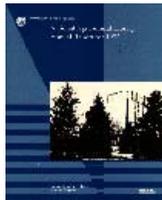


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Annual Report for 1993



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Joseph H. Howard
Retired NAL Director.



Pamela Q. J. André
Acting NAL Director

At Joe Howard's retirement reception Tom Bryant, Jr. (left), Executive Director, Associates of the National Agricultural Library, Inc., presents Joe with a "Bird of Paradise" watercolor by Leila Moran, President of the Associates and NAL retiree, on behalf of the Associates. The Associates of NAL was one of a dozen national and international organizations whose members and representatives joined NAL staff and hundreds of other friends who braved an ice-storm to honor Joe for his accomplishments during his career and to wish him a long and happy retirement.



Director's Message

1993 was a year of change for the National Agricultural Library.

The election of President Clinton brought Mike Espy to USDA as the new Secretary of Agriculture. One of Secretary Espy's top priorities was to reorganize the department in order to cut costs, reduce the number of USDA agencies and, overall, make the department more "farmer friendly." The Secretary proposed that NAL be merged into a new Agricultural Research and Education Service along with the Agricultural Research Service, the Extension Service, and the Cooperative State Research Service.

But even before the change in administration, NAL had been moving in the direction of change. Since arriving at NAL in 1983, Director Joe Howard had steadfastly guided us toward the library of the future, in which our wonderful collection would be accessible by computer anywhere in the world. In 1993, we began to pursue that goal in earnest through a systematic strategic planning effort. We began formulating detailed, carefully reasoned plans on how NAL will look and function in the next 10 years. We have completed initial environmental assessments through the activities of several work groups. One key decision related to that planning effort is our commitment to make electronic information the "preferred medium" for library materials as of January 1, 1995. This we have announced publicly in a national news release.

Finally, one item not included in this annual report, but which is as important as any listed here, is the retirement in February 1994 of Joe Howard after 11 years as NAL Director. The enormous strides NAL has made in shaping electronic technology to meet our needs are a result of Joe's leadership. From text digitizing to electronic document delivery to international cooperation, Joe's vision of the library of the future will continue to impact the agricultural information community for decades. He was a pioneer. He provided vision, leadership and opportunity for us all.

Pamela Q.J. André
Acting Director
National Agricultural Library

FY93 Highlights: Secretary Espy's First Visit to NAL



Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy examines items from NAL's Special Collections with curator Alan Fusonie and NAL Director Joe Howard.

Joseph H. Howard (left), tells a story to Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy (2nd from left) while introducing him to NAL staff.



Secretary Espy greets the NAL staff.

Secretary Espy looks at items of interest in NAL's collection of Forest Service photographs while Ron Young (background) searches the power files for additional subject files.



Secretary Espy examines materials related to George Washington Carver, while (L-R) Ron Young, Joseph Howard, NAL Director, and Alan Fusonie, Head of NAL's Special Collections presents materials of interest and answer questions.

Ron Young demonstrates to Secretary Espy the laser video disk and computer database developed by NAL to provide instant access anywhere to Forest service photographs and the companion system for USDA photographs, developed jointly with USDA's Photography Division.



Leo Chem's bronze portrait head of Abraham Lincoln which is permanently exhibited in the lobby of the National Agricultural Library.

National Agricultural Library

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General

NAL History and Background

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) is one of three national libraries of the United States, with the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine. NAL was established as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture under legislation signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862.

That legislation, the Organic Act of 1862, set a mission "to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture...." The act further placed upon the Secretary of Agriculture the responsibility to "procure and preserve all information concerning agriculture...which...can obtain by means of books."

From that beginning until 1969, NAL was located at U.S. Department of Agriculture Headquarters in Washington, D.C. In 1969, the library was moved to its current home in Beltsville, MD, on the grounds of the USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

The library's collection totals nearly 2.2 million volumes, making NAL the largest agricultural library in the world. To accommodate that number of volumes NAL has about 48 miles of bookshelves located throughout the 14 stories of the NAL building. But the collection is not only books. It is also journals; audiovisual materials like photographs, films, slides and posters; research reports and theses; maps; patents; computer software and laser discs; and artifacts. The library also receives about 22,000 periodicals each year.

NAL has items dating back to the seventeenth century and in 75 different languages. The collection grows by about 20,000 to 30,000 volumes each year.

Access to the NAL collection is provided through AGRICOLA, the library's bibliographic database. AGRICOLA, which stands for AGRICultural OnLine Access, is available online or on compact disc and contains over 3 million citations to agricultural literature. It is used by agricultural researchers worldwide. NAL, aided by the land-grant university community, adds thousands of records to AGRICOLA each year.

