

# 2021 – 2022 PROGRESS REPORT



Agricultural Communications Documentation Center

Funk ACES Library, University of Illinois

## AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DOCUMENTATION CENTER

### STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

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

- 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.
- 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 enhances user success in information retrieval and use, including a variety of outreach, engagement, and marketing strategies.
- It strengthens the campus infrastructure to support scholarship and innovation through resources and services for the full life cycle of scholarly communications.

### OVERVIEW

During this reporting period (July 2021-June 2022), the ACDC returned to standard fiscal year reporting and the past twelve months brought major changes in staffing, operations, and outreach activities. In addition, the ACDC experienced adjustment due to the transition back from the campus’ COVID-19 shutdown. Even so, staff members continued to provide excellent service and commitment to ACDC users and wider community. The Center continued work on existing projects and evaluated improved opportunities for collaboration and outreach.

### ADMINISTRATIVE

#### Staffing and Operations

Assistant Professor Janis Shearer served as head of ACDC during this administrative period, as part of her faculty services within Funk ACES Library.

Kevin Wiggins, graduate student in the Information Science Program, continued serving as a graduate assistant on a quarter-time basis. This appointment was in association with his graduate studies, and it continued through May 2022. In June 2022, he accepted a teaching assistantship with the history department.

Library and Information Science graduate student Rachel Riffe was hired as a graduate assistant in July of 2021 on a quarter-time basis for the 2021-2022 academic year. In May she transitioned to serving on an hourly basis and will return for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Volunteer associates continued to play an active role in the ongoing success of the Center. They identified relevant literature from throughout the world, assisted in project development, offered counsel, and provided contacts. Associates during this period included, Jim Evans, emeritus professor of agricultural communications, University of Illinois; Liz Harfull, associate for the Asia/Pacific Region, based in South Australia; and Paul Hixson, emeritus chief information officer, University of Illinois. Alumna Eunghae Hong continues with the ACDC on a volunteer basis, working on the continued processing of the Robert and Susanne Morris collection.

During August of 2021, staff members prepared for the first in-person semester since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. ACDC services continued via virtual platforms but also through agricultural communications (AGCM) student presence in the center. Also, the staff prepared and distributed the 2020-2021 ACDC Progress Report; revised the ACDC Libguide and updated the ACDC Manual and Website. Graduate Assistant Wiggins continued to process the contributed Robert and Susanne Morris Collection.

In October, the ACDC underwent a preservation assessment by graduate students Riffe and Wiggins for use in their IS 523 Preservation of Information Resources course. This assessment resulted in sending ACDC's film reels to be cleaned and digitized, the 4<sup>th</sup> floor shelves were added to the Funk cleaning schedule, and it provided confirmation that the ACDC is meeting preservation standards.

A major project which occurred throughout November- January was the intake of a bulk delivery of documents from Associate Evans which he had compiled throughout the COVID-19 shutdown. This required the review of the boxes located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor stacks, removing duplicates, and relabeling. This endeavor uncovered a larger concern involving the way files were assigned to boxes throughout the pandemic and the resulting potential usability challenges which was addressed over the spring semester.

### System Development

Staff members updated the curated services section of the ACDC website, adding and replacing six links, as well as deleting five outdated links. The Information Technology manager for infrastructure in the University of Illinois Library reported that the Bibleaves system used by ACDC is running on an outdated version of software and will need a major ground-up rewrite soon.

