

# 2014 PROGRESS REPORT



Agricultural Communications Documentation  
Center

ACES Funk Family Library, University of Illinois

# 2014 Progress Report

## AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DOCUMENTATION CENTER

### ADMINISTRATIVE

#### Staffing and Operations

Staffing in the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center expanded through special projects during 2014 and closed the year looking to further change.

- Prof. Lura Joseph served as head of ACDC during the 2014 calendar year.
- Stephanie Pitts-Noggle, doctoral student, continued her role as assistant manager and webmaster until August when she left to pursue other opportunities.
- Amanda Marolf, a student in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, continued her role as graduate assistant until her graduation in May.
- Kelsey Berryhill, a student in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, joined the Center staff in May. She became assistant manager and webmaster in August on a half-time appointment.
- Olivia Harris, student assistant and undergraduate major in agricultural communications, worked part-time on a comprehensive box review and other projects through spring semester.

*Volunteer associates* continue to play a valuable role in the resources and services of the Center. They identified relevant literature from throughout the world, assisted in project development, offered counsel, and provided contacts. Those who contributed in 2014 included Jim Evans, emeritus professor of agricultural communications, University of Illinois; Pat Allen, Associate Professor and head of Funk ACES Library, University of Illinois; Liz Harfull, associate for the Asia/Pacific Region, based in South Australia; Paul Hixson, emeritus chief information officer, University of Illinois; Karlie Elliott Bowman, news editor of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists; Joyce Wright, Professor Emerita, University of Illinois Library; and Katie Abrams, Assistant Professor of Journalism and Technical Communication, Colorado State University.

#### System Development

The Center benefited during 2014 from enhancements to BibLeaves, the web-based bibliographic system used by ACDC and other library units at University of Illinois. It was developed by the University of Illinois Library Information unit (IT), and rolled out in 2012. It includes both a public side that enables searching for citations and the ability to email or text search results, and a staff side that is used to add new bibliographic information. During 2014, IT tested and implemented enhancements that include the ability to limit by journal article publication year, and for journal article publication years to appear in search results. BibLeaves is revealing itself to be a robust and stable search platform for the growing ACDC collection. It also is adding convenience and saving time for the Center personnel who review documents and prepare citations for the database.

During 2014, the Thesaurus, used by the ACDC staff to assign subject terms to entries, was updated with major revisions. In collaboration with IT, some of the terminology on the public side is being clarified, and the input system is being modified to reduce errors when assigning subject terms, and to allow addition of

keywords (words in addition to official, controlled subject terms). These enhancements will be tested and implemented early in 2015.

A finding aid for the new Volume 1 Number 1 collection is being created, and will be added to the ACDC website in early 2015. This aid will help people find resources in this valuable, rare collection of agricultural trade journals.

## Strategic Planning and Action

As a special resource and service of the Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) Library, the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center is revealing itself as increasingly robust, recognized and valuable.

*Growing the collection:* During 2014, one long-time strategic goal involved continuing to grow the collection. As reported below, that goal was met and exceeded.

*Positioning the Center:* Another major strategic goal involves expanding the role and value of the Center in several ways: (1) expanding use of the collection, (2) tapping new information sources and partnerships, and (3) using the Center to generate new research and add to the body of knowledge about communications aspects of agriculture, broadly defined. Several experiences during the year reflect notable progress toward that goal.

- Center personnel were approached during 2014 about the Center serving as home for records of the National Farm-City Council. They helped coordinate discussions that led to entering those records in the University Archives, as a unique source for research involving rural-urban communications throughout the nation.
- They also continued efforts to identify the appropriate home on campus for a valuable research collection of readership reports and farmer survey findings contributed by Farm Progress Companies.
- They were invited to help initiate a national and international project, "Strategic Communications History of the Crop Protection Industry." ACDC personnel convened and took part in early discussion with Library colleagues and the president of CropLife America.
- At the invitation of the Association for Communication Excellence in Agricultural, Natural Resource, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE) organization, Center personnel began to help that professional organization assess the need and feasibility of a digital archiving project.
- They took part in discussions with a major marketing communications firm about establishing a project in thought leadership involving agricultural/food issues.