NAL's staff of about 210 people includes librarians, computer specialists, administrators, information specialists and clerical people. A number of the staff work at 11 specialized information centers established by the library. These centers provide information services in areas of particular concern to world agriculture. Subjects covered by these special information centers are agricultural trade and marketing, alternative farming systems, animal welfare, aquaculture, biotechnology, food and nutrition, plant genome, rural development, technology transfer, water quality and youth development. These centers provide a wide range of customized information services ranging from responding to reference requests and developing publications to coordinating outreach activities and establishing information dissemination networks.

In general, it is NAL's role to gather, maintain and make accessible agricultural information. The library is viewed nationally and internationally as the premiere world resource for that information. Those whom NAL serves include federal, state and local government scientists and officials; farmers; professors, researchers and students at universities and colleges; private scientific and agricultural

organizations; business leaders; the news media; the general public and, more and more in recent years, foreign agricultural organizations.

The 1990 Farm Bill designated NAL as the primary agricultural information resource of the United States. The Farm Bill formally recognized NAL's responsibility to the public, private, and international agricultural information communities, as well as to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

NAL is the coordinator and primary resource for a nationwide network of state land-grant university libraries and USDA research libraries. Together, NAL and these libraries form a document delivery service that allows interlibrary loan of agricultural materials nationwide to USDA personnel.

In addition, NAL works closely with land-grant university libraries in using electronic technology to improve access to the nation's agricultural knowledge. The technology also helps in the library's ongoing efforts to preserve older, rapidly deteriorating agricultural materials. This technology includes CD-ROMs, laser discs, computer networks and optical scanning. As one example of NAL technology use, the library has placed over 50,000 photographs and images from the collections of the USDA Forest Service and the USDA Photography Division on two 12-inch laser videodiscs. Specific photographs can be located in seconds through computer software that allows "keyword" searching.

NAL has also established software demonstration centers which hold hundreds of software programs on food and nutrition and other areas of agriculture. The centers allow NAL users to review and evaluate the computer software.

Information on NAL products and services is available through the library's electronic bulletin board ALF (Agricultural Library Forum). ALF supports messaging and conferencing, bulletins and file transfer on the range of agricultural subjects. ALF can be reached on (301) 504-6510, -5111, -5496, or -5497, or on the Internet (see page 35).

The library is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., eastern time, Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays. Visitor parking is available.

A reference desk is staffed by NAL librarians during normal library hours. Here patrons can receive assistance in library use and in identifying research sources. Reference librarians also respond to telephone requests for assistance. The NAL reference desk can be reached at (301) 504-5479.

Jefferson Letters Found in NAL Collection



Letters signed by Thomas Jefferson, and dealing with various agricultural matters, were found among old NAL files in August 1993.

Also with the Jefferson letters were several letters addressed to the former President and Founding Father.

Photo courtesy of Monticello/Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation

Letters signed by Thomas Jefferson, and dealing with various agricultural matters, were found among old NAL files in August 1993. Also with the Jefferson letters were several letters addressed to the former President and Founding Father.

The 11 letters date from April 24, 1786, to October 20, 1819, and include requests to Jefferson for appointments to federal agricultural offices, letters from Jefferson transferring "millet seed" and "succory seed" to acquaintances in the United States and a letter to Jefferson from "Lord Sheffield" of the Board of Agriculture in London, England, commenting on Jefferson's invention of a "mould board" for use in farming.

The letters were found in files of agricultural materials dating from the 1940s. The papers had been sent to NAL by USDA's Economic Research Service.



Secretary Houston and letters from W.K. Bixby conveying the Jefferson correspondence to the Department of Agriculture.

courtesy of NAL Special Collections



Jefferson's reply to a letter from Henry Watkins regarding succory [chickory] seed, etc. Jefferson gives tips for cultivation and usefulness of chickory, plus a note on his health. Watkin's letter as well as Jefferson's reply are among those found in the NAL collection

courtesy of NAL Special Collections



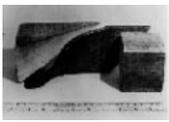


Photo of the mould board model which Thomas Jefferson sent to France. A similar model sent to the British Board of Agriculture is the subject of letter from Lord Sheffield also among the correspondence at NAL.

photo courtesy of Smithsonian Photo Archives and NAL Special Collections



Patent models of plows reflecting Thomas Jefferson's mould board concept.

photo courtesy of Smithsonian Photo Archives and NAL Special Collections

NAL Materials Help Celebrate Smokey Bear Anniversary

Materials from the NAL collection will form the basis for a national exhibit commemorating the 50th anniversary of Smokey Bear. Throughout the year, NAL assisted coordinators of the exhibit in searching NAL's vast collection of Smokey Bear materials. The Smokey Bear collection is one of the largest in the world and was given to NAL by the USDA Forest Service. Items in the collection include original artwork, comic books, coloring books, dolls and other toys, recordings, video materials and other Smokey Bear memorabilia. The Smokey Bear Exhibit is touring nationally throughout 1994.

