

# 2020 – 2021 PROGRESS REPORT



Agricultural Communications Documentation Center

Funk ACES Library, University of Illinois

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## 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 (January 2020-June 2021), the ACDC began a shift from calendar year reporting to fiscal year reporting and over the past eighteen months brought major changes in staffing, operations, and outreach activities. In addition, the ACDC experienced adjustment due to the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted staff work and development over the course of this time. 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.

Graduate students Courtney Smith and Emily Benton, alongside student assistant Kimberly Villanueva, graduated from the University in May 2020, and their appointments ended that summer. The student assistant role was vacant during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Eunchae Hong, graduate student in the Information Science Program, joined the staff in July 2020 on a quarter-time basis. She completed her master’s degree in May 2021 and continued with ACDC during following months on a volunteer basis, working on the continued processing of the Robert and Susanne Morris collection.

Kevin Wiggins, graduate student in the Information Science Program, joined the staff during August 2020 on a quarter-time basis. This appointment was in association with his graduate studies, and it continued through May 2021. In June 2021, he began a half-time appointment.

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.

During April 2020, staff members began to work off-site due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Funk ACES Library was closed, along with other libraries on campus. ACDC services continued, mainly via virtual platforms. Also, the staff prepared and distributed the 2019 ACDC Progress Report; revised the ACDC Libguide; developed and initiated use of a new ACDC Certificate of Appreciation; and updated the ACDC Manual and Website. Graduate Assistant Hong began to process the recently contributed Robert and Susanne Morris Collection. It involves the 30-plus-year history and teaching resources of the Management Training and Development Institute, based in Washington, D.C.

### 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.

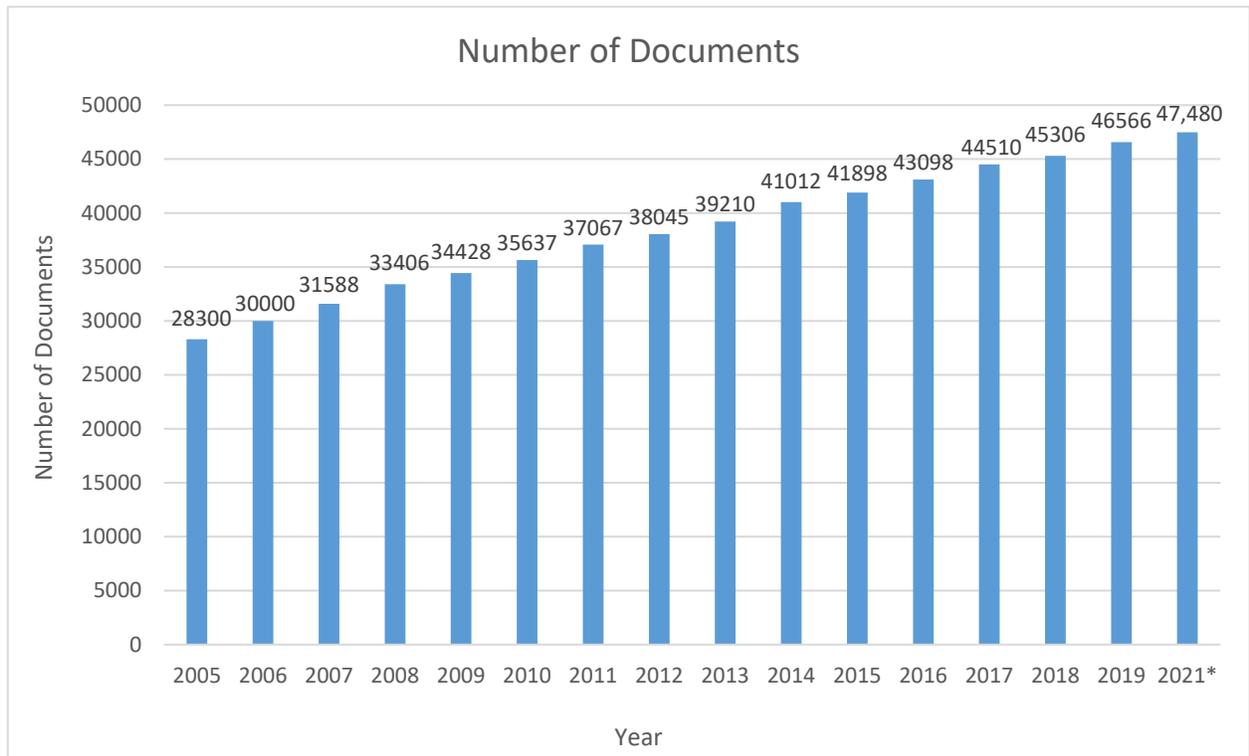
Online metrics limitations persisted during this period. The ACDC staff continued to document need and to request IT improvements that will provide detailed metrics involving information needs and requests, searching patterns, and other online activities of those who visit the ACDC collection and website.

## CONTENT, PROGRAMMING, AND SERVICES

### Document Collection

#### Growth of the ACDC Collections:

The ACDC collection consisted of 47,480 documents at the end of June 2021. About 960 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, emphasis on processing new contributed collections, and the restrictions placed on staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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

### Top document formats:

Of the 960+ documents that were added to the BibLeaves database during the eighteen-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, commentary or other.

| Top Document Formats   | Number of Documents Per Format |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Online journal article | 585                            |
| Article                | 52                             |
| Commentary             | 34                             |
| Research Report        | 32                             |
| News Release           | 30                             |
| Online article         | 30                             |
| Research Summary       | 29                             |
| Video                  | 12                             |
| Editorial              | 11                             |
| Blog                   | 9                              |
| Paper                  | 8                              |
| News Article           | 8                              |
| Other                  | 106                            |

### 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 Hong devoted most of her 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.

