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# Information in Everyday Life: Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Clubs as Sponsors of Literacy, 1900–1920

*Ciaran B. Trace*

Building on prior research into the 4-H movement, the role of the agricultural extension service, and rural life and school reform in the United States in the early twentieth century, this article examines the history of the 4-H movement during the Progressive Era, with a particular focus on uncovering the role that records and recordkeeping played in the clubs for rural girls and boys. The research documents the activities and events within the early 4-H movement where written literacy had a role, analyzes the idea of the 4-H movement as an agent and a sponsor of written literacy, and uncovers the view of the world that the 4-H movement was imparting through its early record books. In doing so, the article documents some of the key exogenous and endogenous forces at play during the Progressive Era that had an impact on children's everyday information creation practices.

4-H (Head, Heart, Hands, and Health) is a volunteer and youth movement that has its origins in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Initially begun as Junior Extension, Girls' Home Demonstration, and Boys' and Girls' Clubs, which sought to connect rural youth with hands-on agricultural education, 4-H has developed into a community for young people to learn citizenship, leadership, and life skills.<sup>2</sup> Administered today by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in concert with the Cooperative Extension Service of the land-grant colleges, 4-H is said to be the largest out-of-school program in the United States, with a membership of between 6.5 and 7 million young people, a staff of over 3,500, and over half a million volunteers.<sup>3</sup> An iconic part of 4-H club work today is the green "record

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book” through which members document their growth and development as 4-H members and learn the important life skill of keeping good records.

Attempts have been made to link the birth of the 4-H movement to a particular time and place, whether that is the first federally sponsored corn-growing contest in Mississippi in 1907 or the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. However, it has been argued that the 4-H movement evolved within a broader social context, a context shaped by both macro- and microforces. At the macrolevel, the beginnings of 4-H have been linked to the larger social, economic, and political forces in play during the Progressive Era. Such forces included a belief within the educational community that schools in rural communities were not equipping students for life on the farm; the growth of an educational philosophy, influenced by John Dewey, that sought to apply scholarship to the practical arts (including agriculture and homemaking); an effort on the part of colleges of agriculture to bring new techniques and methods to farm communities; a desire from rural communities to raise their standard of living; and a worry about the perceived migration of rural youths from the country to the city. At the microlevel, the roots of 4-H have been traced to the efforts of individuals to improve the life of rural girls and boys.<sup>4</sup>

Building on prior research into the 4-H movement, the role of the agricultural extension service, and rural life and school reform in the United States, this article examines the beginnings of the 4-H movement during the Progressive Era, with a particular focus on uncovering the role that records and recordkeeping played in the clubs for rural girls and boys that emerged during the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, the article documents some of the key exogenous and endogenous forces at play during the Progressive Era that had an impact on children’s everyday information creation. This article begins by looking at the external contexts that shaped the 4-H movement, accompanied by an overview of the history of 4-H between 1900 and 1920. The second half of the article focuses on the microperspective, documenting the particular activities, events, and associated literacy practices in the contests and clubs for rural girls and boys that formed part of the early 4-H movement. A particular emphasis is placed on documenting and examining the 4-H record book as a form of written literacy, a textual artifact still in use by 4-H members today.

This study fits within two interdisciplinary research frameworks, one (new literacy studies) interested in studying literacy as a social practice, and the other (human information behavior) interested in the role

that information-bearing objects (texts that are the artifacts of written literacy) play in people's everyday lives. The framework of new literacy studies posits that the study of writing is best understood in relation to the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical practices of which it is a part.<sup>6</sup> In particular, this study draws from an analytical framework developed by Deborah Brandt that rests upon the notion that there are agents in society who act as "sponsors" of literacy, supporting or discouraging literacy learning and development as "ulterior motives in their own struggles for economic or political gain."<sup>7</sup> In viewing the 4-H movement as a sponsor of literacy, attention is paid to the interconnected social, political, and economic forces within government, agriculture, education, and business that took an interest in young people's everyday writing and recordkeeping. Within the field of information science, human information behavior (HIB) research involves the study of human behavior as it is manifested through people's relationship and interaction with information. In particular, HIB research studies how people seek, forage, organize, retrieve, or use information in both personal and professional contexts.<sup>8</sup> Of particular interest to this study is the HIB work that looks at people's information-filled activities in everyday life.<sup>9</sup> Drawing from human information behavior research, this study looks specifically at an historical example of the activity of participating in a youth development program, looking at when, where, how, and why children created information at this particular context, place, and time.<sup>10</sup>

### **External Contexts**

The Progressive Era (1900–1920) in the United States has been characterized as a period of economic, political, and social tumult, a time when policies were shaped by disparate forces, including "huge waves of immigrants, exploding central cities across the country, mass production manufacturing, growing trade unionism, and . . . the first glimpses of rural depopulation."<sup>11</sup> During the Progressive Era, every facet of American life was a "cause for reform," and in rural areas this included transformations in education, health care, production, labor, and community cooperation.<sup>12</sup> Improvement and transformation were linked to better management of land, resources, environment, and people themselves.<sup>13</sup> The notion of "progress" and an associated faith in the ability of science and technology to improve the quality of life went hand in hand with the emergence of experts. The role of experts was to articulate and translate new knowledge in the physical and social sciences to

the perceived betterment of everyday life and to organize partnerships between individuals and institutions to make reforms a reality.<sup>14</sup>

### *Agricultural Reform*

Agriculture was a predominant economic and social force in the United States from colonial times well into the nineteenth century. The rise of industrial agriculture was closely tied to the rise of extension work, which provided farmers with education in new agricultural techniques and advanced new agricultural practices in stock and crop farming. Agricultural societies (first established in the late eighteenth century) utilized publications, newsletters, and lectures as a means of acquainting their members with new agricultural improvements and of stimulating interest in agricultural reform in general.<sup>15</sup> By the early nineteenth century, local farmers' clubs had been established as centers for demonstrations and lectures on agricultural topics. Farmers' institutes emerged by 1852 with the goal of disseminating information about reliable farming practices to rural men and women through lectures, practical demonstrations, movable schools of agriculture, and the like. Patterned after teachers' institutes, farmers' institutes were supported by state agricultural organizations, including state agricultural societies, state boards of agriculture, and the experiment stations of state agricultural colleges. Farmers' institutes were also held to teach young people "how to make money in agriculture."<sup>16</sup> In particular, farmers' institutes collaborated with county superintendents of schools to get rural youth involved in farm demonstration work (in the form of production contests, net-profit contests, and exhibit contests).<sup>17</sup>

At the federal level, efforts to increase crop production and promote new agricultural research discoveries resulted in the establishment of the Bureau of Agriculture in 1862. That same year, the passage of the Agricultural College Act (the Morrill Act) brought concerns about economic productivity, professionalization, and educational reform into the realm of public higher education with the endowment of state colleges, which prioritized practical education in agriculture and the mechanical arts for the common man. The emphasis was on education for white men and, to a lesser extent, white women.<sup>18</sup> Two decades later, the Hatch Experiment Station Act (1887) handed a clear research mandate to the land-grant colleges through the funding of agricultural experiment stations. This work (which included operating research farms and distributing information to farmers about scientific agricultural methods) was facilitated by what was now the USDA through the newly formed Office of

Experiment Stations. By the turn of the twentieth century, the relationship between farmers' institutes and the agricultural colleges had led to the Office of Experiment Stations being charged with the promotion of the interests of farmers' institutes. The USDA also promoted scientific techniques to farmers through the work of its various bureaus, including the Bureau of Plant Industry, which was established in 1901. In 1903 Dr. Seaman Knapp was appointed as the head of the newly formed Office of Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work within the Bureau of Plant Industry with the goal of enrolling southern farmers as demonstrators of new agricultural methods and techniques. Three years later, the Bureau of Plant Industry established an Office of Farm Management, under the direction of William J. Spillman, in order to conduct and publicize research about farm management and economics, including research on such topics as costs of production, farm organization, and farm finance.<sup>19</sup> In 1914 the Smith-Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service, in which the land-grant colleges formally partnered with the federal government to take on responsibility for rural extension and demonstration work, with county agricultural agents being the principal points of contact with farming communities.