*Expanding the research agenda:* Opportunities for active involvement in conducting and reporting agricultural communications research became increasingly clear during 2014. Several examples are described below in the section, "Research and Other Scholarly Contributions."

*Promising potentials:* Such developments reveal strong potentials for advancing the strategic mission and service of ACDC, moving forward. We are pleased that they also integrate with, and support, missions of the University Archives and the University Library at large. We see many promising opportunities for funded, self-supporting initiatives to strengthen contributions of the Center and position it for larger service within the U.S. and internationally.

## PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES

### Document Collection

The ACDC Collection consisted of approximately 41,012 documents at the end of 2014. In the 2014 calendar year, 1,778 new references/documents were added to BibLeaves (exceeding the goal of at least 100 new documents per month). In addition, 20,091 records were modified and improved. As a result of the 2013 Box Review, the Center has begun going through and inputting box numbers for each record, which is why the number of modified records is so much higher than the previous year. At the end of 2014, records for documents in 128 out of the 190 boxes containing the collection were enhanced with box numbers. This work will be completed in 2015, and will facilitate retrieval of requested documents.

During 2014, assistant manager Kelsey Berryhill processed the second wave of the Volume One Number One Collection. This included the Rare Serial Materials from the John Harvey Collection, which had been partially processed the year before. Out of the 269 donated items, 160 items were added to the collection, and 109 items were deaccessioned (as they were found elsewhere in the University of Illinois library system). The Volume One Number One Collection also includes the James F. Evans Collection of Special Editions and Rare Serials totaling 366 items. The new additions bring the total of this unique collection of agricultural periodicals to 1,842 items.

### Serving Users

**ACDC News:** Thirteen issues of the e-newsletter, ACDC News, were posted on the website during 2014. By highlighting some of the literature being added to the collection, every month it alerted more than 1,000 readers to agricultural communications research, methods, events, and issues throughout the world. A few of the topics highlighted included:

- Strengthening ethical agricultural reporting
- Images of agriculture featured in recent research
- Farmers using smartphone self-portraits
- New agricultural communications research reports from conferences and journals
- Encouraging environmental journalists to report on the future of food and agriculture
- Economic payback from public-supported extension
- Mobile phone – helping disadvantaged farmers in India
- Update on farm and rural broadband
- Readership of small-town community newspapers
- The arts – missing link in rural revitalization
- Accuracy of crop storage forecasts by USDA and private analysts
- Singing for rural women
- Rural-urban gap in home computers and internet use in China
- Emerging platforms for digital photography about nature

**Social Media:** The Center started increasing its social media presence with consistency in August 2014. Prior to this, the Center's Twitter account (@ACDCUIUC) had 37 followers. As of January 7, 2015, the account has 67 followers with 122 tweets. Tweets include original tweets of articles and events within the agricultural communications profession, retweets of others in the field, photos of VIN1 items for "Throwback Thursdays," newsletter alerts, and interaction with other University of Illinois library units. Other efforts include tweets that are "From Our Newsletter" and "Doc of the Day" in order to highlight items within the collection.

**Visiting Scholars and Professionals:** The Center mainly hosted scholars from this campus during 2014. They included Professor Lulu Rodriguez, new head of the Agricultural Communications Program. She brings excellent experience in teaching, research and service related to this subject area. Discussions centered on how to coordinate and integrate the Agricultural Communications Program more closely with the resources and services of the Center. Center personnel also conferred with visiting agricultural communications professionals from Washington, D.C.; St. Joseph, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; Bloomington, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; and other locations.