Associate Evans began 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 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. Eighteen issues featured selected agricultural communications topics in journal articles, books, research reports, news media, commentaries, gatherings, and other settings. Some examples:

- Edible urbanism 5.0 - part of the next food revolution
- Short memories about extreme floods
- A new perspective on agricultural communications
- Information issues in the wake of “Ag-Gag” legislation
- Views Canadians hold about an “obesity crisis”
- Use of smartphones and social media in 11 emerging economies
- How new agri-marketers should talk to farmers
- Detecting fake news about environment and healthcare
- “The food in this restaurant is horrible.”
- Communications lessons from a Brazilian meat scandal
- How community newspapers can diversify their revenue streams
- A bitter toast at Press Freedom Day
- How not to write about African cuisines
- Views of food consumers about plant alternatives to animal meat

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, 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 serves some 5,000 members in 55 countries. A long-time collaboration with ACDC continued during this period.

- The ACDC website continued to provide a special section for IFAJ members as a way 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 2020 and remained under consideration through the end of the period.
- During August 2020, IFAJ President Owen Roberts confirmed interest in looking for further opportunities to work together. One idea involves collaborating to establish an agricultural journalism certificate program at the University of Illinois for IFAJ members and others.

### Marketing Materials:

At the beginning of the period, staff planned to begin the distribution of the marketing materials produced in 2019 by graduate student Benton and Associate Evans. However, in March of 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic forced staff to work remotely. The planned physical distribution of the 500 brochures was halted.

In response to COVID-19, staff members distributed the new ACDC brochure electronically to an on-campus list of selected administrators and faculty/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.

In June 2021, ACDC became listed as a distinctive University Library Collection on the “Featured Collections & Acquisitions” webpage.

### Special Searches, Requests, and Contacts:

During this period 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:

- Historical photographs in the John L. Woods Collection
- Wireless broadband opportunities through TVWS for networking in rural areas of Africa
- Textbooks and other references for a new university course in agricultural and natural resource communications (Georgia)
- Recent research about agricultural information sources used by U.S. farmers and ranchers
- Information about the development and definition of agricultural communications
- Opportunities for graduate studies in agricultural communications (from Iran)
- Instagram as an agricultural information-gathering method for rural development (Ghana)
- Contemporary political discourses (2009-present) surrounding agriculture, food production, and food access in Mississippi Delta region
- Content analysis of influential agricultural magazines for thesis development

### Other outreach activities

ACDC personnel met individually with students who inquired about information resources for class projects and degree programs.

In June 2020, Head Shearer virtually attended the ACE 2020 Virtual Conference as an opportunity to grow and network with communication faculty and to learn how ACDC and Funk ACES Library at large can best serve them.

In July, Head Shearer virtually presented a poster during the U.S. Agricultural Information Network Conference. The poster titled, “Agricultural Communication & Climate: Understanding the ACDC’s Users & Collection” informed researchers how the ACDC collection can contribute to their work on the subject of climate change communication.

During November 2020, Head Shearer virtually attended the annual Illinois Extension Conference to maintain relationships with specialists and educators from all Illinois counties and improve their awareness of the ACDC.

Possibilities of producing a video to the ACDC Libguide came under consideration. It would show and describe how to navigate the Bibleaves search system.

Associate Evans served on the search committee for a senior faculty member in agricultural communications within the new ALEC program of the College of ACES.

Staff members served the Archives Task Force of the ACE organization by providing details about issues of ACE-published periodicals held within the University of Illinois Library. Findings indicated that the Library contains nearly all issues in the century-long series of ACE periodicals (1919-2020).

ACDC staff members helped the professional organization – AAEA: The Agricultural Communicators Network - gather historical information for an approaching centennial celebration.

### Research and Other Scholarly Contributions

Following discussion during the ACDC webinar with Society of Agricultural Communications Scholars (SACS), personnel began to gather information to guide decisions about ACDC serving as home for conference proceedings of the American Association for Agricultural Education. Options also include exploring possibilities for a home elsewhere at the University of Illinois.

### 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.

- “Thank you to all who helped get this article!” (Missouri)
- “I thoroughly enjoy the ACDC news as it helps me stay tied to Illinois despite being 8,000 miles away.” (Rwanda)
- “I always look forward to receiving the publication; it underlines how invaluable the ACDC is to the agricultural communications sector.” (Canada)
- “Thank you very much for sending me the December edition.” (Indonesia)
- “Thanks for the detailed response. This is exactly what I needed.” (Florida)
- “I’m an avid reader of the ACDC News. It provides insights not readily available anywhere else.” (Alabama)
- “Thanks for the latest ACDC, good stuff all around.” (Canada)
- “Kind regards and keep up the good work.” (Germany)
- “Fabulous report!” (Illinois)

- “How thought provoking! An ag journalism class could discuss this for days. Good sleuthing on ACDC’s behalf.” (Canada)
- “The consultation was super helpful and I greatly appreciate your time and consideration.” (Illinois)
- “After reading "Scrubbing the academic jargon" in the latest AC-DC News, I felt compelled to share this story with you...It also underscores this critical point: Communication specialists must be their absolute best while constantly reminding the scientific community in which they work that in their own right, they are as professional as the scientific professionals they serve.” (Location?)