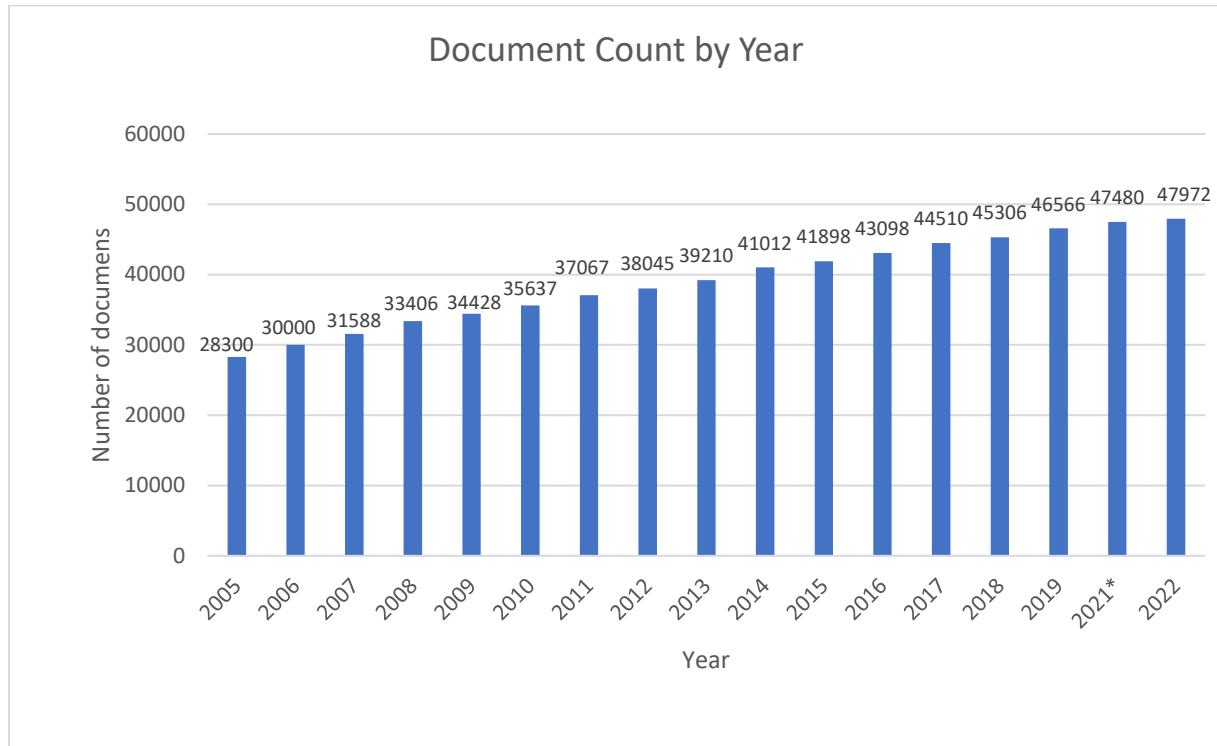
Online metrics limitations persisted during this period. The ACDC staff continued to document need and to request IT improvements that will provide detailed metrics involving information needs and requests, searching patterns, and other online activities of those who visit the ACDC collection and website.

## CONTENT, PROGRAMMING, AND SERVICES

### Document Collection

#### Growth of the ACDC Collections:

The ACDC collection consisted of 47,972 documents at the end of June 2022. About 490 documents were added to the BibLeaves database during the period. This includes documents housed in the ACDC's collection, as well as citations of materials held at other libraries on campus. This continued the upward trend but fell short of the goal of 100 documents added per month. The shortfall was due primarily to time invested in special projects and emphasis on processing new contributed collections as well as organizing an influx of documents from that had built up over the course of COVID-19.



\* Represents the 18-month period between January 2020 – June 2021

### Top document formats:

Of the 490+ documents that were added to the BibLeaves database during the twelve-month period covered in this report, the ACDC collected a variety of formats. Most of the collection document types fell under online article, journal article, or other. Some of the ACDC's top sources from this period include The Packer, Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education, Journal of Agricultural Extension, Sustainability, and the Journal of Agricultural Economics. The bulk of newly published works for this period were born-digital, though a selection of physical works were donated and are awaiting cataloging by associate Evans.

Column1	Column2
Abstract	3
Blog	4
Book Chapter	3
Commentary	9
Conference Paper	6
Directories	2
Editorial	4
Infographic	1
Journal Article	404
Magazine Article	1
Online Article	22
Opinion Piece	3
Research Report	15
Review	2
Teaching Materials	2
Thesis	1

### Contributed Collections

Staff members continued to identify appropriate documents for the ACDC collection, using mainly online search protocols, and preparing citations for deposit and publication in the Bibleaves system.

Graduate assistant Wiggins devoted most of his effort during the period to processing the extensive Morris Collection – reviewing and selecting materials, rehousing items in acid-free folders and boxes, and planning the finding aid to be developed.

Staff members reviewed and considered offers from several retired or retiring professional communicators and leaders, agricultural media organizations, and others who reported having resource materials they would consider contributing to ACDC, including a new Chris Scherer Collection which has been under review by associate Evans.

Associate Evans continued to review an extensive historical collection involving project files that feature dozens of international initiatives of the Office of Agricultural Communications, University of Illinois College of Agriculture. They span a period from the late 1940s to mid-1990s. Citations for selected materials were prepared in Bibleaves.

Links to several communicator organizations were added to the “Gateway to Useful Links” section of the ACDC website.

### Opportunities for collaboration

Head Shearer conferred with a selection of ACES faculty members about potentials for ACDC to engage with, and serve, them and their programming interests. Examples include faculty members

in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC) Program of the College of ACES and the statewide Illinois Extension Service.

Staff members also discussed potential opportunities for such collaborations during their monthly staff meetings.