Agricultural literature played a key role in the growth in US agricultural productivity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, serving as a way to educate and inform farming communities. The rise of farm journals and the farm press and the dissemination of agricultural information from the USDA, agricultural societies, farmers' institutes, land-grant colleges, and the like helped to create a core agricultural literature.<sup>20</sup> While book learning was one way to bring about agricultural reform, emphasis was also placed on the doing of agricultural work, and with this idea came the need for associated writing practices and record-keeping activities.<sup>21</sup> In the earlier periods of the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, recordkeeping was already established as part of American farm life. However, lack of education, coupled with the fact that demands on farmers' time were "so heavy and so constant," meant that "few kept diaries or account books."<sup>22</sup> By 1900 farmers saw their role as that of a small businessman, using "land, labor, and capital to produce commodities for the market."<sup>23</sup> Property records, farm diaries, and farm bookkeeping accounts (including inventories, financial records, and farm cost accounts, which provided cost and profit data) therefore were part of the toolkit of the progressive farmer, and the importance of recordkeeping from a scientific and business perspective was being promoted by interested parties, including agricultural colleges, the USDA, bankers' associations, and the farm press.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Reform of Rural Schools*

At the turn of the twentieth century, children in the United States were largely being educated in district schools run by locally controlled lay boards of education. Common schools, in existence since the mid-nineteenth century, provided free public education to children in grades one through eight, but few communities had public secondary schools.<sup>25</sup> Rural schools in particular struggled under the burden of a basic curriculum (reading, writing, and arithmetic), inadequate facilities, and the one-teacher system of schooling. In the South, the doctrine of “separate but equal” created even greater inequalities for African American children, with their schools receiving less educational funding and having shorter school terms than schools for whites.<sup>26</sup> During the Progressive Era, efforts to help improve and reform rural schools in the South came largely from northern philanthropic organizations such as the Southern Education Board and the General Education Board.<sup>27</sup>

As the system of American education evolved, so too did questions about the nature and role of public education. Bound up in a myriad of political, social, and cultural concerns were viewpoints that privileged liberal education and a humanist curriculum as a source of knowledge for all versus those who believed that education should take on a more utilitarian flavor. With an emphasis on training people (including new immigrants) for jobs, the progressive education movement marked a shift away from the idea of an academic or classical liberal education to one that favored manual training, vocational education, agricultural studies, and the like.<sup>28</sup> Curriculum and learning theories moved from that of the doctrine of mental discipline (with an emphasis on training the mind through rote learning and recitation) to pedagogical and management theories that drew from the work of a diverse group of educational reformers, including those involved in movements such as child studies (G. Stanley Hall), social efficiency (John Franklin Bobbitt), and progressive education (John Dewey). Though eschewing any monolithic position, and often at odds with each other, educational theorists of the progressive movement placed an emphasis on the child as the nexus of learning, sought to bring educational needs in line with societal needs, aligned the learning that took place in school with that of everyday life, tied developments in pedagogy to scientific research, and privileged a pedagogy based on problem solving and experiential learning (learning by doing).

The idea of vocational education found a home within this panoply of agricultural and educational reforms, and thus the teaching of agriculture and home economics took further root in the school curriculum during this period. The Office of Experiment Stations of the USDA took

a leading role in this effort, with the office's director, Alfred C. True, creating a special section devoted to promoting and supporting agricultural education in rural schools. Following the publication in 1909 of the *Report of the Country Life Commission* (a commission established by President Theodore Roosevelt to look into the condition of rural farm life), states also passed legislation aimed at improving rural schooling, including the teaching of agriculture in the classroom.<sup>29</sup> If one facet of teaching agriculture in the schools was to preserve and value the agricultural way of life, to encourage rural girls and boys to "understand and appreciate the world in which they lived," then an equally pragmatic stance was concerned with improving farming methods and aligning agricultural reform with the national interest.<sup>30</sup> In carrying out reform from the ground up, it was thought easier to mold younger minds and to do so through direct teaching about agriculture and agricultural methods. The teaching of agriculture and home economics came to emphasize the project method, a method first popularized by Rufus Stimson of the Massachusetts Board of Education in the first decade of the 1900s and later refined by William Heard Kilpatrick.<sup>31</sup> Based on the idea of students applying agricultural knowledge gained in school to practical projects at home, the project method involved students taking on an applied plan of work and demonstrating knowledge through practical hands-on activities that were documented in written form.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Early Beginnings of 4-H, 1900–1920**

During the Progressive Era, boys' and girls' agricultural clubs arose from a partnership between private organizations, public institutions (such as rural schools and farmers' institutes), and government-sponsored agricultural research and educational programs (such as the agricultural experiment stations and the Cooperative Extension Service). Statewide, regional, and local initiatives for rural youths that foreshadowed the formation of 4-H clubs took place via two main venues: contests relating to agriculture and home culture, and early programs of work for girls and boys. Contests for boys and girls relating to agriculture and home culture date back to the nineteenth century and usually took the form of scattered state or regional initiatives supported by the farm press, farmers' institutes, and state colleges of agriculture.<sup>33</sup> The boys' and girls' agricultural clubs that sprung up at the beginning of the twentieth century, beginning in the North and West, were an outgrowth of these types of competitive contests.<sup>34</sup> School personnel initially took the lead in club work, although this work took place not as a classroom

subject but as home projects.<sup>35</sup> Clubs and club members were supported by a host of interested parties, including those who provided help in the form of expertise (farmers' institutes and colleges of agriculture), financing for the purchasing of seed and livestock (local banks), and prizes (merchants and fair associations).

A number of individuals in particular have been singled out as pioneers of early club work for rural youths. One of them was Albert B. Graham, superintendent of schools in Springfield township in Clark County, Ohio. It was Graham's interest in bringing agriculture into the classroom through applied education that led to his founding of a boys' and girls' experiment club, which met for the first time on January 15, 1902. In the early days of the club, monthly meetings focused on studying soil testing and crop yields. By 1903 Graham had enlisted the help of the agricultural experiment station at Wooster and of Thomas F. Hunt, dean of agriculture at Ohio State University. L. H. Goddard, secretary of the Agricultural Student Union at Ohio State University, supplied Graham with seed and agreed to supervise soil-testing activities. Soon Graham added a vegetable gardening project and a flower garden activity (mainly for girls). By the end of 1903, these agricultural clubs had spread to nine Ohio counties. Graham's work in Ohio led to his appointment in 1905 as the first superintendent of extension at the College of Agriculture at Ohio State University. By 1906, under Graham's direction, the number of school clubs rose to sixty with an enrollment of three thousand, after which they were gradually replaced by the introduction of agriculture into the school curriculum.<sup>36</sup>

Similar efforts took place in Illinois, where Olly J. Kern, county superintendent of schools in Winnebago County, founded his own boys' experiment club on February 22, 1902.<sup>37</sup> The thirty-seven charter members of the club first met in Kern's office in Rockford and listened to talks given by Professor Shamel of the Illinois College of Agriculture and by Superintendent Fred Rankin of the Agricultural College extension work. From these offices were sent "circulars, bulletins, and literature of various kinds," the main goal being "to keep in touch with the boys, and to interest them more deeply in the beauty of country life and the worth, dignity, and scientific advancement in agriculture."<sup>38</sup> In its first year, the focus of club work was on testing seeds for vitality, surveying oats for smuts, and growing corn and sugar beets. Seed corn was provided by the local farmers' institute, and sugar beet seed was provided by the college experiment station. By September 1903 the Girls' Home Culture Club had been organized with a focus on projects such as needlework and bread making.<sup>39</sup>

