

Agricultural Communications Documentation Center
ACES Funk Family Library, University of Illinois

Executive Summary
PROGRESS REPORT for 2010

I. Administrative

Staffing and Operations

- In May, Professor Joyce Wright, Librarian, became director of the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center. Professor Wright was head of the Undergraduate Library for thirteen years and worked with Library Advancement for three years.
- Anna Pederson, who had served as graduate assistant for three years, graduated in June. Gemma Petrie became the new graduate assistant, academic coordinator and webmaster in August. Gemma is in the master's program in Library and Information Science.
- Also in August, agricultural communications student Michelle Fluty became the new student hourly assistant.
- Continuing volunteer associates included Liz Harfull (Asia-Pacific Region, based in South Australia), Jim Evans (emeritus professor of agricultural communications), Steve Shenton (emeritus professor of communications and journalism, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania) and Karlie Elliott Bowman (agricultural communications graduate who completed her master's degree in advertising in December).
- Paul Hixson continued to serve as liaison with the Information Technology and Communication Services (ITCS) unit of the College of ACES.
- Staff members improved operations in varied ways during the year. For example:
 1. The ACDC policies and procedures manual was updated and made available in print and electronic format.
 2. An ACDC LibGuide was created to facilitate access to materials. More than 1,700 libraries of all types and sizes use LibGuides to connect patrons and share information online about their resources.
 3. A new ACDC tutorial was posted on the website. Karlie Elliott Bowman produced the tutorial which explains how to search the database and gain access to documents of interest.
 4. ACDC hours were expanded during 2010 to 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, as well as 1-3 p.m. on Tuesday.

Strategic Planning and Action

- The Center continued to strengthen connection with the academic program in agricultural communications during 2010. Center staff members got acquainted with Dr. Katie Abrams who joined the agricultural communications faculty in August. The Center continued to involve agricultural communications students as part-time assistants.

- Work began during 2010 to enhance the ACDC website and shift from the current database management system to a more robust, capable platform. This will be the fourth system since the Center database was established in the early 1980s.
- Digitization of materials in the ACDC collection increasingly commands strategic attention and continued to move higher in priority.
- Professor Joyce Wright received a grant of five hundred dollars from the Library Strategic Communications and Marketing Committee. The grant will help expand awareness of the Center through an informational handout and other marketing activities.

II. Programming and Services

Document Collection

- The ACDC collection contained 35,637 documents at the close of 2010. The 1,209 added during this past year met our long time goal of adding 100 documents or more a month. Documents in the collection represent agriculture-related communications in more than 170 countries. An increased share of documents was retrieved in digital format.
- Staff members continued to find agricultural communications literature in dozens of scholarly journals across a surprisingly wide spectrum. For example, they ranged as broadly as *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, *Rural 21*, *Adotas* and *Journal of Travel Research*.
- Research papers added during the year came from more than 15 conferences, globally.
- Efforts continued to prepare oral history teaching resources for posting on the ACDC website. These resources are in collaboration with an associate from Purdue University.
- Arrangements were completed during 2010 for the University of Illinois Archives to serve as home for records of the American Agricultural Editors' Association. These AAEA materials trace back more than 90 years, so represent especially important resources about agricultural reporting and publishing in the United States. Through the online search system, ACDC will help call these valuable resources to the attention of researchers and others during the years ahead.

Online Usage

- The Center continued to show a strong online presence in the broad subject area of agricultural communications. For example, during 2010 the ACDC website consistently appeared first or second among more than 65,000 websites identified through a Google search on "agricultural communications."
- Visitors came to the website from all 50 states in the United States and from 114 countries/territories.
- Fifty-two percent of visitors were new to our website and 48 percent were returning.
- Search engines sent 1,370 visitors to the ACDC through 635 keywords.

ACDC News

Twenty-one issues of the e-newsletter, ACDC News, were prepared, posted on the website and announced internationally through selected listservs. By highlighting some of the literature being added to the collection, the newsletter alerted readers to agricultural communications research, activities, methods and issues throughout the world.

Expanded Partnership with IFAJ

- During 2010 the Center expanded services to the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists, which represents about 4,000 agricultural journalists and communicators in 29 countries. During mid-year, IFAJ leaders invited the Center staff to consider coordinating editorship of the online newsletter, IFAJ News, and increasing the frequency of it. With Karlie Elliott Bowman as new editor, the newsletter began a monthly schedule in August 2010.
- The Center continued to provide other information services in support of the professional development mission of IFAJ. It generated and coordinated features for online posting, provided customized information search services, helped strengthen the international visibility and prominence of IFAJ, and collaborated in other ways.

