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THE EDUCATIONAL EXTENSION PROGRAM OF
THE ILLINOIS STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

By
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THE EDUCATIONAL EXTENSION PROGRAM OF THE ILLINOIS STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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The overall objective of the Educational Extension Program of the Illinois State Geological Survey is to bridge the gap between the geologist and the general public, and to make the fruits of the science available to the layman according to his particular needs and desires. Geology may be approached through the layman's wish to understand and to interpret a little more of the things of nature—to expand his horizon. Or he may come to the science through a need for assistance in solving some economic problem. Or he may be drawn to look more deeply into geology through a civic-minded interest in, or concern with public questions, such as mineral conservation or mineral stockpiling.

Educational Extension in geology has a two fold purpose. There is the more immediate one of contributing to the particular individual's intellectual pleasure or material need. But even more fundamental in a democracy, where every voter is a policy-maker, is the necessity for the average citizen to be fully aware of the basic role that mineral resources and their proper utilization play in our social and economic system and in our position as a world power. The local corollary to this broader concept is the defining of the position that the particular state plays in relation to the national and international mineral picture, and, in the present instance, the part that the State Geological Survey plays in its relation to Illinois' mineral industry.

PROGRAM

The Educational Extension Division of the Illinois State Geological Survey contacts the public through a number of channels, including non-technical publications, collections of geological material, lectures, exhibits, public field trips, correspondence involving identification and information, and through the press. Closely dovetailed with this general program, is one especially designed to assist the teachers of the State in the geological science.

To carry out this program, the Survey at present employs two full-time and two part-time employees, supported of course, by the staff and facilities of the Survey as a whole.

EDUCATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Although most of the Survey's publications are of a technical character, many of the bulletins dealing with the areal and economic geology of specific districts include sufficient general material on

fundamental concepts to be adaptable to the lay reader, particularly to the high school teacher. As an example, J Harlen Bretz's "Geology of the Chicago Region" may be cited. In addition, there has been set up a separate series of educational bulletins, abundantly illustrated and simply written. To date, three of these have been issued and one, entitled, "Typical Rocks and Minerals in Illinois," has been reprinted a number of times. Furthermore, among the Survey's "Circulars" are pamphlets characterized by an extremely simple style and designed primarily to be broadcast at public fairs and among primary school children. Others in this series are in essence reports of progress to the general public. An example of the first is Circular 124, "What About Our Minerals?" and of the second, Circular 126, "Operation of the Illinois State Geological Survey." The series of popular publications on geology is augmented from time to time as a result of the cooperative efforts of other State organizations. For example, a small pamphlet, "The New Oil Fields of Southern Illinois," was written and illustrated by the Survey, published by the State Chamber of Commerce, and distributed by both organizations. A spontaneous demand from the public for popular publications continues to come at an accelerated rate. The Survey receives numerous requests for publications on the physiography and on the general geology of the State, for handbooks to assist mineral and fossil collectors, for field trip guidebooks, and for material on mineral conservation. It is attempting to satisfy this demand for such publications to the extent that staff and time permit.

SERVICE TO THE SCHOOLS

Many a life interest has been awakened in high school. The selection of courses by college freshmen may be a hit-or-miss affair or it may be guided, in part at least, by an early interest in some subject to which the student has already been happily introduced. Unfortunately, geology has not been widely taught in our high schools. Accordingly, the study of geology is neglected by many, for whom it remains one of those semi-popular, semi-mysterious things it "would be nice to know more about." We believe that the educational objectives of us all can be benefited by stimulating an interest in fundamental subjects like geology among the teachers of our secondary schools. The arousing and fostering of this interest in the teaching of geology is a major objective of the Educational Extension Program of the Survey.

Rock and Mineral Study Sets

One important phase of this program is the preparation of sets of rocks, minerals, and fossils typical of Illinois. All the sets are supplied with printed labels giving the most essential information about each

item. These sets are not loaned, but given to schools and other organizations for only the cost of mailing charges. The response to the service has been most gratifying. In the past year, for example, more than 650 sets of 35 specimens each have been distributed to schools, scout troops, nature clubs, and other organizations. Many cordial letters of appreciation have been received from teachers and pupils.

Field Trips for Teachers

To contact high school science teachers more directly the Survey annually conducts a series of six field trips. These trips are carefully scouted, and mimeographed itineraries are prepared in advance. The localities are chosen in such a manner that no section of the State is remote from a field trip center; selection is made, not so much on a basis of the most spectacular points of interest, but rather for the purpose of illustrating that geology is universal and accessible to every high school teacher, regardless of the geographical location of the school. In early fall, advance publicity is sent to each high school, as well as to all persons having previously indicated an interest in the trips. Itineraries and maps are distributed at the beginning of the trip, which is generally confined to a period of about six hours, to a minimum number of stops, and to a limited geographic area. No fee is charged, as participants supply their own picnic lunches and transportation.

EXHIBITS

An effective means of contacting wide sections of the general public is through exhibits. Last year the Survey prepared displays in connection with the meeting of the Geological Society of America in Chicago and participated in the Old King Coal Cavalcade, at West Frankfort, in the heart of the Southern Illinois coal district. For the past two summer seasons, an attractive exhibit highlighting the applied research activities of the Survey has been presented at the State Fair and at numbers of county fairs. These procedures have proved an excellent means of contacting the general public over a wide area, and thereby appreciably furthering our Educational Extension Program.

PUBLIC LECTURES

Each year the staff of the Survey gives a limited number of lectures to schools, Rotary Clubs, and other civic groups, and also is called upon to assist in special summer courses in conservation for school teachers. It is a conscious policy of the Survey not to solicit lecturing opportunities, but merely to respond to spontaneous requests to the extent that it is able. In this way, geology may be popularized without the public's coming to feel that we have something we are trying to

sell or propagandize. The Survey's policy on radio broadcasting follows the same line as that relative to personal lecture appearances.

PRESS PUBLICITY


The Educational Extension Division channels the news releases issued by the Survey, and prepares many of them. News releases fall into several categories: stories for local papers in the Champaign-Urbana area, stories for state-wide release through publicity channels of the State administration, special stories for large newspapers, and articles for trade journals and periodicals. Because of the nature of the material, and of the difficulty newspapers have in maintaining scientific accuracy, very little news is issued directly to interviewers or reporters; almost all stories go out as written releases issued and checked by the Survey.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A program for securing high-quality photographs illustrating the geology, the mineral resources, and the operations of the Survey in Illinois is being carried on under the direction of the Educational Extension Division. Such a photographic library is extremely useful for purposes of press publicity, for illustrating the more popular publications of the Survey, for exhibits, and for the preparation of lantern slides. In addition the Survey has prepared one motion picture film on the oil industry. Under the existing setup, the Survey does not deem it expedient to institute a lantern slide or motion picture loan service inasmuch as this would require a very considerable addition of clerical and photographic personnel.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Educational Extension policy of the Survey is oriented toward meeting popular demand for information on natural science, including the desire of public school teachers to create a more enlightened citizenship. It is, in fact, merely attempting to meet the public half way in their constantly rising demand for geological popularization.



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