Other so-called valiant pioneers during this period include Cap E. Miller, Jessie Field, Oscar H. Benson of Iowa (Field and Benson are credited with designing the three-leaf clover symbol that formed the basis of the four-leaf clover design in use by 4-H members today), George Claude Adams of Georgia, J. F. Hetler of North Dakota, E. C. Bishop of Nebraska, and Louis R. Alderman of Oregon.<sup>40</sup> While these early club activities had no direct connection to the federal government, this changed in 1907, when the first federally sponsored corn club was organized in Mississippi by William Hall Smith, superintendent of schools in Holmes County.<sup>41</sup> The club was organized as part of the larger extension work of the USDA and, in particular, the farm demonstration work in the southern states (work that involved tackling the spread of the boll weevil and changing the one-crop agricultural system).<sup>42</sup> Boys were to supplement and extend the work of the adult demonstrators, and although club work was done in cooperation with the public schools, the goal was not about teaching agriculture in the classroom but about instructing boys in “practical agriculture on the farm.”<sup>43</sup> Smith’s work in Mississippi was the “seed that was to grow into a South-wide system of Federal-State College cooperation in the development of boys’ and girls’” club work. By the end of 1907, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, special agent in charge of farmers’ cooperative demonstration work of the Bureau of Plant Industry, had appointed Smith a collaborator of the USDA, with Smith becoming the “first man to be federally named to do club work with rural boys and girls.”<sup>44</sup>

Taking cues from the work being done in Mississippi, corn contests and clubs soon spread to Texas and Louisiana. By the end of 1908, the growth of these clubs in the South led Knapp to appoint Oscar B. Martin, state superintendent of education in South Carolina, as a special agent in the Bureau of Plant Industry with the “specific duty of developing club work.” Martin appointed state club leaders (including club leaders in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and Arkansas), and these club leaders worked under the joint direction of the state agricultural college in partnership with the Bureau of Plant Industry.<sup>45</sup>

As boys’ clubs took hold throughout the South and expanded to include projects other than corn growing, they were soon joined by programs for girls. If boys’ corn-growing clubs had been established to try to bring about reform in farming practice through crop diversification, better yields per acre, and creating a home-grown meat supply for rural farmers in the South, then girls’ clubs (initially, canning and poultry clubs) were established to increase family income and give greater financial independence to girls.<sup>46</sup> These girls’ clubs were federally

sponsored, with financing initially provided by the General Education Board. In 1909 and 1910 garden and canning clubs for girls were organized in South Carolina (under the direction of Marie S. Cromer), Virginia (under the direction of Ella G. Agnew), Tennessee (under the direction of Virginia Moore), and Mississippi (under the direction of Susie Powell).<sup>47</sup> Agnew, Cromer, Moore, and Powell were all made agents or field representatives of the USDA, the first women to be appointed to such a role. As the early boys' and girls' clubs throughout the South were segregated, a separate system evolved for African Americans in the early 1900s, with African American demonstration agents taking the lead in club work. In 1906, under pressure from the General Education Board, Seaman Knapp hired two African American demonstration agents for the southern states to instruct rural communities in modern scientific agricultural practices. Thomas Monroe Campbell operated from the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and James B. Pierce worked out of the Hampton Institute in Virginia.<sup>48</sup> In 1912 African American home demonstration agents Annie Peters Hunter and Mattie Holmes were appointed to work in Virginia and Oklahoma.<sup>49</sup>

In 1912 boys' and girls' club work in the southern states continued to be supervised by the Office of Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work of the Bureau of Plant Industry, while boys' and girls' club work was being developed in the northern and western states by the Office of Farm Management of the Bureau of Plant Industry. With the USDA in charge, a degree of formality and standardization was built into the operational structure of all boys' and girls' clubs. General club requirements were the same for all states, and the administration of club work through the two offices was adapted to meet local conditions.<sup>50</sup> Club membership was generally open to girls and boys aged ten to eighteen. Clubs had officers as well as a constitution and bylaws that set out how meetings should be conducted and how the program of work for the year was to proceed. The basis for club work was an economic project (e.g., field, farm, fruit, and garden projects; home demonstration, including home canning, projects; and animal husbandry projects) that club members carried out at home. Club members were required to attend local and county meetings; take part in field and community demonstrations, exhibitions, and achievement days; and keep records of their work, including observations, costs, receipts, and verification.<sup>51</sup> Members also took part in county, district, and state championships for which prizes and premiums were on offer. A formal method of reporting was enacted to share information among partners at the local, state, and federal levels. The secretary of a local club was required to send

yearly enrollment information, as well as monthly club reports and photographs of club work, to the state agent in charge of club work to be forwarded to the USDA.<sup>52</sup> Such information helped in the distribution of special instructions and bulletins to club members, as well as facilitating the USDA's own internal reporting requirements.

The clubs relied on a system of federal, state, and local (county) cooperation. Typically, in southern club work, in addition to state leaders from the Bureau of Plant Industry and the state agricultural colleges, county leadership for club work was provided by the county superintendent of schools and the county agent in charge of field studies and demonstrations. County leaders, in turn, could appoint a township leader, who in turn could appoint a teacher or other leader in each school district to organize the club, enroll members, supervise work, and offer encouragement and instruction.<sup>53</sup> In the northern, central, and western states, state cooperative agents were in charge of club work with the assistance of collaborators. Unlike the southern states, an initial lack of funds made it difficult to meet the demand for boys' and girls' club work. Help in organizing and supervising club work was therefore sought from schoolteachers, state superintendents of public instruction, federated women's clubs, chambers of commerce, and Granges.<sup>54</sup>

By 1914, with the Smith-Lever Act stipulating that 25 percent of each state's extension service budget be allocated for girls' and boys' clubs, the extension service became the formal base for a nationwide system of boys' and girls' agricultural clubs.<sup>55</sup> Following the passage of the act, a reorganization in the USDA resulted in the extension activities of the Office of Experiment Stations and the Bureau of Plant Industry being consolidated into a States Relations Service, including the Office of Extension Work in the South (with O. B. Martin and I. W. Hill in charge of club work), and the Office of Extension Work in the North and West (with O. H. Benson in charge of club work).<sup>56</sup> The reorganized Office of Extension Work in the South included distinct lines for extension work with boys' and girls' agricultural clubs.<sup>57</sup> These clubs continued to be segregated, with clubs for African Americans given distinct names ("farm makers' clubs" for boys and "home makers' clubs" for girls) to distinguish them from agricultural clubs for white boys and girls.<sup>58</sup>

During World War I, club enrollment increased sharply, with membership growing from 169,000 in 1916 to over 500,000 by 1918.<sup>59</sup> With its role in aiding the war effort through increased food production, the extension service received emergency funds to expand the number of paid county club agents, and club work expanded outside of rural communities to encompass urban centers.<sup>60</sup> A particular focus was placed on

expanding canning and food preservation projects, and home economics teacher Gertrude Warren was brought in by the USDA to organize the program.<sup>61</sup> After the war, with the threat of declining enrollments and reduced funding, the work to build a strong foundation for boys' and girls' club work began again in earnest. In 1919 northern and western club leaders and federal extension staff met in Kansas City, Missouri, to plan long-range objectives and to establish more formal guidelines for club work. Key discussions at the meeting centered on the need to improve local organization, the effects of the reorienting of program control from the schools to leaders in the local farming community, and issues to do with recordkeeping and report forms.<sup>62</sup>