Partnership with AgNIC

The University of Illinois continued to serve as national center of excellence in agricultural communications as a partner in the Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC) of the National Agricultural Library. ACDC serves as the portal for information about agricultural communications within this worldwide online agricultural information system.

Visiting Scholars and Professionals

- On February 26-27, Center staff members hosted Professor John Hatcher of the journalism faculty, University of Minnesota-Duluth. In preparation for a book he is writing, he reviewed resources in the Center about community journalism.
- On May 14, Center staff member Jim Evans hosted a visit by Markus Rediger, professional agricultural communicator in Switzerland. The visitor is vice-president of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists.
- On May 18-19, Center staff members Karlie Elliott Bowman and Jim Evans hosted a research reporting session that involved two visiting collaborators: Karen Simon, communications director of the Iowa Soybean Association and 2009-2010 president of the American Agricultural Editors' Association, and Owen Roberts, agricultural communications program director at the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, and secretary-general of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists.
- On July 4-7, Center staff members hosted Caroline Stocks, deputy editor of the *Farmers Weekly* (UK). As a Nuffield Scholar, she searched for resources in the ACDC collection to help her identify farmers' information needs and preferred sources.

Ethics Case Studies

Resources in the Center collection contributed to a professional development project of the American Agricultural Editors' Association during 2010. A committee of affiliate members of AAEA planned and produced 14 case studies to illustrate what the Affiliate Code of Ethics means to those who relate to commercial agricultural media through advertising, public relations and sales, or as freelance writers. Jim Evans served on the committee. Anna Ziegler, a recent University of Illinois agricultural communications graduate, researched, wrote, edited and designed the package of case studies. They will be used in courses, workshops and discussions.

Special Searches, Requests and Contacts

Center personnel continued to respond to a steady stream of requests for information and searching assistance. Requests came from researchers, graduate and undergraduate students, teachers, professional journalists/communicators and others throughout the world. Here are samples of topics involved in requests for information from the Center during 2010:

- Assessment of communications skills and competencies of agricultural extension workers
- Popular perceptions of agriculture in media and mass culture
- Communicating with livestock producers about managing fragile land
- Resources about agricultural writing skills
- Information needs and sources of beginning farmers, how they communicate and potentials for them to use social media to advantage
- Effectiveness of outdoor advertising in rural America
- New perspectives on adoption and diffusion of agricultural technologies
- Identification of agricultural newspapers that serve corn-growing regions of the U.S.
- Resources for communications in rural lifestyle marketing
- Headline motivations and reader responses to a farm magazine
- How agri-marketing firms can get better services from their communications agencies
- Crisis communications methods, as related to food
- Food labels and labeling

Advancing Agricultural Communications Scholarship and Practice

The Center staff contributed to agricultural communications scholarship and practice through individual and team research during the year. Following are research presentations involving Center associates Jim Evans and Karlie Elliott Bowman at the annual conference of the Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE), St. Louis, Missouri, June 14-17, 2010:

- "Yesterday, today and tomorrow: journalism ethics among agricultural writers." Presentation by Karen Simon, Owen Roberts and Jim Evans
- "Point-of-view communications: a fresh look at telling rural-urban stories." Presentation by Owen Roberts, Karlie Elliott Bowman and Jim Evans

Encouragement from Users

During 2010, users of the Center continued to provide encouragement through their responses to information provided by staff, newsletter features and other services. Here are some of the messages received during the year:

"Thank you very much for the document. It will be really useful for me."

"I enjoy reading the items from the documentation center. They come from such a variety of sources."

"This is great, Miss Anna! Thanks bunches."

"Always interesting."

"Thanks again for all this incredibly valuable information."

"I don't know what I would do without it [the online ACDC resource]. ACDC makes searching much simpler!"

"I know it took work to do this. I cannot thank you enough."

"The visit was more valuable than I can tell you, giving me both support for existing projects and inspiring me with a long list of future work that will keep me busy for years. ... It seems to me that this collection is crucial to preserving and centralizing an area of research that not only has a fascinating and important history, but also (thanks to your interest in the international aspect of this field) holds a promising and important future."

"Your contacts and suggestions are very helpful."

"The student photo gallery looks great! Thank you for doing this."

"Thanks for the quick response."

"This is fantastic. ... I really appreciate your help with this - you are indeed a treasured resource for our discipline."

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