

Sixth National Conference

From Production to Consumption: Agricultural Information for All

April 22-24, 1999

Report by **Valerie Perry**, Public Services Librarian, University of Kentucky
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The United States Agricultural Information Network (USAIN) Sixth National Conference was held in Manhattan, Kansas, April 22-24, 1999. The conference theme was *From Production to Consumption: Agricultural Information for All*. U.S. participants included representatives from the National Agricultural Library, land-grant institutions, federal agencies, corporations, other libraries, information providers, and vendors. In addition, international participants came from as close as Canada and as far as Australia.. Conference sponsors included USAIN, the Kansas State University Libraries, and the Kansas State University Division of Continuing Education.

1999 Conference Scholarship Recipients:

Sheila Merrigan, University of Arizona
Diana Wheeler, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

Pre-conference Activities

The USAIN Executive Council held an all-day meeting before the official conference began. Attendees arriving early had several opportunities available to them. During the morning, a pre-conference workshop entitled Manhattan Area Partnerships: Information Management's Contribution to Agricultural and Agribusiness Agendas was offered. Presenters included: Mukti Bajaj, Rhonda Jahnke, Amy Hartman, George Brandsberg, Donna Schenk-Hamlin (all from Kansas State University), and Ron Wirtz (American Institute of Baking). The presenters discussed new products and services that were developed through partnerships with business and government, including "The Kansas Information Express Disc." Participants toured the Kansas State University Grain Milling and the American Institute of Baking. The tours ended at the weekly Bakery Science Club bake sale. In addition, both DIALOG and CABI gave free demonstrations of their products. During the evening, an informal reception was held at the Hemisphere Room of the Hale Library at Kansas State University. Tours of the recently renovated library were offered.

Thursday, April 22, 1999

Keynote Address

Attendees enjoyed a continental breakfast with exhibitors. Rita Fisher (Washington State University), USAIN President, chaired the Welcome and Keynote Address on Thursday morning. The featured speaker, Dr. Wes Jackson, President of the [The Land Institute](#) in Salina, Kansas, told the audience that "natural-systems agriculture", such as alternative agriculture, can provide us with a world in which we eat and live without further erosion of the planet. He urged the attendees to become advocates for the preservation of our land and not wait for someone else to do it. "The time is now for action - we can be agents of positive change instead of instruments of ecological destruction," he said. Dr. Jackson gave several real-life example of farmers struggling against environmental problems caused by agribusinesses. He expressed concern about the increasing growth, power and market-share of such companies. "If we don't save agriculture then we can't save nature. The solution is that we must make sustainable agriculture work ... and move from an extractive economy to a renewable economy."

Contributed Papers

Luti Salisbury (University of Arkansas) moderated two sessions on Information Systems and Web Resources. The first session, *Building a Digital Outreach Information System*, was presented by Robert S. Allen (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). Mr. Allen began by defining the [outreach system](#) as a "digital library composed of copyright-free, full-text, electronic documents of interest to the people of Illinois." Collection development concerns for document selectors included intellectual content, physical format, copyright freedom and costs. Pamphlets, newsletters and journals (articles and entire issues or runs), books (chapters and complete works) and electronic government publications are document types found in the outreach information system. Editorial concerns ranging from the politics of ownership to the liability of outdated material were considered. Other issues discussed included the system's mechanics, search interface, electronic conversion, archival concerns, and partnerships.

The second session, *Beyond the Farmgate: Australasian Partnerships in Agricultural Information Provision* was presented by Tricia Larner (CSIRO Tropical Agriculture, Australia), Ruth McIntyre (Kondinin Group, Australia), and Peter Walton (Suva, Fiji). Several new agricultural information products were discussed, as well as the importance of collaboration between the Agricultural Information Association of Australasia ([AGRIAA](#)) and USAIN. [Agrigate](#) is a database designed to complement the U.S. Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC) gateway. The intended audience is both agricultural researchers and farmers. An index of *Agrigate* resources can be found in *AgTerms* produced by the Kondinin Group in Australia. It is based on the *CAB Thesaurus* and incorporates the *Australian Bibliography of Agriculture*. *Prime Notes on CD* is produced by Department of Primary Industries Queensland, Australia. It includes full text extension and technical advisory fact sheets. *Meat Online: Internet for Beginners* ([MECIS](#)), produced by the Tropical Beef Centre, was designed for electronic communications and information systems in the meat industry. It is based on the book *Farming the Web: the Use of the Internet in Rural Australia*. Ms. Larner suggested that AGRIAA and USAIN collaborate since they have similar charges and strong internal networks. This

collaboration could provide important access to agricultural sources, exchange of ideas, networking opportunities, and research partnerships.