### **Recordkeeping and the 4-H**

Report blanks (also called reports, records, record blanks, or record books) had their origins in the project method, championed by progressive educators, and in the early-twentieth-century extension practices of the USDA. In particular, recordkeeping was an integral part of agricultural extension work (both for extension workers and for farmers), with recordkeeping being encouraged by the USDA through its experiment station, cooperative demonstration, and farm management work. Staff from the experiment stations furnished farmers with report blanks in order to learn which new agricultural methods were securing the best results and to secure data about farming practices that would help in the publication of future extension bulletins.<sup>63</sup> In the sphere of cooperative demonstration work, farm demonstrators were given instructions on how to keep records and had to make weekly written reports so that cooperative demonstration agents could keep track of their progress.<sup>64</sup> In the sphere of cost accounting, the Office of Farm Management provided blank forms, diaries, and instruction to farmers and then gathered and analyzed the furnished records to help farmers understand the cost of farm operations and the profitability of crops and livestock enterprises.<sup>65</sup>

The keeping of records was also adopted and standardized for extension work with young people. Recordkeeping was an integral part of club members' projects and was also interwoven into annual club exhibits, meetings, field and community demonstrations, and achievement days. Club members who had taken a loan of money to help purchase livestock or seed had to furnish a final written report of their activities to their funder (banks, business firms, chambers of commerce, and the like).<sup>66</sup> In instances where there was close cooperation between

extension workers and the school system, records also played a role in bridging school and club work. Superintendents and teachers could count club work toward school requirements, including the grading of club members' crop reports and written compositions and accepting these in lieu of the written examination component for elementary agriculture or home economics or of the other required subjects in the regular school course. The story submitted to the teacher in connection with language work or work in English was seen as the way that club members could "project the interest of club activities into the regular work of the school."<sup>67</sup>

While written report blanks and written histories (also called stories and later called "personal learning narratives") were the most prevalent types of records kept by club members, these document genres were not the only types of literacy in use.<sup>68</sup> Records were just one part of a larger landscape of literacy that existed within early agricultural clubs for youth and within the literacy practices that formed part of home and school life.<sup>69</sup> Meetings of boys' and girls' clubs were often advertised by county superintendents or commissioners of schools, and young people read about such meetings through notices in county schools and in the farm press. Local papers were also used as a way to communicate timely advice on projects and to publish the results and achievement stories of club members. As clubs took on the trappings of formal organization, literacy formats such as constitutions, bylaws, and enrollment cards helped bring an air of formality and legitimacy to club work.<sup>70</sup>

Success in club work was said to depend on implementing follow-up programs or methods to ensure that club members stayed engaged with projects.<sup>71</sup> Along with published reports, announcements, instructions in the local press, and personal visits to club members' homes, follow-up was achieved through personal letter writing between club leaders and club members. Letters were used to answer inquiries, to encourage club members "in the face of obstacles," and as a way for club leaders to "create a closer bond of association" with club members. A less personal but more far-reaching effort to share information with club members was through the use of printed materials. Over the duration of a club project, typewritten, multigraphed, mimeographed, and printed follow-up instructions (in the form of bulletins and circulars, including outlines, report blanks, and special sheets of instruction) were mailed to club members at regular and fixed intervals by the state leader in charge of club work.<sup>72</sup> Bulletins were often the most extensive documents, containing detailed information on the latest agricultural methods in order to help club members carry out particular projects.

These materials were produced not only by the state colleges of agriculture but also by the state experiment stations and the USDA.<sup>73</sup> In the Office of Extension Service, North and West, circulars were preferred over bulletins, and the office went to great lengths to devise a scheme to manage this information. A system of numbers and letters was devised to differentiate club literature based on whether the circulars related to projects or club work as a whole or whether the circulars consisted of leadership or instructional materials. The system was created to strengthen the organization, expedite the process of sending out the material when requested, make it easier for club leaders and office staff to distribute circulars to club members, and enable boys and girls to organize club circulars for easy reference in a personal or a club library.<sup>74</sup> At home, club members were instructed to keep their bulletins, farm books, and club records in a place where "they will not be molested by anyone else in the house." Members were told to keep these materials "filed away in a systematic order so that they may be found on a moment's notice."<sup>75</sup>

As part of this follow-up material, the USDA and its various extension offices, along with state agricultural colleges, worked together to furnish report forms to club members for projects as diverse as crop production (corn, cotton, peanuts, potatoes), sewing, gardening and canning (including mother-daughter home canning clubs), making and selling hackamores, and raising hogs, poultry, calves, baby beef, and sheep. An examination of boys' and girls' club records from 1913 to 1918 from Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin shows that these report forms came in various formats.<sup>76</sup> Blank report forms of approximately eight pages were in common usage, their quarto size helping to distinguish them from the other material (such as bulletins) that was mailed to club members. These reports also took the form of smaller blank booklets, daily record books, and postcards.<sup>77</sup>

As the instructions on the records themselves indicated, the report blanks and record booklets acted as a simple and convenient method for club members to keep detailed accounts of all expenses, receipts, observations, and transactions of their club work, and they provided a uniform basis for reporting the club work of counties, districts, and states to the state agent in charge of club work and to the USDA.<sup>78</sup> A member's success in club work was tied to the completion of the entire project and to filling out the report.<sup>79</sup> However, getting compliance from club members to complete their records was difficult from the outset, and solutions were sought to encourage club members to keep accurate and up-to-date records. One solution was to incorporate greater oversight,

and, in visiting club members at home, one duty of the county agent was to keep watch over the record book so that no member would fall behind in his or her account.<sup>80</sup> Solutions also included tailoring when and how club members received report forms, sending out accompanying circulars that reiterated that reports had to be filled out and barring club members from competition unless reports had been completed.<sup>81</sup> Inducements in the form of prizes were also offered to club members in an effort to get boys and girls to keep comprehensive records throughout the year and to submit their report at the end of the project.<sup>82</sup>

The fixed categories of information in the report blank required club members to draw upon their writing, drawing, and numeracy skills. This included entering basic data about the project and the conditions under which it was undertaken; entering and computing time, labor, expenses, receipts, cost, yield, and profit or loss per year; and drawing and sketching aspects of the project such as gardens or plats. Some report forms, particularly those kept for the rearing of livestock, were arranged so that information could be recorded daily or monthly. In many instances, club members also had to attest to the fact that their report was “complete and correct in every particular,” and independent witnesses had to sign the report to verify certain key information (e.g., the dimensions of a plat and yield).

A section of these reports or an associated booklet included a space for club members to provide an illustrated story of how they carried out their project work. This section included essays covering such topics as how girls or boys came to be club members, the work they undertook, how they prepared for their exhibits, who visited their exhibits and what was said, how the project reduced the cost of living for their families, and members’ future plans for their businesses. Members were encouraged to improve their stories through illustration. This was achieved through drawings, photographs of club products or activities, and original designs on the covers of the booklets.<sup>83</sup> During World War I, the ability of this youth movement to respond to national needs and concerns was demonstrated by the fact that story sections became more focused, with club members asked, for example, to write about how their project helped to increase the country’s food supply.

Club members learned how to create and keep records through direct engagement, demonstration and mentoring, and written and in-person instruction. Instruction to club members on how to keep careful records about their projects was provided by local leaders during club meetings and field demonstrations. Teachers, parents, and county agents were also used as resources to assist club members in

filling out their reports. Club members were advised to keep complete, accurate, timely, up-to-date, neat, and clean records and to submit a report no matter how small the yield.<sup>84</sup> In writing the story element of the report, club members were told to use pen and ink and to write with their best language skills, with correct paragraphing, capitalization, and punctuation.

