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Meet the Staff: Sandra Clarke

Sandra Clarke joined CARD as communications manager in November. Her professional background includes seven years as communications manager at the American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA), where she was technical editor of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics and managing editor of Choices—The Magazine of Food, Farm, and Resource Issues. Before that, she worked in communications and public affairs for the City of Cottonwood, Arizona, and she edited a specialty art magazine for Heartland Communications in Fort Dodge. She's a 1987 Iowa State journalism and communications graduate.

Sandy oversaw the AAEA’s transition to desktop publishing in early 1994, and she says that publishing is a never-ending exercise in adapting to new media and new technologies. “Desktop publishing was a big deal in the eighties and early nineties. That was just a drop in the bucket compared to what the internet means to publishing.”

Most of CARD’s research and information is now conveyed through the portal of the organization’s website (www.card.iastate.edu). But the internet, according to Sandy, creates as many challenges as it does opportunities.

“For instance, I ask myself how we can fight through the information overload or bring clarity to an issue when there is so much information out there competing for attention in the public realm. Luckily, this organization has a lot of history and a solid reputation that keeps us in the forefront when it comes to communicating with policymakers and agricultural leaders.”

Her experience with the American Journal of Agricultural Economics and Choices magazine has helped Sandy to understand the publishing process from the other side of the desk, which means she has a unique vantage point in assisting faculty and researchers as they prepare working papers for peer review or journal submission.

“I had already worked with several faculty members here on journal or magazine articles, so I knew what to expect in terms of the papers and reports that are part of CARD’s publication series. I enjoy helping scholars to improve their papers and articles. And beyond the day-to-day publishing, I work to create connections and get CARD analysis and findings into the hands of those who are making the decisions or framing the debates in agricultural policy.”

Sandy is managing editor of the Iowa Ag Review, one of CARD’s efforts to present its news and information to interested readers. Other outreach vehicles include CARD websites, and the annual Agricultural Forum, which Sandy helps to plan.

“I learned a lot, working on my first Forum. I like the way that CARD tries to facilitate a broad-based discussion of breaking issues. I think it’s unique, the many voices and perspectives that come together at a CARD Forum. Public discourse is healthy, and there seems to be no shortage of contentious questions in agricultural policy.”

Outside of the office, Sandy can often be found exploring the streets and trails of Ames with her golden retriever. She also likes to cook, especially to try new dishes, but admits she enjoys eating out “way too often.” She seeks out local live music, including music festivals, which often figure prominently in her summer weekend plans. She and her husband Al, who teaches English at ISU, like to travel and hike on occasion, particularly in the high desert of the Southwest.◆