

2016 PROGRESS REPORT



Agricultural Communications Documentation
Center

ACES Funk Family Library, University of Illinois

2016 Progress Report

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DOCUMENTATION CENTER

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

As a special resource and service of the ACES (Funk) Library, the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center is revealing itself as increasingly robust, recognized, and valuable. It contributes uniquely within the four-part “Framework for Strategic Action” of the University Library.

- It strengthens the campus infrastructure to support scholarship and innovation through resources and services for the full life-cycle of scholarly communications.
- It enhances user success in information retrieval and use, including a variety of outreach, engagement, and marketing strategies.
- It maximizes the use and impact of library services and collections through application of emerging technologies, new service models, and changes in scholarly communications.
- It capitalizes on the University Library’s national and international leadership by expanding access to unique collections and resources, and by leveraging international engagements to develop unique collections, services, and partnerships.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Staffing and Operations

Staffing in the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center changed in several ways during 2016.

Cailín Cullen continued to serve as the assistant manager and webmaster through July, following her graduation from the School of Information Sciences.

Elizabeth Ray, a new student in the iSchool, started training under Cailin in the summer and in Fall 2016 took over as the assistant manager and webmaster.

In December, Caeli Cleary joined the staff as student assistant to enter relevant literature into BibLeaves, process documents, prepare exhibits, and help with other projects. She is a senior in the Agricultural Communications Program.

Prof. Pat Allen, former head of ACES (Funk) Library, continued as ACDC administrative coordinator on a part-time basis.

Prof. Lulu Rodriguez, Director of the Agricultural Communications Program, contributed throughout the year in programming and strategic planning.

A plan to increase collaboration and communications with ACES (Funk) Library staff was continued through Elizabeth Ray’s quarter-time assistantship in the Center and quarter-time at the Library Reference

Desk. Graduate assistant Mike Dickinson also assisted with adding to BibLeaves throughout the summer and into the fall semester, helping the Center reach its 100-citations-a-month goal.

Volunteer associates continued to play a vital role in ongoing success of the Center. They identified relevant literature from throughout the world, assisted in project development, offered counsel, and provided contacts. Volunteers during 2016 included Jim Evans, emeritus professor of agricultural communications, University of Illinois; Joyce Wright, professor emerita, University of Illinois Library; Paul Hixson, emeritus chief information officer, University of Illinois; and Liz Harfull, professional rural communicator in Australia.

System Development

BibLeaves, the web-based bibliographic system used by ACDC and other library units at the University of Illinois, continues to be the resource locator for the ACDC collection. A public side enables searching for citations and the ability to email or text search results. A staff side is used to add new bibliographic information. Library IT continued to test and implement enhancements.

Staff members continued to assess the need and explore potentials for ACDC to increase its capability for digital archiving, especially in regard to audio-visual materials.

They also continued to gather information about metrics for reviewing use of the ACDC website. The Library Software Development Group reported that BibLeaves does not keep such statistics. Google Analytics is a limited alternative. It does not track traffic within the BibLeaves search system, for example, or within some other sections of the website.

Graduate Assistant Cullen updated the ACDC Manual.

Agricultural Communications faculty member Leia Flure developed a new email skin for use with the ACDC newsletter.

Staff members continued a project to create links on the website to connect ACDC with six or more collections within the University Archives related to agricultural communications.

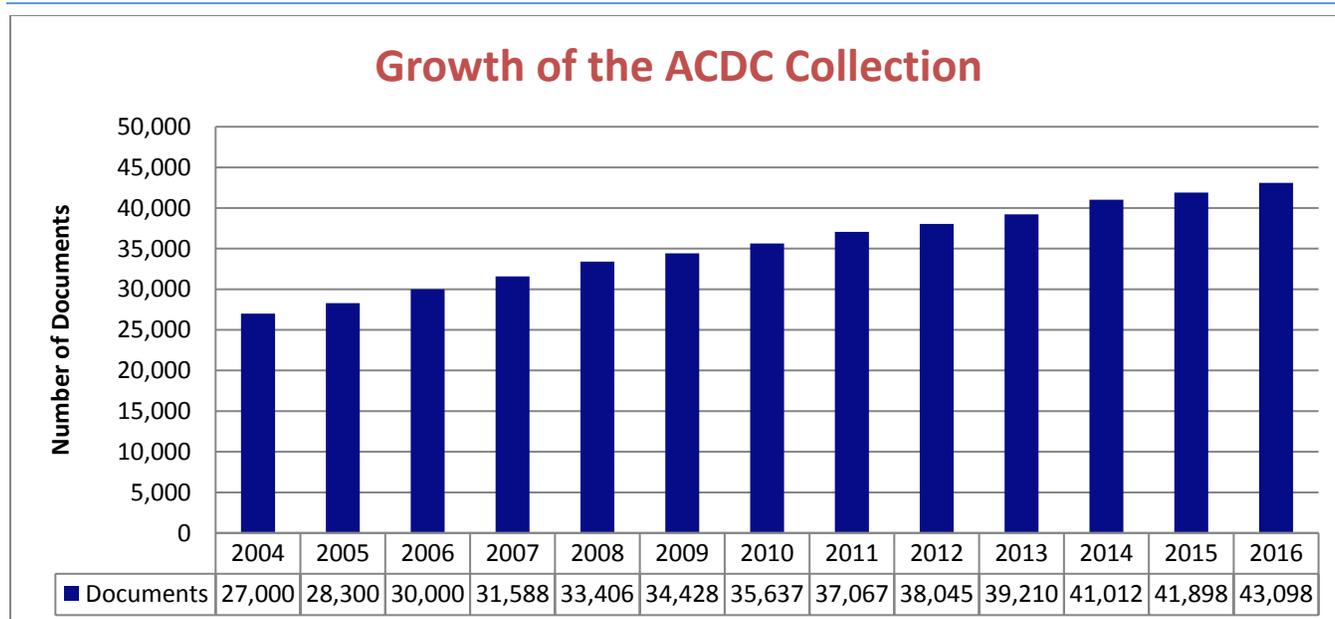
Graduate Assistants Cullen and Ray updated the ACDC finding aid regularly. It identifies the location of all documents within boxes in the ACDC storage area. Cullen also worked on a project to locate and identify theses in the ACDC collection.