Club members had an opportunity to display their proficiency in this record-creation aspect of club work during club achievement days, which included time in the schedule for the reading of the best stories and reports by club members.<sup>85</sup> Club members also had the opportunity to demonstrate and put into practice what they had learned about the importance of records and recordkeeping during demonstration days at fairs, shows, and expositions. One of the criteria (along with skill in work and subject matter) by which demonstrators were first selected for a demonstration team was the quality (accuracy, completeness, and neatness) of their own record books.<sup>86</sup> Report forms and compositions were also used as part of the judging process in contests and club exhibits, with scoring based on an evaluation of the club member as scribe (the mechanics of writing, such as accuracy, completeness, and neatness) and as author (the content of writing, such as the best description of the method followed in completing a project).<sup>87</sup> In some instances, school officers and teachers judged the written accounts and the determinations of profit, while farm experts passed judgment on the yield per acre and the best exhibit.<sup>88</sup>

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

During the Progressive Era, record creation and recordkeeping were essential to the financing, work, and evaluation of boys' and girls' agricultural club projects and formed an integral part of annual club exhibits, meetings, field and community demonstrations, and achievement days. However, these literacy practices did not develop in isolation. Specific groups, seeking to bring about progress and reform in rural life, helped to enable, support, teach, model, regulate, and withhold literacy.<sup>89</sup> These so-called sponsors of literacy included a disparate and powerful network of agents: private organizations (such as banks and the farm press), public institutions (such as rural schools and farmers' institutes), and government-sponsored agricultural research and educational programs (such as the agricultural experiment stations and the Cooperative Extension Service). The federal government was invested in increasing American agricultural production and activity.

Businessmen were eager to foster capitalist impulses and to increase the flow of goods and money. Educational reformers sought to align the learning that took place in the schoolroom with that of everyday life and to better prepare young people for the working world. To further these goals, these experts introduced children to “bureaucratic (and adult) standards of discourse and literacy” in the form of two archetypal and canonical record genres: the written account/report blank and the history.<sup>90</sup>

As forms of written literacy, these records can be examined along a spectrum of uses and types.<sup>91</sup> In talking about the use of written literacy, it is important to acknowledge that records have both an immediate use and a larger purpose.<sup>92</sup> The *use* to which records are put refers to the affordances that records provide to allow people to carry out their daily business. In the case of the boys’ and girls’ agricultural clubs, records were a framing mechanism for projects. The report blank, in particular, facilitated the work of trying new farming methods, and, through keeping records, members learned how and why new agricultural methods paid off. Records and recordkeeping also allowed members to manage their projects, including tracking expenditures so that notions of profit and loss could be factored into project work. Overall, records were used as a form of intermediation, a way for members to demonstrate to club leaders that they were making progress and to show that all requirements for club work had been completed.

The notion that records also serve a larger *purpose* acknowledges the fact that records are created “in anticipation of future as well as current uses” and that these other uses “are (or will be) more than the purely technical.”<sup>93</sup> In the early boys’ and girls’ agricultural clubs, records served as a larger mechanism of accountability for those vested in the success of agricultural extension work and the reform of farming practices, including county agents, funding agencies, and the USDA.<sup>94</sup> For extension workers, report blanks turned project work into highly visible and useful data that could be repurposed for their own ends. County and state agents used members’ records in order to get accurate data (enrollments, extent of project completion, average yields, and net profits) both for their own monthly field reports and for annual reports to the USDA and other funding entities. These data helped to prove their own worth in the field. The USDA, in return, aggregated this information in its annual reports in order to help demonstrate the efficacy of its work at the national level. Because the extension service was also accountable to the general public, examples of boys’ and girls’ written compositions were submitted to the local press and to leading

agricultural and home economics journals for publication and thus drew attention to club work at the local, state, and national levels.

The use of these written literacies was largely imposed from outside rather than emerging organically from within the rural communities themselves.<sup>95</sup> The association of these records with formal institutions, their standardization and regulation of these records to meet institutional purposes, and the very public sphere in which they lived and were displayed and circulated made these records a dominant, rather than a vernacular, form of literacy.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps, as a result of their status as dominant literacies, the relationship of recordkeeping to project work was not always straightforward. From the very outset, it was difficult to get young people to collect data about their projects and to keep the associated records up-to-date.<sup>97</sup> An assumption that could be drawn from this fact is that some club members simply did not like to create and keep records. An alternative interpretation is that these forms of imposed documentation sometimes failed because they were not aligned with the way that club members conceived of their own project work. Whatever the cause, the end result was the need for a good deal of adult oversight and intervention.<sup>98</sup>

Another question that arises is whether the use of these records was “domesticating” (maintaining the status quo) or “empowering” (transformational) for club members.<sup>99</sup> It is clear that social constraints were placed on literacy in this realm but that, to varying degrees, children and young adults could negotiate, accept, or challenge their roles as they pertained to literacy. In one sense, these early records and the structural contexts that surrounded them served to protect and maintain the social order. Racial divisions and to a lesser extent gender roles were perpetuated and reproduced through these literacy practices. A separate bureaucracy established through the USDA to deal with club work for African American boys and girls resulted in a separate organizational structure with separate extension workers, separate clubs and club activities, and separate records and recordkeeping requirements, or what Debra Ann Reid calls “race specific paperwork.”<sup>100</sup> Societal norms vis-à-vis the doctrine of the separate spheres meant that extension work for young people also had a gender-based division of labor.<sup>101</sup> When the issue of girls being enrolled in boys’ clubs, and vice versa, came up at an annual conference of state agents, it was recommended that such enrollments be recognized but discouraged.<sup>102</sup> For girls, an emphasis was placed on training for their “home responsibilities,” with specific projects centered around work considered appropriate for women, including canning, gardening, and sewing.<sup>103</sup> Projects for boys typically

focused on work on the land, including crop growing and the rearing of livestock. Stereotypes also occurred in relation to gender and literacy. One of the ways that the perceived differences between girls and boys played out was in the perception that girls were often better at writing—girls were seen as keeping better quality records than boys. This was said to allow girls to excel in competitions (such as in hog raising) that were considered at the time to be boys' work.<sup>104</sup>

At the same time, the boys' and girls' agricultural club movement in the Progressive Era speaks to the fact that the practical realities of farm life often pushed against the boundaries of traditional gender roles. At the national level, there were voices that spoke up against differentiating members by gender. Gertrude Warren insisted that there should be "no differentiation on sex lines," as she felt that no gender should monopolize knowledge that "is important for the practical purposes of everyday life."<sup>105</sup> O. H. Benson also argued that the gender division of the boys' and girls' extension work was "detrimental to the broad constructive program for the improvement of agriculture and home life," and he, like Warren, felt that "men, women, and children should be equally interested in both agriculture and home-making problems."<sup>106</sup> The notion that agriculture should be seen as scientific and as a successful form of business, worthy of being pursued in its own right, meant that agents needed both men and women to be partners in the process of rural reform. Therefore, business and competition, and their associated record-keeping elements, were considered the domain of both girls and boys. To carry out this agenda, female club leaders were expected to "inspire girls to be real women" and to "think that they are something more than the clothes they wear, and that everything is not powder and puffs."<sup>107</sup>

Lastly, these records can be looked at in terms of whether they were "creative" or "constrained" forms of literacy.<sup>108</sup> Arguably, the report blanks were a constrained form of literacy in that they represented the expert's view of scientific agriculture—the need to "industrialize agriculture, using science and new technologies to make it more productive and efficient."<sup>109</sup> Recordkeeping was therefore a means to a particular end. These values were codified in the questions on the report blank requesting data on income, expenses, and value of products; dates of important operations; and numbers of hours of labor performed. The larger penchant during the Progressive Era for technocratic management that sought to organize, order, and control is also demonstrated in the structure of these records, including the degree of textual regularity used in the report blanks to efficiently capture precise data and information about club projects. On the other hand, the histories or

stories of club work were more creative forms of literacy, as they gave club members more control in terms of how they presented their work on the written page. Through the story, the club member learned to “put thought and interest into the printed page.”<sup>110</sup> These compositions gave voice to the thoughts and feelings of thousands of boys and girls who were participating in club work. Generally factually, but sometimes more expressively, these essays set out the stages of work that club members undertook in the course of their project and captured the hard work, disappointments, and achievements encountered along the way.<sup>111</sup>

This article captures the role of the 4-H movement as a sponsor of literacy at a particular historical point and time, an emphasis that has been largely overlooked in preceding research. The article demonstrates that records and recordkeeping have always been deeply embedded in the 4-H movement. Records gave an opportunity to agricultural, educational, and business institutions of the time to provide and display strategies that met their dominant concerns and reflect their attitudes toward social as well as youth development. For example, one 4-H strategy was to encourage farming communities to see agriculture as a business, with the focus not just on produce but on production that could be measured through profit and loss. Records and recordkeeping were essential in making such determinations. Recordkeeping continues in the 4-H today, and over time it is highly likely that the process of creating record books and the political, social, and economic reasoning behind the need for them have evolved and changed. Given that, as 4-H has stated, the focus of present-day recordkeeping (and the associated record books) is on “youth development and life skills” rather than, as formerly, on “competition and subject matter,” it would be interesting to see whether and how this particular educational strategy and perhaps other, more recent social and political purposes are reflected in the record books themselves.<sup>112</sup> That, however, is a question to be asked and answered in a further study.

