

2015 PROGRESS REPORT



Agricultural Communications Documentation
Center

ACES Funk Family Library, University of Illinois

2015 Progress Report

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DOCUMENTATION CENTER

ADMINISTRATIVE

Staffing and Operations

Staffing in the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center changed somewhat during 2015. Although there were some staff changes, several projects were completed by the new people involved.

Kelsey Berryhill, a student in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, continued to serve as the assistant manager and webmaster through her commencement in May, then continuing until June 30. Tyler Austgen, an ACES (Funk) Library graduate assistant, helped with ACDC activities during mid-2015.

Cailín Cullen, also a student in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, joined the ACDC staff as assistant manager and webmaster on August 25.

Prof. Pat Allen, head of ACES (Funk) Library, replaced Lura Joseph as ACDC Coordinator beginning in April as Professor Joseph entered a sabbatical leave with following plans to return to the cataloging department full time.

Olivia Harris served in the Center as an undergraduate assistant through Spring Semester. She was a student in the Agricultural Communications Program with special interest in environmental journalism and communications.

A plan to increase collaboration and communications with ACES (Funk) Library staff was implemented through Cailín Cullen's quarter-time assistantship in the Center and quarter-time reference desk hours at the Library Reference Desk.

Volunteer associates continued to play a vital 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. Volunteers during 2015 included, Jim Evans, emeritus professor of agricultural communications, 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 Dr. Lulu Rodriguez, Director of the Agricultural Communications Program, University of Illinois.

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 continues to test and implement enhancements. For example, Professor Joseph completed a comprehensive update of the ACDC Thesaurus. Based on her efforts and those of the

Library IT staff, the BibLeaves system now features improved input of keywords through a controlled vocabulary. The update also clarifies terminology on the public side. These recent enhancements were tested successfully.

Graduate Assistant Berryhill initiated a new “Digital Exhibit” section on the ACDC website and began the series with these first two exhibits:

- “The Farmer’s Wife: Women on the Farm in the 20th Century”
- “A Century of Publishing” Features 100th Anniversary editions of seven long-lived U. S. farm periodicals.

She also updated the ACDC Manual and developed a new “Archival Collections” web page. It currently highlights the Oscars in Agriculture Collection and the Volume 1 Number 1 Collection of U. S. agricultural periodicals. Other related collections will be featured, including several housed in the University Archives.

During the year, staff members continued to explore ways to maintain an accurate count of user search activity on the website, including detailed use of the BibLeaves search system. Sarah Williams, life sciences data services librarian, helped identify past problems in using Google Analytics to track use of the ACDC website. This has proven to be a challenge.

Another improvement in the system involved access to theses in the collection. Efforts to update them began during Fall 2015. Some documents contained only the table of contents and/or an abstract. About 15 percent of the theses reviewed required changes in the BibLeaves citations.

Graduate Assistant Cullen updated the ACDC finding aid in November. It identifies the location of all documents within boxes in the ACDC storage area.

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.

Social Media

ACDC continues an active presence on social media. As of yearend, the Center’s Twitter account (@ACDCUIUC) had more than 100 followers with more than 200 tweets. Tweets include original tweets of articles and events within the agricultural communications profession, retweets of others in the field, photos of V1N1 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.

Strategic Plans

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.

Growing the collection: During 2015, one long-time strategic goal involved continuing to grow the collection at a rate of at least 100 documents a month.

Positioning the Center: Another major strategic goal involves expanding the role and value of the Center in several ways: (1) increasing 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.

- ACDC personnel 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 continued discussions with CropLife America about initiating a national and international project, “Strategic Communications History of the Crop Protection Industry.”
- They continued discussions with the Association for Communication Excellence in Agricultural, Natural Resource, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE) organization, about partnering on a digital archiving project.

Expanding the research agenda: Progress in conducting and reporting agricultural communications research based on ACDC resources became increasingly apparent during 2015. 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 ACES (Funk) Library, the Agricultural Communications Program, 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

