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LARRY W. DRAPER

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Public Affairs Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in 1972 in response to a long-felt need for channeling and coordinating information about the growing Church throughout the world. The department handles news-media relations, hosts visiting dignitaries, and maintains liaison with volunteer public communications representatives called to serve in Stake and Mission. Originally, the department produced radio and television public service announcements and exhibits for temple square and other visitor centers, but these functions were later transferred to the Missionary Department of the Church. In 1983, the department's name was expanded to Public Communications/Special Affairs, and it merged with the government and community relations office.

Forerunners to the department were the Church Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee, organized in 1935 with recently returned missionary Gordon B. Hinckley (later an apostle and counselor in the FIRST PRESIDENCY) as its director, and the Church Information Service, organized in 1957 with Theodore Cannon as director. Wendell J. Ashton was the first managing director of the Public Communications Department. Subsequent managing directors have been Heber G. Wolsey (1978–1983), Richard P. Lindsey (1983–1989), and Bruce L. Olsen (1989–).

Divisions in the department include Media Relations; National News Placement; Community Relations; Field Publications Liaison; Hosting; and Administration. Area offices with full-time directors are situated in Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; Toronto; London; Paris; Frankfurt; São Paulo; and Sydney. The headquarters staff in Salt Lake City coordinates the efforts of local public communications directors, designated to serve in the stakes, regions, and areas.

The department is responsible to, and counsels with, the Church's Special Affairs Committee, comprised of members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. It maintains ongoing contacts with news media at local, national, and international levels. The staff prepares and distributes both print and electronic news and feature releases about the Church, its programs, events, and activities. Public-affairs radio and television programs are produced and distributed for the use of the media and community organizations; queries from the media and the public are answered; and news media representatives are hosted. Designated spokespersons convey Church policy statements on pertinent issues to the public via the media. Designated staff members monitor legislative issues affecting the Church, its operations, and its members, and keep the leaders of the Church apprised of such developments. In addition, designated members of the staff join with representatives of other Churches and national organizations committed to combat such things as pornography, alcohol abuse, gambling, and various other social problems.

ARCH L. MADSEN

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Many public relations programs, activities, and services exist in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to support its public ministry. These efforts are coordinated by the Church Public Affairs Department and are grounded in Christ's instruction to his disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). This instruction was repeated in revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 1:4–5; 49:11–14; 71:1–2, 84:62).

Making Christ's gospel known throughout the world has been central to the Church's purpose from the beginning. Sharing the gospel requires Church members to reach out to others (see JOINING THE CHURCH; MISSION; TOLERANCE). Various approaches have been used over the years to attract interest and to introduce and explain the Church, its people, and their beliefs. Now, as at first, personal communication and distribution of