### Notes

1. The 4-H pledge is “I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living . . . for my club, my community, my country, and my world.”

2. Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890–1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 171.

3. Numbers taken from the 4-H website (<http://4-H.org>) and the website of the national 4-H headquarters (<http://www.4-h.org/> and <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/youthdevelopment4h.cfm>).

4. Franklin Mering Reck, introduction to *The 4-H Story: A History of 4-H Club Work* (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1951), vii–x.

5. The use of the name 4-H was not adopted nationally until the early 1920s. See Thomas Wessel and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900–1980* (Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1982), 42.

6. Key readings in the area of new literacy studies include Brian V. Street, ed., *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); David Barton and Mary Hamilton, *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community* (London: Routledge, 1998); David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and Roz Ivanič, *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context* (London: Routledge, 2000); Deborah Brandt, *Literacy in American Lives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); David Barton, *Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); and Deborah Brandt, *Literacy and Learning: Reflections on Writing, Reading, and Society* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

7. Brandt, *Literacy in American Lives*, 26.

8. Key readings in the area of human information behavior include Tom D. Wilson, “Human Information Behaviour,” *Informing Science* 3, no. 2 (2000): 49–56; Karen E. Pettigrew, Raya Fidel, and Harry Bruce, “Conceptual Frameworks in Information Behavior,” *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST)* 35 (2001): 43–78; and Amanda Spink and Charles Cole, “Human Information Behavior: Integrating Diverse Approaches and Information Use,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 57, no. 1 (2006): 25–35.

9. For examples of everyday human information behavior research, see the collected essays in William Aspray and Barbara M. Hayes, eds., *Everyday Information: The Evolution of Information Seeking in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

10. For further information on the concept of “information creation,” see Ciaran B. Trace, “Information Creation and the Notion of Membership,” *Journal of Documentation* 63, no. 1 (2007): 142–64. Other work in this area includes Isto Huvila, “The Complete Information Literacy? Unforgetting Creation and Organization of Information,” *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 43, no. 4 (2011): 237–45.

11. William L. Sherman and Paul Theobald, “Progressive Era Rural Reform: Creating Standard Schools in the Midwest,” *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 17, no. 2 (2001): 84.

12. Holt, *Linoleum*, 4.

13. *Ibid.*, 5.

14. *Ibid.*, 4–5, 13–38; Scott J. Peters, “Rousing the People on the Land: The Roots of the Educational Organizing Tradition in Extension Work,” *Journal of Extension* 40, no. 3 (2002).

15. John Hillison and Brad Bryant, “Agricultural Societies as Antecedents of the FFA,” *Journal of Southern Agricultural Education Research* 51, no. 1 (2001): 102.

16. Jeffrey W. Moss and Cynthia B. Lass, “A History of Farmers’ Institutes,” *Agricultural History* 62, no. 2 (1988): 150–63, quote at 161.

17. George E. Farrell, *Boys’ and Girls’ 4-H Club Work under the Smith-Lever Act, 1914–1924*, USDA Misc. Circular No. 85, 1926, 11.

18. Support for African American land-grant institutions was forthcoming with the passage of the second Morrill Act in 1890. Native American tribally controlled colleges and universities were not given land-grant status until 1994.

19. H. C. Taylor, "The Work of the Office of Farm Management and Its Relation to the Agricultural Experiment Stations," *Journal of Farm Economics* 2, no. 1 (1920): 45–55.

20. Prior to 1914, the farm press was the main way in which farmers came into contact with new ideas about farming. See Roy Vernon Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 17–18.

21. An instructive example of the push to improve the recordkeeping practices of farmers during the Progressive Era is documented in a report by O. R. Johnson, an assistant professor of farm management at the University of Mississippi, outlining how the college began a program in 1910 to help farmers with record work. Farmers participating in this program used diaries (supplied at cost by the university) to keep a daily record of what happened on their farms. The diary included space for a farm inventory, a record of the labor carried out on the farm, receipts and expenses, and a feed and chore statement. Diaries were summarized by the department at the end of the year to help farmers study the costs of their operations. See O. R. Johnson, "The Use of the Farm Diary," in *Annual Report of the Missouri State Board of Agriculture* (Jefferson City: Missouri State Board of Agriculture, 1913), 476–81.

22. Paul W. Gates, "Problems of Agricultural History 1790–1840," *Agricultural History* 46, no. 1 (1972): 33.

23. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer*, 38.

24. Edward H. Thomson, *Farm Bookkeeping* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1912); E. C. Johnson and P. E. McNall, "How Kansas Bankers Are Bringing Better Business to the Farm," *Banker Farmer* 3, no. 6 (1916): 14–15.

25. In 1900 a little over 11 percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds were attending secondary school. Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893–1953* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 7.

26. Kamina A. Pinder and Evan R. Hanson, "360 Degrees of Segregation: A Historical Perspective of Segregation-Era School Equalization Programs in the Southern United States," *Amsterdam Law Forum* 2, no. 3 (2010): 49–69.

27. The Southern Education Board was founded in 1901 by an alliance of northern and southern philanthropists. The General Education Board (GEB) was established in 1903 by John D. Rockefeller.

28. Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Kliebard, *Struggle*.

29. Wayne E. Fuller, "Making Better Farmers: The Study of Agriculture in Midwestern Country Schools, 1900–1923," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 154–68.

30. Holt, *Linoleum*, 152.

31. Michael Knoll, "The Project Method: Its Vocational Education Origin and International Development," *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education* 34, no. 3 (1997): 59–80; William Heard Kilpatrick, "The Project Method," *Teachers College Record* 19 (1918): 319–35.

32. For more on the history and role of the project method in teaching, see John A. Stevenson, *The Project Method of Teaching* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921).

33. Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 3–10, 23–36.
34. F. W. Howe, *Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Clubs, Farmers' Bulletin 385* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1910), 5.
35. Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 11–22.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 16–19.
38. Olly Jasper Kern, *Among Country Schools* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1906), 131, 132.
39. Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 16–19.
40. *Ibid.*, 23–36.
41. *Ibid.*, 48–55; United States, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1912* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913), 197–98.
42. United States, *Report*, 197–98. From 1902 until the end of the fiscal year of 1914, the USDA's extension work was centered primarily in the Bureau of Plant Industry. Within the bureau, the Office of Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work was established in order to "try out the idea of good farming practices in the southern states." See Inventory for Record Group 33 (1955), 2, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. Hereafter cited as RG 33.
43. Alfred Charles True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785–1923* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1928), 65–66.
44. Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 53.
45. *Ibid.*, 60, 61–67.
46. Farrell, *Boys' and Girls' 4-H Club Work*, 11–17.
47. United States, *Report*, 198; Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 77–91.
48. For a history of the unequal treatment of African Americans within the extension service, see Carmen V. Harris, "The Extension Service Is Not an Integration Agency": The Idea of Race in the Cooperative Extension Service," *Agricultural History* 82, no. 2 (2008): 193–219; Debra Ann Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest: African Americans, the Extension Service, and Rural Reform in Jim Crow Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007); and United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Equal Opportunity in Farm Programs: An Appraisal of Services Rendered by Agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Washington, DC: US General Printing Office, 1965).
49. Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 137.
50. O. H. Benson and B. T. Galloway, *Organization and Instruction in Boys' Corn Club Work*, Bureau of Plant Industry Circular 803 (Washington, DC: US General Printing Office, 1913).
51. Club field demonstrations involved club leaders (or other experts) giving practical demonstrations to club members about certain operations (how to test seeds, how to select livestock, etc.). Community demonstrations involved club members in turn demonstrating approved practices in agricultural and home economics to members of the wider community. The club exhibit was an opportunity for a club member to showcase his or her project for the community, and making an exhibit was a condition of successful completion of a project. See Eduard C. Lindeman and A. M. Freeland, *Kent County Boys' and Girls' Clubs: Junior Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics: How to Conduct and Organize Boys' and Girls' Clubs* (Grand Rapids, MI: A. M. Freeland, County Commissioner of Schools, Kent County, 1918), 1–24.

