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Subject: 21st Century Communications Skills

Communications skills in which undergraduate students in agricultural journalism/communications need to be most proficient.

I think the art of simple writing, communicating in an easily understood fashion, even in story-telling ways is still in vogue and important in conveying ideas. I was visiting with an MD last evening. He commented that he and his colleagues take turns reading medical journals and sharing the information in easily understood language. Whether it's via YouTube, or blog, radio, television, the pages of a periodical, or a learned paper, it's desirable to keep the attention and interest of the observer-reader whenever possible.

Particular agricultural areas, if any, in which they need more schooling.

I think there is a need for a greater understanding of some of the basic laws-rules of economics. They apply in so many ways, from crop and livestock production to trade policy and international relations.

Whether they need to be educated in communications theory and research.

Only if they are going on to advanced degrees or readership or other types of research. Maybe a little dab wouldn't hurt anything. I used to say that "If you award a PhD to a journalist, you've ruined her/him for useful work--he/she will want to study and examine writing, rather than writing." Since then, I've been disabused of that thinking, of course.