**Special Searches, Requests, and Contacts:** Associates in the Center provided individual services in response to a broad range of questions and requests from dozens of persons throughout the world. The following is a sampling of the topics involved in those requests during 2014, including from countries abroad:

- Gender trends in agricultural communications
- Agricultural Communications academic history
- Archival materials relating to the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension's services/programs to local farm women
- Help developing a bibliography for a literature review for research park
- The development of extension information services in Iowa
- Primary sources on an early agricultural journalist in the 1850s
- History of the Oscars in Agriculture program, honoring excellence in media reporting
- The role of journalism in times of social media and agricultural innovation (Belgium)
- Preparing for the information revolution in Extension
- Media coverage of agricultural safety
- "New media," public relations and strategic communications of organizations representing farmers in Canada
- Agricultural writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- How rural women gather and use agricultural information (international)
- Gauging readership of agricultural research periodicals
- History, current status and trends, and outlook for agricultural communications
- Animation and comparative use of static and dynamic pictures in communicating with illiterate farmers (Timor-Leste)
- Journalism and educational methods and needs regarding agricultural biotechnology
- Teaching resources for a course and teacher manual about agricultural journalism (Bangladesh)
- Resources for a thesis on readability of an advisory sheet on oil palm research in Nigeria

**Partnership with the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ):** A partnership with the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists continued during 2014. The Center served as coordinator for services of the IFAJ news editor, as well as a resource for special information searches for IFAJ leaders and members. IFAJ serves members of guilds located in more than 30 nations.

**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.

**Other Outreach Efforts:** Professor Joseph provided orientation for new ACES faculty members. Professor Evans assisted with AGCM classes and provided agricultural communications students with career development information in the field of agricultural communications, including referrals to the Center.

## Research and Other Scholarly Contributions

Center staff members completed work on a collaborative research grant with associates at the National Farm Medicine Center in Wisconsin. The grant supported a pilot project to lay the groundwork for expanded and innovative communications about occupational safety in farming and agriculture: "Laying a new foundation for engaging agricultural media gatekeepers in covering agricultural safety and health." This proposal was submitted during March, 2013 to the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH), approved during mid-2013 and completed in August 2014. It features (a) a review of literature about this topic, (b) a comparative content analysis of safety articles published in three high-risk industries – agriculture, mining and transportation, (c) a survey among agricultural journalists and (d) a survey among university faculty members who teach courses in agricultural journalism and communications. Professor Lura Joseph took over as principal investigator in January, 2014, when Joyce Wright retired. Project team members included Amanda Marolf and Jim Evans of ACDC, consultant Matt Harrington, as well as Scott Heiberger, communications specialist in the National Farm Medicine Center. The final report was submitted to UMASH in August, 2014. Three manuscripts based on the pilot project were prepared during late 2014 and submitted to selected research journals for review.

During 2014, Center personnel also co-authored a research paper submitted for presentation at the 2015 conference of the International Communication Association. Now-retired ACDC Head Joyce Wright and volunteer associates Jim Evans and Devi Annamali are co-authors, along with two colleagues in the Agricultural Communications Program at the University. The title of the paper is "Trends in information needs and communication channel use among rural women in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 2000-2012." It is based on analyses of 200 case studies, for which the Center collection served as a prime resource.

## Encouragement from Users and Reviewers

Following are some of the responses ACDC staff received during 2014:

**"An invaluable resource of ag journalists!" (Canada)**

**"Thank you so much for your help! This will really help with my paper, and I'll be sure to let my fellow ag majors know about what a great resource this is!" (Illinois)**

**"I always read your newsletter with great interest. I've found many nuggets of info to apply to my work."**

**"I look forward to your newsletter each month." (New Zealand)**

**"Can't thank you enough for your quick and very helpful recommendations. They are extremely helpful. What a ray of light: you, ACDC, and the U of I."**

**"Thank you for continuing to send the Center's news. I learn a lot."**

**"Keep up the good work. It's much appreciated." (New Zealand)**

**“You gave me a lot of information to help me finish this project.”**

**“I always enjoy reading through the newsletter.”**

**“This is a fantastic resource.”**

**“The material you sent was fine – it all appeared once I simply clicked the URL. It will certainly be helpful.”**

**“Thanks so very much. Know the work you and your team are doing to manage this library is a wonderful asset to all of agriculture. We appreciate what you do!”**

**“Excellent literature for a snow day.”**

**“I am reading the newsletter regularly. It is the best source of contact and know more about the world.” (India)**