52. Benson and Galloway, *Organization*.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Boys' and Girls' Club Work, Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 1912, and Ending June 30, 1913 for the Northern, Central and Western States, box 126, Botanic Gardens—Buildings, 1914, General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, Record Group 16, National Archives, College Park, MD. Hereafter cited as RG 16.

55. For budget allocations, see Kathleen C. Hilton, “4-H,” in *Girlhood in America: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 288. Club work for girls did not take off immediately in all states. In California, for example, no girls' club existed for the first six years of club work (1914–19). See State Histories of 4-H Club Work, Volume I, Alabama to Montana, box 1, State Histories of 4-H Club Work, Volume 1, Records Related to Histories of State 4-H Clubs, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

56. In 1921 these two offices were combined into the office of Cooperative Extension Work.

57. United States Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ending 1916* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917).

58. United States Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ending 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918); Reid, *Reaping*.

59. Wessel, *4-H*, 25.

60. Farrell, *Boys' and Girls' 4-H Club Work*, 19.

61. Wessel, *4-H*, 31–32.

62. Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 156–69.

63. See, for example, V. M. Shoesmith, *Alfalfa Growing in Michigan*, Bulletin No. 271 (East Lansing: Michigan Agricultural College, Experiment Station, 1913).

64. True, *A History*.

65. W. J. Spillman, *What Is Farm Management?*, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 259 (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1912), 39–43.

66. W. F. Ward, “The Boys' Pig Club Work,” in *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture, 1915* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1915), 177–79.

67. Report of club work from O. H. Benson written for a talk at the College of Agriculture at Columbia, Missouri, January 1914, entitled “Home Garden, Field Crops and Home Canning for Boys' and Girls' Club Work.” Box 126, Botanic Gardens—Buildings, 1914. General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70. Record Group 16: Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

68. The term “personal learning narratives” is from I. Moriah McCracken, “I Pledge My Head to Clearer Thinking’: The Hybrid Literacy of 4-H Record Books,” in *Reclaiming the Rural: Essays on Literacy, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy*, ed. Kim Donehower et al. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 124.

69. By May 1903 Albert B. Graham was described as “on the road, driving around to each rural school, distributing seed corn, mimeographed garden diagrams, and report forms” (Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 14). In 1904 Cap E. Miller,

county superintendent of schools, learning from Graham's work in Ohio, organized a boys' agricultural club and girls' home culture club. In doing so, he asked the children to grow any plant and write an accompanying report entitled "An Interesting Plant." The best of these reports were to be given at a township meeting. See Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 30. The keeping of records was also an integral part of girls' club work. In tending one-fourth-acre gardens and learning to "preserve tomatoes and other vegetables for their families' winter meals," girls' canning and tomato club members also kept "detailed records of planting and fertilizing activities" and "submitted report forms describing their activities and yields" (Hilton, *4-H*, 288).

70. Enrollment cards acted as a contract, with boys and girls "agreeing not only to enter but to stay in the work and finish the job, covering a period of from six to ten months in all of the club or home projects" (Benson, "School Credit," 1144).

71. A slogan used in connection with club work demonstrates just how essential follow-up was for club success. "There are three 'ups' in club work: The start-up, the follow-up and the close up. If you cannot follow up, it is better to close up before you start up" (Lindeman and Freeland, *Kent County*, 11).

72. *Ibid.*, 13, 14.

73. The Office of Farm Management in charge of Boys' and Girls' Club Work in the Northern, Central and Western States reported that in the 1912-13 fiscal year, fifty-two circulars, outlines, and special sheets of instruction were prepared and sent from time to time as a system of follow-up instruction. The Office of Farm Management also reported that it was sending out, on average, eight pieces of specially prepared follow-up instructions to each club member during the season ("a total of approximately 640,000 sheets, circulars or bulletins of instruction furnished in a year's time to the club membership"). See Boys' and Girls' Club Work, Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 1912, and Ending June 30, 1913, for the Northern, Central and Western States, box 126, Botanic Gardens—Buildings, 1914, General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906-70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16.

74. Beginning about 1912, boys' and girls' club literature was issued in series based on projects, and each project was given a serial number with a letter (e.g., the letter "O" was adopted to identify all potato club circulars; "R" was for corn; "N R" was for canning; "K" was for poultry; "L" was for sheep; "H" was for handicraft, etc.). Circulars that related to club work as a whole (such as enrollment blanks) were given the letter "U." The letter "E" was adopted to indicate office forms and reports (such as annual report blanks). Each letter was also assigned a number, which had a specific meaning. Numbers ranging from one to twenty inclusive related to club membership material (R-14, for example, was corn report blanks). Numbers from twenty-one up consisted of leadership material. Numbers left blank were used for instructional circulars or incidental leadership circulars. See letter and enclosure (History and Plan of Serial Letters and Numbers on Club Circulars, Boys' and Girls' Club Work—North and West) from O. H. Benson, in charge Boys' and Girls' Club Work, United States Department of Agriculture, States Relations Service, Office of Extension Work North and West, to Col. Ousley, Office of the Secretary, April 8, 1918, Boys' and Girls' Clubs 1918, box 529, Bones—Bldgs & Grounds, January-July 6, 1918, General

Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16.

75. W. H. Balis and J. W. Wilkinson, *Farm and Home Study Clubs—Boys' Community Pig Club Reading Courses*, Louisiana State University, Extension Division, 1916, 8–9.

76. Box 5, Club Stories UT–WY: Southern States, Reports and Other Records Concerning Boys' and Girls' Club Activities, 1911–22, Other Regular Reports Concerning Field Extension Work, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33. A national 4-H report form did not come into existence until 1927. See McCracken, “I Pledge My Head,” 126.

77. The smaller blank booklets came in sizes such as 5.5 inches in width by 8.5 inches in length and 6 inches in width by 4 inches in length. Record books came in sizes such as 5 inches in width by 8.5 inches in length, 6 inches in width by 4 inches in length, 4 inches in width by 6.27 inches in length, and 4 inches in width by 8.5 inches in length. The postcards measured 5.75 inches in width by 7 inches in length.

78. Jane McKimmon, founder of North Carolina's home demonstration program, eloquently described the work of county agents in running the clubs, including submitting annual reports. “During the first year of home demonstration work (November, 1911 to November, 1912), there was neither office nor stenographer for home demonstration work at the headquarters of Farmers' Co-Operative Demonstration Work in Raleigh. My letters were written by hand; and hundreds of packets of tomato seed, sent out from the United States Department of Agriculture for the girls' tenth-acre garden plots, were labeled and addressed on my large dining-room table. The first annual report was written with pen and ink, the members of my family being pressed into service when compilation of the data was to be done. Many of our county home agents used their families in the same way, or we would never have been able to accomplish all the work involved.” Jane Simpson McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 18.