## Serving Users

### ACDC Newsletters

This open-access online newsletter was prepared and distributed monthly during the period. Twelve issues featured selected agricultural communications topics in journal articles, books, research reports, news media, commentaries, gatherings, and other settings. Some examples:

- Persuasive effects of metaphors regarding gene-editing in agriculture
- A bitter toast at Press Freedom Day
- Journals and journal editors – guardians of the agricultural sciences
- Environmental impacts of U.S. food waste
- How to sell good international stories
- There’s no journalism on a dead planet
- How advanced text mining techniques “could help address critical issues in food and nutrition sciences”
- Where the produce industry is missing the boat on consumption
- Scholars need to address rural health care ethics more rigorously
- Impact of government promotion of agricultural exports in Nigeria
- Advice for delivering effective science communication
- Tribal nations against “one way” communicating
- A self-sustaining agri extension service: success in Rwanda

Issues were circulated to an estimated 900-1,000 agricultural communications professionals, academics, students, and others in the U.S. and beyond. Outlets included the ACDC website, an ACDC News listserv, and members of the Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE). The ACDC News listserv was managed actively, providing a bounce-back rate of only three-tenths of one percent.

### Social media

Outreach over social media took place through the ACDC’s Twitter account. The account is used to interact with the Funk ACES Library, industry professionals, and users of the Bibleaves citation database. It is updated with current updates relevant to center events, exhibits, local programming at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and to advertise the publishing of the Center’s newsletters. Twitter interaction was mainly with the Funk ACES Library account, and other University accounts.

## Outreach Activities

### 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 Collaborative (AgNIC) of the National Agricultural Library. ACDC serves as the portal for information about agricultural communications within this worldwide online agricultural information system

### Partnership with IFAJ:

This professional organization, The International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ), serves some 5,000 members in 60 countries. A long-time collaboration with ACDC continued during this period.

- The ACDC website continued to provide a special section for IFAJ members to acquaint them with ACDC resources and to offer information services to them.
- Dozens of features that ACDC has created for IFAJ members through a special project remained as resources for professional development on the IFAJ website.
- During early 2019 the Queensland Rural Press Club (IFAJ affiliate) inquired about the possibility of collaborating with ACDC. Through the arrangement, ACDC would host the mid-career recipient of an annual professional development scholarship sponsored by the Rural Press Club. Conversations continued during 2021 and remained under consideration through the end of the period.

### Marketing Materials:

In response to COVID-19, staff members continued to distribute the ACDC brochure electronically to an on-campus list of selected administrators, faculty and staff members throughout the University Library, College of ACES, College of Media, and University of Illinois Extension. They were encouraged to use and refer others to the unique resources and information services in ACDC.

### Special Searches, Requests, and Contacts:

During this period the ACDC assisted Professor Owen Roberts' AGCM 320 class with a project throughout March and April. Each student was required to select a few ACDC resources for use, which graduate assistants Riffe and Wiggins provided. Among them were:

- The Farm Market (circa 1948)
- Historical documentation of rising food prices in the US
- Information about types and roles of college and university student agriculture clubs in Iowa and Illinois (request from a farm periodical)
- Consumer responses to food costs
- Historical articles on ag teachers

Besides the materials for Professor Roberts' class, the ACDC responded to a wide range of requests involving communications related broadly to food, farming/ranching, natural resources, and other aspects of agriculture. Among them:

- Agricultural development in the Sultanate of Oman (PhD Candidate from Columbia University)
- Information on farmland donors for the University of Illinois Foundation (UIUC undergraduate student)

#### Other outreach activities

ACDC materials were used in a History of Women in Agriculture exhibit created by graduate assistant Riffe during this period. These were printed onto pasteboard to protect the integrity of both items, which are part of the V1N1 collection.

ACDC personnel hosted Professor Owens' AGCM 320 class for two informational sessions, ran by Head Shearer and associates Riffe and Wiggins. These consisted of two parts: a lecture portion in which the students were shown how to navigate Bibleaves followed by a tour of the fifth-floor office where a selection of items from the collection were provided for the students to peruse. This visit was photographed by Professor Roberts and was posted on his LinkedIn. After the success of this visit, an outreach plan targeting AGCM undergraduate classes was put into consideration.



The ACDC also hosted university trustee and AGCM alumna Tami Craig Schilling for a visit during this period. Trustee Schilling was familiar with the ACDC already and wanted to see the facility and some materials. Graduate student Riffe selected some items from the V1N1 collection and advised her of the History of Women in Agriculture exhibit on the second floor if she wished to see more of the ACDC's content.

In June 2021, Head Shearer virtually attended the ACE 2021 Virtual Conference as an opportunity to grow and network with communication faculty and to learn how ACDC and the Funk ACES Library at large can best serve them.

In March 2022, Head Shearer served the Archives Task Force of the ACE organization by virtually attending their meeting to share updates related to the Center's services and projects.



### Encouragements from Users and Reviewers

Following are samples of feedback from faculty members, professional journalists and communicators, organizations, students, and others during the period. The samples reflect responses to individual search and advisory services provided by ACDC, issues of ACDC News, and various features of the ACDC resources, services, and website.

"To the ACDC Staff I appreciate all your hard work! THANK YOU!!!" - AGCM 320 Student

"Thank you so much the ACDC has been a big help this semester!" - AGCM 320 Student