

Nebraska Educational Television Spreads Over Entire State



Checking overall lighting effects on the set for YOUR UNICAMERAL is Dick DePriest (above). In the second picture Gov. Norbert Tiemann (sitting) and George S. Round discuss points they

want to make on Nebraska legislation. Douglas Atkins (below) sits at the master control and watches the set as the show is relayed to all of the Nebraska Education Television stations.

By Richard Crees
NU School of Journalism
 Imagine an auditorium filled with 200 people. Now take this group and multiply its size by perhaps 50 and you have a rough estimate of the number of persons who view instructional programs on Nebraska Educational Television.

Like the invisible circular waves emitted by the television transmitters, programs on the Nebraska Educational Television Network (ETV) radiate across the state from their origin at studios in Lincoln and Omaha.

In addition to stations KUON-TV, Channel 12 in Lincoln and KYNE-TV, Channel 26 in Omaha, the Nebraska network also has stations at Lexington (KLNE-TV, Channel 3), North Platte (KPNE-TV, Channel 9), and Alliance (KTNE, Channel 13), with stations under construction at Bassett and Norfolk.

According to the Carnegie Commission survey of station capital outlay, operating costs and sources of income, the average ETV station spends about \$360,000 annually.

Financed by both private grants and government appropriations, Nebraska ETV stations offer cultural, informational and children's programs in addition to instructional material.

KUON is First

According to Edward F. Vitzthum, Nebraska ETV information director, the story of Nebraska's education television network began Nov. 1, 1954, the day KUON-TV, the University of Nebraska television station, began broadcast operations.

Originally the station was a commercial one owned by Cornhusker Broadcasting, which also owns KOLN-TV in Lincoln. At that time KUON was assigned to Channel 18.

In 1954 John Fetzer, president of Cornhusker Broadcasting, proposed that Channel 18 be turned over to a trusteeship which would operate it on a non-commercial basis in connection with the University of Nebraska, according to Vitzthum.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved the move and assigned the new educational station the call letters KUON-TV and changed the channel designation to Channel 12.

During the early years of operation, KUON used equipment of KOLN-TV until adequate studios could be built on the University campus, Vitzthum continued.

KUON-TV was helped to its feet by an agreement in July, 1956, between the Fund for Adult Education and the University Regents which provided KUON with a \$100,000 grant for purchase of television equipment.

Signal Extended

In those early years, KUON also had agreements with three other commercial stations in Nebraska to extend the station's signal beyond the Channel 12 radius, Vitzthum said.

According to Miss Frances E. Buell of Lincoln, a former teacher on KUON-TV during the 1959-60 school year, her course in plane geometry went out to classes in the three Lincoln high schools and to other schools in the Channel 12 radius.

"The summer before the show went on the air, I met with some of the teachers whose classes would use the television program as a supplement to regular classroom work. We planned a lesson and exam schedule for the whole school year," Miss Buell recalled.

At the suggestion of the 1961 Nebraska Legislature, Gov. Frank B. Morrison appointed a Nebraska State Committee on Educational Television to study the feasibility of a state wide ETV network.

On recommendations of this group the 1963 Legislature enacted two bills concerning ETV. One appropriated funds for construction of the program originating studios in Lincoln and Omaha and the other set up a 13-member Nebraska Educational Television Commission.

Licenses

The Commission licensed all network stations in the expected seven-station hookup except for KUON-TV, which is licensed to the University of Nebraska Regents. Educational television stations are subject to the licensing and rule requirements as commercial stations.

Network operations began Jan. 18, 1965, with completion of KUON's 874-foot tower at Mead, midway between the two originating studios in Lincoln and Omaha.

The 1965 Nebraska Legislature expanded the Nebraska Educational Television Commission to 17 members and provided construction funds for completion of the Nebraska ETV network in the 1965-67 biennium.

In corporate meetings the program areas, schedule and cost to member schools is determined by majority vote in each council. Membership in the councils is open to all public and private schools who want to participate upon payment of a membership fee based on total enrollment in the school district.

Programs are prepared by the classroom teachers working with the TV teacher. Programs emphasize systematic treatment of material and the TV lesson as supplementary to regular class work. Some special programs are contracted to private groups.

Ninety Hours

Most Nebraska ETV stations present about 90 hours of programs weekly. Daytime hours usually are filled with 15-minute and half hour educational programs.

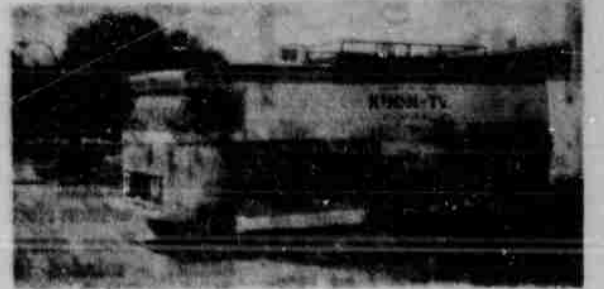
Evening on ETV is devoted to cultural and informational programs. The Nebraska include a documentary dealing with domestic and international issues and N.E.T. supplements local stations and Nebraska network products with five hours of national programming weekly.