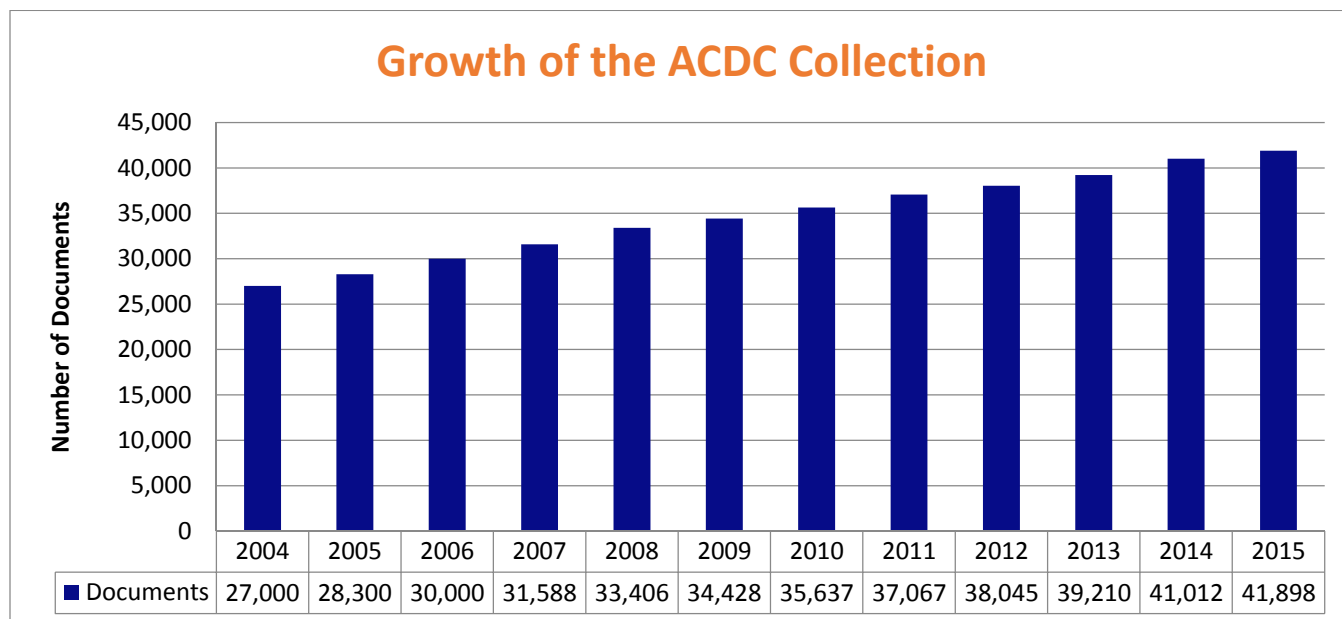
Document Collection

The ACDC Collection consisted of 41, 898 documents at the end of 2015. Eight hundred eighty-six documents were added to the BibLeaves database during 2015. This total fell short of the intended 100 documents added per month, with the shortage due to personnel changes and reduced ACDC staffing during the year.

Volume 1 Number 1 collection: Graduate Assistant Kelsey Berryhill finished processing the Volume One Number One collection of U. S. agricultural periodicals from the mid-1800s to date. She also developed a comprehensive, 31-page finding aid to help users locate information of interest in this unique collection of 1,842 periodicals. It offers a special view of innovation, creativity, and change in agricultural publishing across the decades.

Overview of other contributed materials: A 2015 review of contributed materials shows that 37 scholars, professionals, and other individuals have contributed agricultural communications literature and other related materials from their personal resources.

Contributions to ACDC have also involved major agricultural communications projects of historical importance. Among them: resources from the National Project in Agricultural Communications (1953-1962) and from the Oscars in Agriculture program (1986-2001). The latter recognized excellence in agricultural reporting in U. S. magazines, newspapers, radio, and television.



Serving Users

ACDC News: Eleven issues of the e-newsletter, ACDC News, were posted on the website during 2015. By highlighting some of the literature being added to the collection, on a regular basis it alerted more than 1,000 readers to agricultural communications research, methods, events, and issues throughout the world. Sample topics featured during the year included:

- New survey on food decisions and consumer trust in the food they eat
- Caution to agriculture-related firms and organizations about staffing for social media
- Six steps for maintaining agricultural journalism standards
- Rethinking the United Nations for the networked world
- Text mining and competitive analysis of social media in the food industry
- Who is tweeting what about food and agriculture applications of nanotechnology
- How small-market rural media are adapting to new media
- Two influences of big data in the future of agriculture
- New role needed for environmental and food safety journalism
- How ethical is food blogging?
- Farmer perspectives about climate change
- Recognizing 100 years of farm publishing
- Voice-based citizen journalism in rural India
- Gap between what's on the label and what's in the food: a case example
- Rural areas perhaps hardest hit by digital television transition
- Country journalism and development journalism: close connections
- Easing public concern about animal welfare
- Need to move beyond participation and empowerment of rural women

Online use of the ACDC website: Metrics from Google Analytics indicate that 846 users from 77 countries visited the ACDC website during 2015. Reported usage does not include an extensive amount of search activity to the BibLeaves search system and within it. The 1,598 sessions on the website ranged from 17 to 0 per day, or an average of 4.4. The home page was the highest-ranked starting page for online visits to the website. Other top-ranked starting pages included (in order of frequency) issues of ACDC News, the thesaurus, the oral history section (description and podcasts), digital exhibits, the “contact us” page, the contributed collections section, search tips, and the progress report of the previous year.