Lunch

Several informal groups met during the lunch break to discuss the importance of networking and mentoring within USAIN. A new mentoring program is now available. For more information please contact [Debra Currie](#) (North Carolina State University), USAIN Mentoring Work Group Chair.

AGRICOLA Interest Group: What Users Think was a lively discussion of issues related to AGRICOLA presented by Anne Fox (Western Oregon University), Carla Casler (Arid Lands Information Center), and Pamela Q. J. Andre (National Agriculture Library). Ms. Fox shared the results of the 1999 [Agricola Survey](#). Seventy responses were received and respondents included comments about what they liked most about AGRICOLA and what they liked least. Ms. Andre responded to many of the issues raised. Record inputs have increased significantly to 85,000 per year. The number of journals indexed has decreased to focus on core agricultural literature and key current issues (such as sustainable agriculture and genetics), especially those not covered well by other databases. Links to full text have been added when possible. NAL has been working with AGRIAA and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to offer broad international coverage.

National Agriculture Library (NAL) Update The four presenters from NAL included Pamela Andre, Melanie

Gardner, Keith Russell and Joseph Swab. Ms. Andre discussed many important issues including the 19.5 million dollar budget for 1998-1999, the Food Safety Research Information Office, preservation of USDA publications, and the proposed electronic access of all USDA publications. Ms. Gardner spoke about the AgNIC project. She announced that there were twenty-one partners which cover over twenty subject areas. Mr. Russell and Mr. Swab provided information on the extensive renovation being done at NAL. The changes include improved space for the collection, better safety and security for users and staff, and improved electronic access due to cable in flooring. The main floor will be ready November 1999 and the grand opening will be held during National Library Week in April 2000.

Dinner Theatre: Oklahoma! Many conference attendees enjoyed dinner and a live musical production of *Oklahoma!* at The Columbian Theatre in Wamego, Kansas. The theatre is also known for its rare and historic paintings from the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Friday, April 23, 1999

[Agriculture Network Information Center \(AgNIC\) Update](#)

Following a continental breakfast with exhibitors, several AgNIC Alliance Members provided an update on the AgNIC project. These included Doug Jones (University of Arizona), Jeanne Pfander (University of Arizona), Barbara Hutchinson (Arid Lands Information Center), Mary Ochs (Cornell University), Connie Britton (Ohio State University), Elaine Nowick (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), and Ina Pour-El (Iowa State University). Mr. Jones commended the USAIN members participating in the AgNIC project for the vision and guidance they have provided. Ms. Pfander spoke about the various collaborators involved with the creation of [Rangelands West](#). Ms. Hutchinson stressed the importance of presentations, partnerships, and funding possibilities. Cornell University has been involved with the project from the beginning and Ms. Ochs discussed how they assisted with the gateway and partnered with the USDA Economic Research Service and the National Agricultural Statistical Service. Ms. Britton illustrated the basic steps of becoming involved in the project. These were selecting a subject, deciding on technology needs, and developing a website. Ms. Nowick showed how the University of Nebraska was able to participate in the project despite the lack of start-up costs. All participants encouraged other USAIN members to become involved in AgNIC.

Changing Information Environment Interest Group

Gaining Control of Electronic Journals: a Lesson in Herding Cats was an enlightening discussion of issues surrounding electronic journals moderated by Debra Currie (North Carolina State University). Mr. Joseph Barrett (CABI) discussed the publisher's concerns such as balancing the need for investment in new systems with the need to keep prices reasonable. Mr. Michael Somers (Kansas State University) discussed technical services issues including collection development, acquisitions, cataloging, local web interfaces, purchasing options, local practices and license negotiations. Public service issues illustrated by Alesia McManus (University of Maryland) were provision of access, aggregators, outreach and marketing, end-user training and evaluation.

