

2022 – 2023 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 2022-June 2023), the ACDC returned to standard fiscal year reporting and the past twelve months brought changes in staffing, operations, and outreach activities. The Center continued work on existing projects, started new projects, and sought out opportunities for collaboration and outreach. In addition, the staff members continued to provide excellent service and commitment to ACDC users and wider community.

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. She and Associate Jim Evans conferred about several matters involving staff development. They included:

- Potential for Janis to be identified as an affiliate faculty member in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) unit of the College of ACES.
- Potential for Eric Morgan and Owen Roberts to be identified as associates in ACDC.

Janis and Associate Evans learned of plans for an agricultural journalist from Ireland to visit the Agricultural Communications Program at UIUC during late 2023 and offered to help agricultural communications faculty members host the visit.

In August of 2022, Precious Olalere a graduate student in the Information Sciences Program joined the Center to serve on an hourly basis for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Rachel Riffe, graduate student in the Library and Information Science Program, continued serving as a graduate student through March 2023.

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.

In October, graduate student Riffe began creating finding aids for the contributed collection of Robert and Susanne Morris and graduate student Olalere continued this work in April. Riffe also worked on developing ACDC deed of gift that would be incorporated into our subsequent donated collections. The deed of gift document is currently under review.

Graduate student Olalere created video tutorials to enhance patrons' ability to use the Bibleaves database to locate agricultural communication documents, and how to request for documents found on Bibleaves.

Arrangements got under way for adding student staffing for publication of the ACDC newsletter. The ACDC staff provided Owen Roberts a sample position description for use in announcing a part-time student internship and considering candidates among students in the agricultural communications major.

Overall, the Morris Collection continued to be the primary focus during the academic year, while ACDC services continued both virtually and physically through agricultural communications (AGCM) student presence in the center and other patrons.

System Development

Associate Evans, delivered to ACES Library his 40-plus years of administrative records involving the origins and development of ACDC.

Staff members updated the curated services section of the ACDC website, adding and replacing ten links, as well as deleting four outdated links. In the same vein, graduate student Riffe worked with the library web team to move the media files linked to the ACDC Oral History Podcasts page to the media Library of the ACES website.

The Center staff began working closely with Library Information Technology's Infrastructure Management and Support (IT) to document the essential requirements for the bulk upload of The Morris Collection to Bibleaves. In April, graduate student Olalere began using the spreadsheet template created by IT for the Morris Collection bulk upload.

Head Shearer consistently maintained communication with the IT department to keep updating the Bibleaves system anytime we ran into a system issue. She also held a meeting with IT on how the

Bibleaves system used by the ACDC can be updated or migrated to a new system as it is currently running on an outdated version of software.