Hosting Scholars and Professionals: Apart from local and area visitors, the Center staff hosted other domestic and international visitors during 2015. Two professional agricultural marketing communicators visited the Center during April and May. One was from Missouri and the other represented a firm in Minnesota that manages several professional organizations of agricultural journalists and communicators. A graduate student and two associates from the University of Arkansas spent four days during July gathering oral history and conducting research about trends in agricultural communications. During May, a faculty member in the College of Development Communication at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños visited the Center with two associates from that university.

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 are some of the topics involved in those requests during 2015:

- Biographical information about a deceased rural communications educator and scholar in Australia
- History of the Cooperative Editorial Association (later Cooperative Communicators Association)
- Front-of-label marketing communications for packaged food snacks
- Role of communicators in the international food security challenge
- References for teaching sales skills used in agricultural marketing
- What farm broadcasters like and do not like in commercials they receive from advertisers for airing
- Agricultural media coverage and related literature about farm safety communications
- History of dairy cooperatives in the upper Midwest
- Perspectives on trends and outlook in agricultural communications
- Research reports and analyses published in relation to the National Research Agenda in Agricultural Communications, 2007-2010
- Agri-sales references for an agricultural communications course
- Historical references about the Extension information office at Iowa State University
- Consumer attitudes toward fair trade coffee
- Current and emerging communications issues in food, farming/ranching and environmental aspects of agriculture (for course reference)
- History of agricultural media in the U. S from newspapers to radio to television to the internet (for a Maryland Public Television program)
- References for a course involving agriculture-related environmental communications
- Communications challenges perceived by stakeholders in the Belgian food chain

- Role, performance and impacts of media in controversial issues involving agriculture and the environment
- Continuing influences and contributions of the communication training program of the National Project in Agricultural Communications (1950s and early 1960s)
- Data on consumer perceptions of antibiotics given to food animals
- Metrics and measurement options involving uses of agricultural 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.

Partnership with the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists: A partnership with the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists continued during 2015. 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 40 nations.

Other Outreach Efforts: Professor Joseph provided orientation for new ACES faculty members. 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

Four articles reflecting research by ACDC personnel and resources in the Center were published in, or accepted by, peer-reviewed journals during 2015. They included:

Roberts, O. and Evans, J. 2015. "Tackling structure and format – the 'great unknown' in professional blogging." *Journal of Applied Communications*. 99, 2: 6-14.

Evans, J. and Heiberger, S. 2015. "Fitting farm safety into risk communications teaching, research, and practice." *Journal of Applied Communications*. 99, 3: 68-80.

Rodriguez, L., Kulpavaropas, S., Annamalai, D., Wright, J., and Evans, J. 2015. "Trends in information needs and communication channel use among rural women in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 2000-2012." *Journal of Agricultural and Food Information*. 16, 3: 221-241. doi: 10.1080/10496505.2015.1047496.

Evans, J. and Heiberger, S. (Accepted 2015). "Agricultural media coverage of farm safety: Review of the literature." *Journal of Agromedicine*.

Two of these articles were based on research by ACDC personnel who took part in a pilot project supported by the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH) and conducted during 2013-2014. The purpose of this project was to lay the groundwork for expanded and innovative communications about occupational safety in farming and agriculture. The article on blogging drew upon resources in ACDC and was co-authored with a faculty member of the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. He is also vice president of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists. The article about information needs and communication channel use among rural women drew heavily upon ACDC resources and a long-time interest of ACDC personnel in gender aspects of communications in agricultural and rural development, internationally.

Two additional manuscripts involving the UMASH project were in review or production at the end of 2015, along with two manuscripts for the Centennial issue of the *Journal of Applied Communications*. Both of the latter manuscripts also involve ACDC personnel and resources. One examines progress in the National Research Agenda in Agricultural Communications since 2008. The other reveals continuing impact of the National Project in Agricultural Communications (1950s to early 1960s).

These research efforts reflect increasing collaboration among personnel in ACDC, the Agricultural Communications Program, ACES (Funk) Library, and other partner units. They address the long-term goal of using the special resources of ACDC rigorously and innovatively.

Encouragement from Users and Reviewers

Following are samples of feedback from users during 2015. They reflect responses to individual search and advisory services, issues of ACDC News, and various features of the ACDC website:

"Many thanks for keeping me in this most informative loop." (Israel)

"Great stuff! Many thanks for these! "

**"Thank you for always keeping us ag journalists updated with valuable inputs."
(Switzerland)**

"This comes in the nick of time...Many thanks for forwarding."

"Most interesting issue. We have published parts." (Italy)

"Keep up the good work!"

"Thanks so very much."

"Congratulations to you and the team on getting VINI project complete."

"I found your page here very helpful!" (UK)

"Appreciated the new link – good reading."

"More power to you and your team." (Philippines)