79. See, for example, Boys' Corn Club Work Crop Blank (Form R-2); Boys and Girls Clubs, box 77, Bills, Invoices—Charges, Criticism, 1912–13, General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16; Boys' and Girls' Potato Clubs Blank (Form O-3) and Garden and Canning Clubs Blank (Form N-7), box 126, Botanic Gardens—Buildings, 1914, General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16.

80. Ella A. Agnew, *Virginia Girls' Canning Clubs*, circular no. 1 (Blacksburg, VA: Extension Department, Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1916).

81. The issue of how to get better cooperation from club members in filling in and submitting reports was a topic of discussion at meetings of state agents. Reck provides an overview of one such meeting that took place in June 1912. See Reck, *The 4-H Story*, 101–3.

82. For pig club work, these inducements included “a year's subscription to one of the good swine papers, a free ticket to the State fair, or seed sufficient to plant a pasture and a small area in some forage crops for the pig” (Ward, “The Boys' Pig Club Work,” 179).

83. For an example of instructions on how to complete these illustrated booklets, see Outline for Illustrated Booklet “How I Made My Crop” in the

“Boys’ Corn-Club Work” by O. H. Benson (Form R-6), Boys and Girls Clubs, box 77, Bills, Invoices—Charges, Criticism, 1912–13, General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16.

84. A crop report form for a pig and crop production project in Wyoming from 1915 instructs club members to “devote five minutes each evening to this record.” A poultry club project record from Wyoming (1917) admonishes that “there is one way, and only one, to make a good record—that is to keep it up to date.” Wyoming Club Stories, box 5, Club Stories UT–WY, Southern States, Reports and Other Records Concerning Boys’ and Girls’ Club Activities, 1911–22, Other Regular Reports Concerning Field Extension Work, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

85. Lindeman and Freeland, *Kent County*, 22.

86. Louise Fitzgerald and Milton Danziger, *Suggestions for the Organization and Direction of Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work* (Agricultural College: North Dakota Agricultural College and US Department of Agriculture Cooperating, 1918), 26–30.

87. The notion of writers being evaluated in terms of their work as scribes and in terms of their work as authors is drawn from the work of David Barton (*Literacy*, 164–67).

88. F. W. Howe, “Rural-School Extension: Through Boys’ and Girls’ Agricultural Clubs,” in *The Tenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education: The Rural School as a Community Center*, ed. B. H. Crocheron et al., 20–28 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1911), 27.

89. Deborah Brandt, *The Sponsors of Literacy* (Albany, NY: National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement, University at Albany, State University of New York, 1997), 2.

90. Quote from McCracken, “I Pledge My Head,” 126.

91. Examples of literacy uses and types are described in Barton, *Literacy*, 38–39.

92. Ciaran B. Trace, “What Is Recorded Is Never Simply ‘What Happened’: Record Keeping in Modern Organizational Culture,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 137–59.

93. *Ibid.*, 153–54.

94. Cynthia Haller has also drawn attention to the importance of report writing in helping club women gain recognition for their work. See “Revaluing Women’s Work: Report Writing in the North Carolina Canning Clubs, 1912–1916,” *Technical Communication Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1997): 281–92.

95. The notion of “imposed” versus “self-generated” uses of literacy comes from the work of David Barton. See “The Social Nature of Writing,” in *Writing in the Community*, ed. D. Barton and R. Ivanič (London: Sage, 1991), 1–13.

96. For a study that addresses children’s use of vernacular literacies, see Ciaran B. Trace, “Resistance and the Underlife: Informal Written Literacies and Their Relationship to Human Information Behavior,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 10 (2008): 1540–54.

97. It was not just club members who had difficulty keeping up with their paperwork. Extension workers could also be taken to task for failing to turn in reports, as a rather testy letter from O. B. Martin to Marie S. Cromer demonstrates. In criticizing Cromer for writing a newspaper article that was not to his liking, Martin states: “I am surprised that you would take time to write such an

article when you have stated on your last two weekly field reports that you were too busy to fill said reports. Making a report is an official duty; writing for the newspaper is a superfluity." Copy of an outgoing letter from O. B. Martin to Marie S. Cromer, May 25, 1911, box 3, 4-H Early Development to 4-H Service Committee and Extension Relations, 4-H Early Developments and Policies, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

98. Holt provides an example of a home demonstration agent in Kansas who dismissed three African American club members for failure to keep records (*Linoleum*, 173).

99. The notion of "empowering" versus "domesticating" uses of literacy comes from Paulo Freire and Donaldo P. Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).

100. Reid, *Reaping*, 36.

101. Originating in Victorian times, the notion of a "doctrine of the separate spheres" held that business and competition were the domain of men, while women were in charge of the hearth and home.

102. "Annual Conference of State Agents in Boys' and Girls' Club Work, at Washington DC, June 24–27, Inclusive, 1912," box 2, Early Phases of the 4-H Club, 1904–52 to 4-H Name and Emblem, 4-H Early Developments and Policies, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

103. Oscar H. Benson, *The Mother-Daughter Home Canning Club* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 4.

104. Ward, "The Boys' Pig Club Work," 181–85.

105. Gertrude L. Warren, "Value of the Demonstration," address to the National Conference Boys' and Girls' Club Work, Washington, DC, February 19, 1916, box 1, Organization and Supervision of 4-H Club Work to Principles and Policies Governing 4-H Club Work, 4-H Early Developments and Policies, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

106. O. H. Benson, "Principles and Practices of Boys and Girls Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics," box 648, Bills: Senate 5332–6649 to Birds & Butter, General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1906–70, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16.

107. George E. Farrell, "How to Organize Boys' and Girls' Club Work," box 1, Organization and Supervision of 4-H Club Work to Principles and Policies Governing 4-H Club Work, 4-H Early Developments and Policies, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

108. Barton, *Literacy*.

109. Peters, "Rousing."

110. Farrell, "How to Organize Boys' and Girls' Club Work," box 1, Organization and Supervision of 4-H Club Work to Principles and Policies Governing 4-H Club Work, 4-H Early Developments and Policies, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33.

111. Archie L. Nash, aged thirteen, from Sheridan, Wyoming, took part in a club project in 1917, and in his essay entitled "How I Cared for my Pig and Crop," he describes how he convinced his father of the importance of club work: "My father at first didn't want me to join the Pork and Crop Production Club because he did not think I would stay with it. But he gave his consent when I told him it would give me a trade, teach me how to raise pigs, how to keep records, and, last of all, it would be patriotic." He also describes his efforts to raise

the pig and the problems he encountered: "My next problem was where to get my pig. The people that had pigs of the right age didn't have the kind I wanted. I had quite a time until my father suggested that I phone Mr. Wagner, for he had been a Duroc Jersey raiser for years. Sure enough I got one from Preston Wagner. My pig is a half-sister to the prize pig of last year. I brought her home and put her in a pen about two and a half feet high and in the morning she was gone. I had to go to school and be excused so I could hunt for her. It wasn't so very long until she came back in the opposite direction from which I thought she had gone. The second time I weighed my pig, Mr. Allen came up to help me. Don, his bull-dog, came with him and when they put the pig in a sack to weigh her, she ran her nose out of a hole in the sack and the dog caught her by the nose and near killed her before Mr. Allen could beat him off. Everybody that saw my pig gave me a lot of encouragement and said it was the fattest and finest pig that they ever saw. I'm glad I joined the Pork and Crop Production Club and went through with the seasons work because I enjoyed it besides making a profit and raising a fine pig" (Pork Club Project, Wyoming Club Stories, box 5, Club Stories UT-WY, Southern States, Reports and Other Records Concerning Boys' and Girls' Club Activities, 1911-22, Other Regular Reports Concerning Field Extension Work, Records of the Extension Service, RG 33).

112. Keith G. Diem and Annette Devitt, "Shifting the Focus of 4-H Record-Keeping from Competition and Subject Matter to Youth Development and Life Skills," *Journal of Extension* 41, no. 6 (2003).