Concurrent Contributed Papers

Ina Pour-El (Iowa State University) moderated the first concurrent session on the topic of Database Development and Evaluation. The three presenters included Jodee Kawasaki (Montana State University), John Kane (National Agriculture Library) and Eileen B. Ferruggiaro (National Agriculture Library). During Indexing of Core Agricultural Serials, Ms. Kawasaki presented her research comparing the core list of journals from Literature of the Agricultural Sciences and their presence in five agricultural databases. Mr. Kane gave a talk entitled *Developing Metadata for*

an Online Agricultural Database and Ms. Ferruggiaro presented *The Development of the International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements (IBIDS) Database: Integrating Thesaurus Terms from Multiple Databases*.

Debra Currie (North Carolina State University) moderated the second concurrent session on the topic of Organizational Growth, Change, and Improvement. The three presenters included Antoinette Powell (University of Kentucky), Valerie Perry (University of Kentucky), and Mary Cassner (University of Nebraska - Lincoln). In *From Books to Binary: Supporting the Agricultural Mission in the 21st Century*, Ms. Powell described the ten-year process of how her Agriculture Library became the Agricultural Information Center, including the beginning assumptions, the role of patron feedback, implementation, and assessment. During *Crossing Boundaries: Public Service and Technical Service Staff Sharing Knowledge*, Ms. Perry spoke about a cross-functional training pilot project at the University of Kentucky involving two paraprofessionals, one from Reference and Government Publications and the other from Acquisitions. She emphasized the very low cost and the great benefits to the individual library staff members and to the library as a whole. Ms. Cassner discussed an instructional collaboration between librarians and the College of Agriculture faculty in her talk entitled *What Makes a Happy Marriage?: Course Integrated Library 110/Agriculture 103*. Assessment included the use of class evaluations, focus groups and post-final exams.

Legislative Information and Government Relations

Sarah Kelly (Purdue University) reported on the USAIN Legislative Committee's efforts. The committee focussed on support for NAL. Ms. Kelly urged USAIN members to write letters to their legislators regarding the NAL budget crisis. She shared a sample letter written by the Executive Directors of the American Library Association and the Association of Research Libraries. A sample letter, legislative contacts, NAL budget data and other information regarding this topic can be found on the USAIN website under Write To Your Congressman!

Collection Management Interest Group

Claudine Jenda (Auburn University) moderated a thought-provoking session entitled *Gray Literature II: Web-Based Solutions or Larger Piles of Gray Matter?* Panelists included Kay Mowery (University of Georgia), Elaine Nowick (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) and Tim McKimmie (New Mexico State University). Ms. Mowery shared some of her "treasure hunt" examples where she found answers to difficult questions. She used a variety of sources including institutional and individual websites. Ms. Nowak suggested that better web page descriptions have helped solve some of the gray literature problems. Usage of standards such as the Dublin Core is becoming more important for precision information retrieval. Mr. McKimmie stressed the importance of sharing the knowledge we have so that it does not "languish in obscurity." Becoming an AgNIC partner is one way to combat the problem of gray literature in agriculture.

Hawaiian Luau Buffet

Friday evening the conference participants enjoyed a Hawaiian luau buffet dinner and did some informal networking in a relaxed setting.

Saturday, April 24, 1999

Social Issues Interest Group

Dr. Pat Murphy (Kansas State University Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering) and Dr. John Leatherman (Kansas State University Department of Agricultural Economics) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of large farming in *Confinement Livestock Operations: What are the Issues?* This session was sponsored by the Social Issues Interest Group and moderated by Margaret Merrill (Virginia Tech). Dr. Murphy illustrated the twenty-six week cycle of raising pigs large-scale. His data included statistics on water usage and waste disposal. Other environmental topics included noise, dead animal disposal, fuel storage, visual damage, construction, maintenance and closures. Kansas State University is conducting research in these areas. He suggested that the [Midwest Plan Service](#) is a useful source of additional information. Dr. Leatherman's portion of the presentation dealt with both potential economic, population, social and environmental issues. For the farmer, there are substantial economic benefits for confined animal feeding operations. The size of the feeding operation increases in direct proportion to the efficiency in production and transaction costs. In addition, the larger farms will be able to survive periods of low prices much more easily than independent farms. Impacts on the communities are unclear at this time. For instance, overall taxable property values and sales tax collections typically increase whereas adjacent property values decline substantially. He stressed that each community is unique and needs to consider all of the possible impacts.