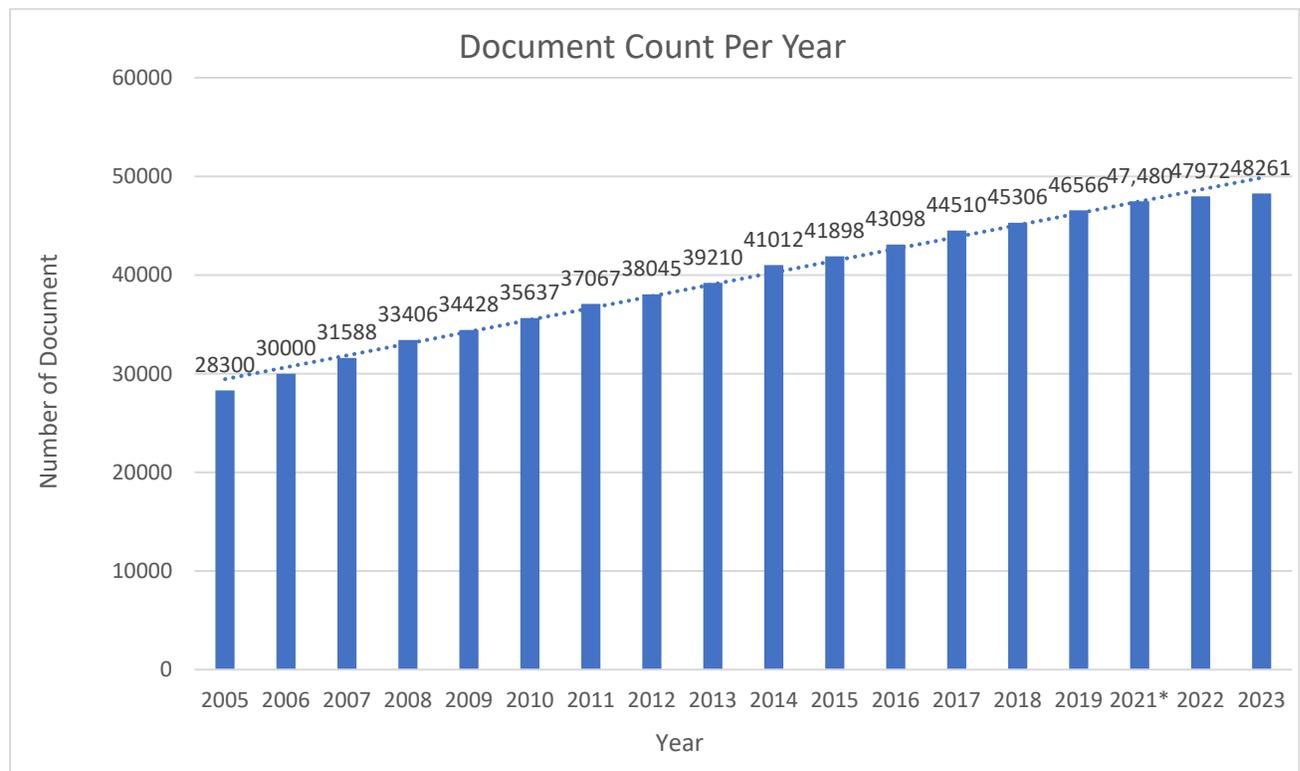
Although the ACDC staff continued to document need and to request IT improvements that will provide detailed metrics involving information needs and requests, searching patterns, and other online activities of those who visit the ACDC collection and website, online metrics limitations persisted during this period. To improve the assessment of the center’s activities and services, we retired the process of recording reference interactions on excel spreadsheet in December 2022 and began to use Desk Tracker to record our interactions with patrons.

CONTENT, PROGRAMMING, AND SERVICES

Document Collection

Growth of the ACDC Collections:

The ACDC collection consisted of 48, 261 documents at the end of June 2023. About 301 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 the Morris Collection.



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

Top document formats:

Of the 300+ 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
Audio Story	2
Blog	1
Book Chapter	1
Commentary	1
Conference Paper	2
Editorial	1
News Article	15
Journal Article	200
Magazine Article	2
Online Article	16
Opinion Piece	2
Research Report	4
Review	5

Contributed Collections

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

Staff members reviewed and considered offers from several professional communicators and leaders, retired or retiring professional communicators and even some agricultural media organization who considered contributing their materials to the ACDC.

Janis Shearer and Jim Evans conferred about the possibility of adding to the ACDC collection a career-long body of material written by agricultural journalist George Montgomery.

Associate Evans continued to search for agriculture communication materials to add to Bibleaves while the processing of Morris and Susanne Morris collection into ACDC database took full gear.

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 2022-2023 period. Twelve issues featured selected agricultural communications topics in journal articles, books, research reports, news media, commentaries, gatherings, and other settings. Some examples:

- Keys to communicating about food waste in different cultural settings
- The Trump effect on rural newspapers
- A tale of two urgent food system challenges
- How efforts to improve water quality influence urban-agricultural relationships
- Troubled landscape about ethics in rural health care organizations
- Constraints facing farm women in adapting to climate change
- How to keep young people in the farming sector
- Acceptance of cultured meat in 10 countries
- Case study of farmers as drivers of innovation
- The dangers of big data extend to farming

Issues were circulated to more than 900 educators, researchers, professional journalists and communicators, students, and others. It focused on communications aspects of food production and processing, foods and nutrition, natural resources and environment, renewable energy, rural activities, rural development, and other dimensions of agriculture. Individual issues provided news and identified research reports being added to the ACDC collection. Associate Evans served as managing editor and maintained the distribution database. At the start of January 2023, we began to circulate the newsletter to University of Illinois Library Listserv.