Programs provided by N.E.T. Journal, a documentary dealing with domestic and international issues and N.E.T. Playhouse, a drama series. Besides these, N.E.T. also offers viewers programs obtained from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) through a mutual exchange agreement.

Through the Educational Television Stations Programming Service, ETV stations also receive non-instructional programs produced by ETV stations in other states.

Besides regular instructional programs, Nebraska ETV offers in-service telecasts designed to keep teachers abreast of newest teaching methods and developments.

Operating from studios at 12th and R Streets in Lincoln, KUON-TV, the network's nucleus, is one of the best equipped ETV stations in the nation, according to Vitzthum. With five cameras, eight videotape recorders and a three-camera mobile unit, the station is able to cover such special features as the Nebraska Centennial.

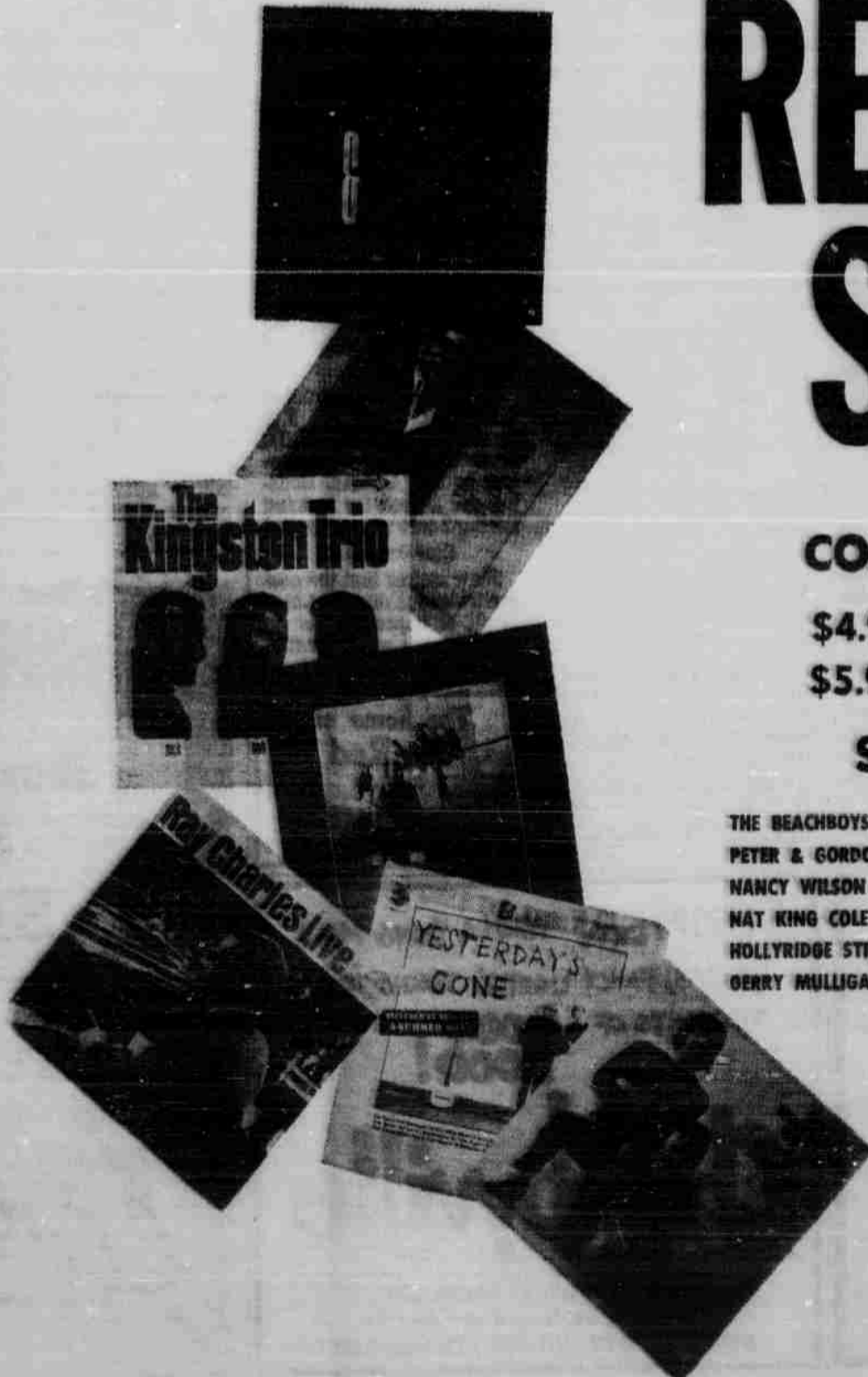


The KUON mobile unit (above) transports camera equipment to various locations. A piano tuner (middle) tunes the piano in an empty set in preparation for the program MASTERS OF THE KEYBOARD. Below, Wes Gripps is dubbing video tapes off a master tape for future use.

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