Contributed Papers

Katie Clark (Purdue University) moderated four sessions on AgNIC. In the first session, *Development and Vision of the Agriculture Network Information Center*, Keith Russell (National Agriculture Library), Doug Jones (University of Arizona), and Melanie Gardner (National Agriculture Library) examined the past, present and future of AgNIC. Mr. Russell chronicled the history of AgNIC from its inception in 1991 to the establishment of its Executive Board in 1998. Mr. Jones continued the history by detailing the many accomplishments achieved in 1998 including the establishment of a permanent coordinator. Ms. Gardner explained the ongoing planning occurring through annual meetings and taskforces. She also gave examples of future tasks such as increasing subject coverage, developing and implementing standards, and planning for a more advanced search engine.

In the second session, *Developing a New Subject Page for AgNIC*, Tim McKimmie (New Mexico State University) advised the audience on practical tips for designing a website for AgNIC. He suggested that a wide variety of materials should be included, such as publications, reference tools and related organizations. It is good to involve others with an expertise in the subject area to help fill in the gaps.

In the third session, *Cattle, Corn, and Chili Peppers: Searching for Agricultural Information on AgNIC*, Anne Hedrich (Utah State University) and Barbara Hutchinson (Arid Lands Information Center) current options for locating specific information on the various AfNIC web sites. Difficulties interpreting the overall home page were noted and plans for a new search interface outlined. Ms. Hutchinson discussed the future plans for the rangelands site including working with Geographic Information System personnel.

In the fourth session, *Meeting Rangeland Information Needs Through A Web-based Reference Service: The Arizona AgNIC Experience*, Jeanne Pfander (University of Arizona) explained how her team handles the reference questions generated by their website. Users are typically academic and from the United States. The types of questions vary from forage allocations to current legislation to the location of the first academic rangeland management program.

Luncheon and USAIN General Business Meeting

USAIN President, Rita Fisher, chaired the Business Meeting. Highlights from the Executive Meeting held on April 22nd included the possibility of engaging a financial management service, a proposal for USAIN/IAALD partnership, and a discussion of the 2001 conference. Reporting groups included the Treasurer, Communications Committee, Legislative and Government Relations Committee, Membership Committee, and Preservation Committee. Activity reports were given regarding the USDA Digital Publications Preservation Program, the Seventh United States / Eastern European Agricultural Librarians Roundtable, the 2005 USAIN Conference, the Mentoring Program, and the Agricola Survey. USAIN election results were announced. The new President-Elect is Diana Farmer (Kansas State University) and the new Directors are Rebecca Bernthal, Tim McKimmie, and Connie Britton. The meeting ended with a call for participation for committees and interest groups.

USAIN Preservation Update

Katherine Walter (University of Nebraska - Lincoln) updated the audience on the [National Agriculture Library Preservation Program](#). NAL hired a coordinator who will work with individual land-grant institutions on preservation issues.

Tour of Konza Prairie Research Natural Area: The Tallgrass Laboratory

Participants toured the [Biological Field Station](#) of Kansas State University. This 3,487-hectare tallgrass prairie preserve is co-owned by the Kansas State University and The Nature Conservancy. Participants had the opportunity to take a walking tour and a driving tour through the preserve, and to hear about its history and to learn about the research taking place in this beautiful area. One highlight of the driving tour was the chance to view a bison herd.

1999 USAIN Program Planning Committee

Jodee Kawasaki (Montana State University), Conference Program Chair

Program Committee

JoAnn DeVries (University of Minnesota)
Diana Farmer (Kansas State University)
Sharon Fujitani (California Polytechnic State University)
Ina Pour-El (Iowa State University)
Luti Salisbury (University of Arkansas)
William D. Siarny, Jr (National Cattlemen's Association)
Irwin Weintraub (Rutgers University)

Local Arrangements

Luann Ingersoll (Kansas State University)
Angela Jones (Kansas State University)