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 primarily with the Funk ACES Library account, and other University accounts. The rate of engagement increased from 6.02% in the previous year to 36.56% in the current year.

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 the Agricultural Communications Program of ALEC:

Janis Shearer and Jim Evans conferred about ongoing and potential collaborations with colleagues in the ALEC academic unit. Among the collaborations: (a) development of a certificate degree. (b) professional development activities for members of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) and (c) formal cross-unit appointments of Agricultural Communications and Library faculty members.

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 2022 and remained under consideration through the end of the period.

Marketing Materials:

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. Some brochures were also shared with Professor Eric in the Alec program to distribute to his students.

Special Searches, Requests, and Contacts:

During this period, the ACDC assisted Director Owen Roberts' AGCM 375 *International Agricultural Communications* class of 8 students with their research papers on extension. Each student was required to select a few ACDC resources for use, which graduate students Riffe and Olalere provided. Among them were:

- The role of extension in rural development: the role of livestock advisory service and skills development, exemplified by a case study of the historic development in Denmark.
- Workshops in agricultural extension programs.
- Voluntary Regulation and Farmers' Environmental Behaviour in Denmark and the Netherlands.
- Agriculture research-extension linkage systems: an international perspective.

In January we received a request from Professor Morgan to assist in incorporating the resources at the ACDC to a new course titled AGCM 310: Investigating Agricultural Communications. Hence, orientation sessions were led by Head Shearer and graduate student Olalere for 12 students. These consisted of two parts: a lecture portion in which the students were shown how to navigate Bibleaves followed by a tour of the Center where a selection of items from the collection were provided for the students to peruse.

In addition to coordinating materials for Director Roberts' class, and orienting Professor Morgan's 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:

- History Section of the 100th Anniversary Saddle and Sirloin Club (Professor of Agricultural Communications Oklahoma State University).
- Proposal for Socioeconomic Evaluation in Fertilizer Use Evaluation Research," for International Fertilizer Development Center, July 18, 1984. (ACDC Donor)
- An Institutional Analysis of a Rural Development Project: The case of the Puebla Project in Mexico (UIUC student).
- "In a fledgling discipline" written by Jim Evans.
- A complete list of scholarship and internship recipients within the professional development program of the American Agricultural Editors' Association (AAEA).
- Searches for selected documents from the Kerry J. Byrnes Collection.
- A request for agricultural communications course references involving global awareness.

Other outreach activities

In September 2022, the ACDC hosted Director Robert's AGCM 320 class to view selected items from the center's collection that included agricultural communication posters and periodicals. The visit was photographed by an ACES photographer, posted on the ACDC Twitter account, and led to a collaboration between librarians to translate five (5) posters from Arabic into English.



In February, Head Shearer presented about ACDC to the Illinois Extension Marcomm Staff on ACDC services and how the center can best serve them, after the presentation, they toured the Funk ACES Library and the ACDC.

The ACDC materials were also used in a National Agriculture Day exhibit created by graduate student Olalere during the period of March 6 -May 31. The exhibits "Highlighting First Issues in International Agriculture" recognized the first issues in local and international agricultural publications. These were displayed on a flat case due to the sensitivity of the materials.



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.

“ACDC is new to me and I’m glad to learn more. Congratulations on your work!” -Newsletter reader.

“Thanks for sending these documents.” -ACDC Patron.

“This was helpful. Thank you so much”- AGCM 320 Student.

“ Super fun – thanks for sharing, Janis! I didn’t realize that this went back for so long!” - Newsletter reader.

“Kudos to you and your team for another excellent newsletter” -Newsletter reader.

“Thanks much for the mention of the Agri Marketing Update, much appreciate it”- Publisher of Agri Marketing.

“ACDC is new to me and I’m glad to learn more. Congratulations on your work!”

“Thanks a lot for your attention and information. I’m so interested in the field of climate change.”