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Abstract

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Summarizes the accomplishments of the National Agricultural Library in 2003.

Keywords: AGRICOLA, agricultural history, agricultural information, agricultural library, agriculture, Department of Agriculture, human nutrition, information center, national libraries



About the Cover

The image featured on the cover is drawn from the Henry G. Gilbert Nursery and Seed Trade Catalog Collection, part of the Special Collections of the National Agricultural Library.

ARS Mission

The Agricultural Research Service conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority and provides information access and dissemination to—

- Ensure high-quality, safe food and other agricultural products.
- Assess the nutritional needs of Americans.
- Sustain a competitive agricultural economy.
- Enhance the natural resource base and the environment.
- Provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole.

The National Agricultural Library—

- Serves as a national library of the United States and as the library of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Acquires, organizes, manages, preserves, and provides access to information and provides quality stewardship of its unique collection.
- Assists, trains, and educates people based on assessment of their information needs.
- Provides leadership in information management.
- Maximizes access to information through collaborative efforts and utilization of technology.
- Enhances global cooperation through international exchange of information and the provision of services and technical assistance.

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From the Director

In 2003, the National Agricultural Library (NAL) began repositioning organizational resources to create a robust environment for the future, capable of continuous improvement. This process was designed to provide NAL the capacity to offer new value-added services in response to the changing needs of our customers for information related to agriculture. NAL's planning process involves the entire NAL organization along with partner institutions throughout the nation.

The Library's accomplishments, highlighted in this report, provide the basis for future integrated service development. In 2003, NAL staff launched a USDA digital desktop library (DigiTop), implemented the Voyager integrated library system (ILS), expanded Web-based information services, created extensive new Web content, improved document delivery services, and instituted a system to measure customer satisfaction. These achievements reflect NAL's creativity and expertise in serving the Department of Agriculture and the nation and form a foundation for future improvements in service to our customers.

To establish a process to plan future services, NAL engaged Michael Crandall, Technology Manager for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to conduct an analysis of Web-based systems and to recommend organizational approaches for NAL to better respond to customers' needs. Crandall's thoughtful recommendations initiated valuable NAL staff discussion about technology-based integrated services and for planning the Library's future priorities, direction, and vision. The skill and dedication reflected in the accomplishments included in this report, and the service improvements planned for the years ahead, will enable NAL customers to benefit from continual improvements in NAL services.

In our last report, I wrote about the 2001 interagency panel review of NAL activities and about the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board's subsequent strong endorsement of the interagency panel's recommendations (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/assessment/comments/index.html>). These recommendations continue to guide and inspire NAL as staff plan future service improvements.

I encourage you to review these recommendations in conjunction with these reports. NAL is using the recommendations of the interagency panel and the NAREEE Board to develop a roadmap for the years ahead. The Library is working to realize the NAREEE Board's further recommendation that "revitalization and visibility of the NAL should be high on USDA's overall priorities for the future."

NAL's future offers exciting opportunities, as staff continues to connect and engage customers with relevant agricultural information, services, content, and resources. This progress is increasingly vital to the nation and has a direct impact on our ability to meet the global challenges of the future.

We invite you to share your own suggestions for NAL's future. You may e-mail me directly at Director@nal.usda.gov. I look forward to hearing about your ideas, and we look forward to your help in shaping NAL's future vision and direction.

Peter R. Young
Director



On January 22, 2003, Secretary Ann M. Veneman officially launched a pilot year of DigiTop, ushering in a new era for USDA agricultural information.