rate of employment growth. More spending will improve job growth if and only if more money results in better schools, a higher level of educational attainment, and a higher quality of human capital to enhance a state's economic attractiveness (Policy Forum, 3-4).

Trends—Summary

Let's catch our breath and summarize trends, some explicit from the foregoing, but logical, meaningful, and patterning across rural America, the Northeast Region, and Pennsylvania. Greatest changes seem to occur on a three- to five-year pattern and are impacting rural areas (Schmidt, 88). The economic competitiveness of rural areas is diminishing. Rural communities are dependent upon too few sources of income. Agriculture is decoupled from rural life. Two percent of our population lives on farms and only one in five American workers is aligned with agriculture. Service demands on local governments and community organizations are growing while attendant resources are diminishing. Rural families and communities are having difficulty adjusting to the impact of political, economic, and social changes on rural life. The quality and diversity of the natural resource base is critical to revitalizing rural communities. Skilled and dedicated persons in community leadership roles is crucial to assuring rural America will survive at an acceptable level of living (RRA: Program Ideas, 88).

These aspects are significant for the rural Northeast and Pennsylvania when one considers increasing foreign ownership takeover of business and industry, our increasingly aging population, the center of political dominance is moving south and west as the population numbers shift in those directions, the need to balance labor shortages and surpluses, and that small businesses

are experiencing the largest growth of any sector of the business community (Jones, 88). One last factor to consider before we explore some "what are you going to do about these trends?" Our nation and state are experiencing a significant increase in the incumbent, full-time professional legislators. About 95 percent of the incumbent legislators are reelected if they choose to rerun. Thus, communities have a long-term opportunity to exert leverage upon the politician as more and more the latter's livelihood is dependent upon reelection.

What are the Policy Formulation Options?

Brown (1987b, 6-7) again provides a succinct description of the policy alternatives. He writes:

Until a decade or two ago, rural policy and farm policy could often be considered synonymous. But such a congruency is no longer defensible. The farm population now makes up only 9 percent of the rural U.S. population, and farmers and farm workers make up only 8 percent of the workforce in rural areas. Other economic influences besides those related to farming now exert more important effects on the rural economy. In addition, the rural economy is no longer insulated from national and global economies but has become an integral part of them. As a result, national rural policy will encompass a variety of policy elements. Major contributions to a rural policy stem from four policy arenas: macroeconomic policy, territorial policy, sectoral policy, and human resource development policy.

Macro Policy. The rural economy is now an integral part of the national and global economies. Rural employment is slightly more sensitive to changes in macro policies than is urban employment. These differences are especially pronounced in the nonmetro Northeast and South because of their relatively greater reliance on manufacturing...Rural areas have a major stake in macro policies that promote rapid rates of real economic growth. Such policies are likely to reduce economic stress accompanying structural adjustment in rural areas.

Sectoral Policy. Sectoral policy regulates the performance of individual industries or focuses on redressing industrial decline...These programs are seen as a strategy to restore America's competitive position. Because current rural stress results primarily from adjustments in agriculture, mining, energy, and manufacturing, sector-specific economic policies are an option to consider. At the same time, such policies have the potential to become primarily protectionist, thus inhibiting adaptation and change in rural economies.

Territorial Policy. National rural development policy has usually focused on strategies to narrow the differences in levels of economic

activity, growth, and rates of return between rural and urban areas. Federal programs aimed at rural economic development have concentrated on public infrastructure, attempting to increase local comparative advantage and encourage local job creation. Current widespread rural stress results from a combination of national and international factors, which may significantly reduce the efficiency and feasibility of such place-specific policy.

Human Resource Policy. Rural residents continue to suffer from an educational disadvantage with urban residents. Rural southerners are the most disadvantaged in this regard. Human resource problems stemming from rural areas affect urban areas, too, because many rural youth will spend their working lives in urban areas. Industrial and occupational restructuring now occurring in the rural economy is displacing many rural workers, putting a premium on their learning new job skills. Human resource policies, to prepare people to enter the labor force and equip them for occupational changes if they are displaced, are central to ameliorating rural economic stress.

Whichever policy or combination of policies one chooses, the individual (community) must keep in mind that the level of analyses is extremely important. Remember, 26 percent of the total population--50 to 60 million persons--reside in rural areas. All of these figures and trends are interesting but relative useless for a local librarian to use for formulating service area policies. Let me borrow one approach a colleague finds useful. Schmidt (88) suggests: (1) determining the total population of your service area; (2) finding the total land area; (3) calculating the population density--the population distribution over land area; (4) analyzing the changes in the population profile; and (5) "targeting" your services by tracking your clientele--computerize zip codes, sex, age, type of information sought, and so on. I would add: analyze the economic situation, the potential for diversity and growth, and do the residents want to change. To carry out such a task will involve: (1) multi-disciplinary team efforts. New coalitions with new and existing clientele and agencies are essential if efforts are to be accurately redirected; (2) Personnel competencies of professionals and volunteers must be continually upgraded by planned orientation, in-service education, and motivation; (3) structural changes will be necessary--reallocation of personnel and holdings, and gaining additional resources as necessary; (4) establish and maintain (or access) appropriate research and other data bases--for example the Rural Informational

Center, National Agricultural Library; (5) Review and target communication strategies to accurately project your services crucial to an informed, dedicated, and skilled community leadership; and (6) Use the first five efforts to develop program strategies.

Summary

As stated at the outset, I have outlined some changing dimensions and trends in rural America, laid out four policy options—which can be adapted and applied to a service area vs. a nation if you do as Schmidt suggest, and provided an approach to and strategy for implementing quality library service to your area. As a colleague and I concluded in our paper presented at the 50 Years of Library Service at Clarion University of Pennsylvania: We are sure you can think of all kinds of ways in which rural libraries can meet the challenges of rural environments—from people challenges—provision of leadership—to community challenges. In fact, we would argue that the future of rural libraries and the critical role for them in rural communities despite changing or nonchanging dimensions and trends in rural areas are limited only by the lack of creativity, vision, and leadership abilities in people like you and us. Conversely, the large amounts of these attributes available at this conference will provide a continuing and solid base for library service in the present, and for the future, as it has done in the past. God speed you on this essential and enormous task (Heasley and Price, 16).

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