Graduate Assistant Ray updated the ACDC Lib Guide to maintain working links and update information.

Content, Programming, and Services

Document Collection

The ACDC Collection consisted of 43,098 documents at the end of 2016. Twelve Hundred documents were added to the BibLeaves database during 2016. This accomplished the intended average of 100 documents added per month.



Overview of contributed materials: A 2016 review of contributed materials showed that 28 scholars, professionals, and other individuals have contributed agricultural communications literature and other related materials from their personal resources. An invited article published in the retiree newsletter of the Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE) invited retirees to consider contributing professional materials. Other possible contributions remained under discussion during the year.

Processing new contributions:

Four new contributed collections were added to the ACDC collection during 2016:

1. Hal R. Taylor Collection. He was a former Assistant Director of the Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture. His contributed materials represent a valuable set of basic resources from the Communication Training Program of NPAC during the 1950s and early 1960s.
2. Paul Hixson Collection. These materials feature project reports, articles, and administrative files of the International Program for Agricultural Knowledge Systems (INTERPAKS) at the University of Illinois. The contributor is former head of Information Technology and Communication Services in the College of ACES and now emeritus chief information officer of the University of Illinois.
3. James E. Grunig Collection. These materials, currently in processing, reflect research by a leading public relations scholar. Dr. Grunig is now retired from the University of Maryland. His scholarship included public information campaigns related to agriculture.
4. John L. Woods Collection. It features communications related to agricultural development and environmental quality in nations throughout the world. Dr. Woods' materials reflect his service on the University of Illinois faculty, as director of development training and communication planning with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and as strategic communicator with Chemonics International Inc.

Serving Users

ACDC News: Twelve issues of the e-newsletter were posted on the website during 2016. By highlighting some of the literature being added to the collection, on a monthly basis it alerted more than 1,000 readers to agricultural communications research, methods, events, and issues throughout the world. Announcements of new issues were delivered to all members of ACE, as well as to others on an ACDC listserv.

Sample topics featured in ACDC News during the year included:

- Honoring 70 years of rural broadcasting in Australia
- Rural use of the internet continues to lag in the U. S.
- Accuracy and role of indigenous knowledge in monitoring climate change
- Warning about social and mobile media as new farm accident risks
- Even small farmers need crisis communication
- Bucking the trend in covering immigration
- Traditional media surviving the test of time
- Consumers using a rich mix of socio-ethical considerations when they buy
- Words of caution about evaluating food safety education
- Gathering history of the GM crops debate in the UK
- Five ways to engage the public with climate change
- Fighting the “yuck” factor in eating insects

Online use of the ACDC website:

The ACDC website remains user friendly. Users frequently comment how easy it is to navigate the site. The graduate assistant continues to update the site regularly. One update during the year included a new heading photo, “Drone,” on the ACDC homepage. It was taken by an agricultural communications alumnus, L. Brian Stauffer, University of Illinois.

Metrics from Google Analytics indicated that 1,395 users from 79 countries visited the ACDC website during 2016. As noted earlier, reported usage does not include an extensive amount of search activity to the BibLeaves search system and within it. The 2,251 sessions on the website ranged from 60 to 1 per day. The home page was the highest-ranked starting page for online visits to the website.

Social Media

ACDC continued an active presence on social media. As of yearend, the Center’s Twitter account (@ACDCUIUC) had more than 130 followers with more than 300 tweets. Tweets include original tweets of articles and events within the agricultural communications profession, retweets of others in the field, photos of Volume1Number1 items, newsletter alerts, and interaction with other University of Illinois library units.

Other outreach activities:

35th Anniversary. This year marked the 35th anniversary of ACDC and offered opportunity for a variety of outreach efforts. A news release prompted a feature story in the *Friendscript* Newsletter of the University Library. Also, it attracted an editorial, “A very special anniversary,” in *Agri Marketing*. This

magazine is a respected source of information for agricultural communicators throughout the nation. A “35th Anniversary” section of the ACDC website featured those articles, as well as a report from Dr. Chandra Prabha, first graduate assistant in ACDC. The anniversary was featured in *ACE Update* online newsletter reaching extension and research communicators throughout the nation. Several issues of ACDC News included items about the history and development of ACDC.