Looking Ahead

NAL Commits to Electronic Library Goal

The year saw NAL take several significant steps toward its goal of becoming an electronic library.

NAL Director Joseph Howard began the Electronic Information Initiative in December 1992 to research, plan and implement a systematic program of managing data in electronic form. Phase I of the Initiative was an examination of the issues associated with the library's ability to manage electronically created and stored information.

A steering committee enlisted a broad-based group of NAL staff, organized into several committees, to work on this project.

The committees gathered policy and procedures statements, identified background material, reviewed current literature, brainstormed to identify questions that needed answers and scenarios that might be faced in the future, proposed answers to questions and, finally, made both broad and specific recommendations for actions to be taken by NAL.

A key recommendation was that the Electronic Information Initiative Statement of Commitment be approved (see the following page). Committing to become an "electronic library" will position NAL to meet the challenges of moving from providing information services using a traditional, print collection to providing full electronic access to information.

Included in the phase I report are sections that address two other key components of the Electronic Information Initiative; the Evaluation Study Developing Structures for Managing Electronic Information in Agriculture, and a proposal to make NAL's bibliographic database, AGRICOLA, available online at NAL and accessible via the Internet.

The Electronic Information Initiative Statement of Commitment

The world of information management is changing daily. The current paper-based information delivery system is inadequate to keep pace with the needs of the modern agriculturalist. Increasingly, information is produced in digitized form, and with recent telecommunications innovations and the Internet, the resources available to the computer literate researcher are expanding exponentially. The length of time expended for traditional publication, procurement, physical handling, indexing and document delivery processes is no longer acceptable. Transition from the traditional print collection to the "electronic library" will necessitate a shift from a production mode to a facilitator mode of service.

The National Agricultural Library has a responsibility to provide leadership to the increasingly networked agricultural information community. In its role as a national library, NAL has an obligation to manage information, promote standardized formats, repackage essential information for mass distribution and mediate electronic access to information irrespective of where the data reside. In addition, NAL is an intermediary with a large client-base that can facilitate USDA research initiatives and enhance the dissemination of these research results to the world.

As knowledge takes on new forms, library staff must learn new skills and develop new storage/dissemination models and systems suitable to meet the requirements of the electronic information age. The NAL is creating a planning document for a systematic program of managing data in electronic form and establishing strategies for collecting, storing and distributing U.S. agricultural information in electronic form.

To demonstrate its commitment to meeting the challenges of becoming an "electronic library," on January 1, 1995, the National Agricultural Library will designate electronic information the "preferred medium."

NAL Makes Other Plans for the Future

NAL initiated a strategic planning process in 1993 that will help guide library operations into the next century. Under the guidance of the Office of Management Studies of the Association of Research Libraries, the first phase of the process focused on developing an understanding of strategic planning, conducting environmental scans, and initiating a "visioning" process.

In early 1993, staff were introduced to elements of strategic planning during an orientation for all staff and a 3-day retreat attended by about 35 staff.

In April, a Study Group consisting of staff at all levels and representing all operating units of the library was named. This group functions as a steering committee that guides and coordinates the process. Five additional work groups were named in the first phase:

- the History Work Group developed a chronology of NAL events and identified major trends, issues, and patterns in its evolution;
- studies were conducted by the Internal and External Current Situation Work Groups to identify NAL's strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats;
- the Visions Work Group developed four scenarios of possible NAL futures, evaluated the results of discussions about these scenarios, and began drafting a preliminary vision statement;
- the Communications Work Group kept NAL employees apprised of the process as it developed.

At the close of 1993, the study group was coordinating activities that will identify NAL's core values. The entire visioning process will result in a statement of NAL's mission, core values, and vision for the future. The completion of the visioning process will set the stage for future planning.

Fifty-four NAL employees have been assigned to the work groups and more than 80 percent of NAL's staff have participated in discussions related to the internal environmental scan, the scenarios, and the core values.