Partnership with IFAJ. Collaboration with the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) continued during the year. This long-time relationship has changed in nature, but remains strong. Past IFAJ President Markus Rediger visited from Switzerland during the year. Discussions also included efforts to collect and feature some 50 ACDC-coordinated articles on the IFAJ website.

Digital Exhibit series: Graduate Assistants Cullen and Elizabeth Ray continued the “Digital Exhibit” section on the ACDC website with these two exhibits:

- “Poetry in Agricultural Communications”
- “November and December Holidays in American Agricultural Publications”

SlideShare (the site used to upload the exhibit to share to the website) analytics show that both exhibits attracted more than 200 views with a majority in the United States, but also from beyond. The highest viewed month for “Poetry in Agricultural Communications” was in April with 40 views. The highest for “November and December Holidays in American Agricultural Publications” was a week of November, with 39 views.

Special Searches, Requests, and Contacts: ACDC personnel provided individual services in response to a broad range of questions and requests from dozens of persons throughout the world. Following are some of the topics involved in those requests during 2016:

- *Communicating sensitive information in relation to image management*
- *Current trends and challenges within agricultural communications*
- *Empirical research about what makes good advertising for farmers*
- *Development and empowerment issues facing rural women in Tanzania and other regions of Africa*
- *Cases of communications strategies that reflect promising experience of gender mainstreaming in agricultural value chains*
- *Suggested readings for a doctoral course study about the history of agricultural communications*
- *Value of communications skills in leadership of agricultural organizations*
- *Opportunities and possibilities for working in the field of agricultural communications in the United States*
- *Identification of agricultural communications study programs available in the United States and elsewhere*
- *Evaluation of a county extension office’s use of mass media*

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: An online letter went to all students in the Agricultural Communications major, alerting them to ACDC resources and offering assistance. Among other outreach efforts, Professor Wright hosted a visit by class members of Agricultural Communications 220, “Presenting Agriculture,” during Fall Semester. Professor Evans provided agricultural communications students with career development information in the field of agricultural communications, including referrals to the Center.

Research and Other Scholarly Contributions

ACDC associates Lulu Rodriguez and Jim Evans used resources in the collection for research projects resulting in four articles published in peer-reviewed journals during the year:

Evans, J. and Heiberger, S. (2016). “Agricultural media coverage of farm safety: Review of the literature.” *Journal of Agromedicine*. 21,1:91-105. doi: 10.1080/1059924X.2015.1106376

Flure, L., & Rodriguez, L. (2016). The usefulness of an online writing improvement tool for agricultural communications courses. *NACTA Research Journal*, 60(Supplement 1), 126.

Rodriguez, L. and Evans, J. (2016). “Coming of age: How JAC is reflecting a national research agenda for communications in agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences.” Centennial Edition. *Journal of Applied Communications*. 100, 1:29-50.

Byrnes, K. and Evans, J. (2016). “The spirit lives on: Communication seminars as a surprisingly hardy, valuable, and promising heritage of NPAC.” Centennial Edition. *Journal of Applied Communications*. 100, 1:76-88.

Encouragement from Users and Reviewers

Following are samples of feedback from users during 2016. They reflect responses to individual search and advisory services, issues of *ACDC News*, and various features of the ACDC website:

- Faculty participants from throughout the nation attending an Agricultural Communications Summit noted the founding of ACDC and the services it provides as “a milestone in the annals of Agricultural Communications as an academic discipline.”
- “It is always so interesting and pleasant to receive your News that I have read and published for the benefit of our readers in the international English section.” (Italy)
- “Thanks so much for your help. Your links and response were very, very helpful to me.” (Brazil)
- “This report is most useful. Many thanks for forwarding.” (Illinois)
- “I am deeply thankful for your introduction to the ACDC.” (Arkansas)
- “Congratulations on the 35th anniversary of the ACDC. It is a wonderful resource as well as a repository for much of ag com’s collective wisdom.” (Wisconsin)
- “Thank you so much for your detailed response. I really appreciate the time you took to help me out with this!” (Florida)
- “I love the mix of your ACDC output. Something for everyone and things you wouldn’t normally think about.” (Canada)
- “Extremely helpful. Thank you!” (Wisconsin)
- “Thank you for your interest and also for providing such a valuable resource.” (Missouri)

- “Thanks a lot for sharing.” (Ethiopia)
- “Thank you kindly for this.” (Australia)
- “It’s such an amazing resource for communicators (and even those who only do some communications in their careers).” (Colorado)
- “It’s a wonderful resource!” (Illinois)
- “Thank you for your kind assistance.” (Philippines)
- “Solved...Thanks!!!” (Illinois)
- “Compliments for the archaeological report on agricultural writing.” (Italy)
- “Thanks heaps for your newsletters and site – really useful and helpful! (New Zealand)