Government Information and Official Publications Section

NEWSLETTER -- SPRING 2004

With budget crises looming still, this is a time of greater cooperation and collaboration than ever before. This issue of the GIOPS Newsletter highlights news about collaboration and cooperation from some of the libraries of our members.

Eleanor Frierson, Deputy Director of the **National Agricultural Library (NAL)** of the United States is a GIOPS member and Chair of the Buenos Aires Conference SubCommittee. She reports on the news from NAL (http://www.nal.usda.gov) which is located in Beltsville, Md. NAL, the world's foremost agricultural library, is part of the Agricultural Research Service, USDA's chief scientific research agency. See http://www.nal.usda.gov/services.htm and

http://www.nal.usda.gov/ref/
The National Agricultural Library (NAL) is building its Digital Desktop Library, DigiTop, (described at http://www.nal.usda.gov/digitop_interim/) to provide 24-hour access for USDA staff to important electronic information resources--key databases, journals, news services, statistics. The NAL provides access to these digital resources by combining NAL and other USDA funding to obtain USDA-wide licenses and offering a single interface to the participating USDA agencies. The NAL is adding information products to DigiTop as it arranges licenses and identifies important free-of-charge products. A recent development is that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library (NAL) has established a pilot demonstration project with Mississippi State University (MSU) in Starkville that will give MSU researchers, teachers and students easier and faster access to the latest and best available information in the agricultural sciences. NAL Director Peter R. Young and MSU president Charles Lee have signed a cooperative agreement to establish the first-of-its-kind partnership between the library and a university and to launch the DigiTop PLUS Pilot Demonstration Project at MSU.

The collaboration means the MSU community will have licensed access through the World Wide Web to science-based information on agriculture and related fields through electronic scientific journals. This service will be integrated with electronic reference and document delivery services provided by NAL, based in Beltsville, Md. In addition to the benefits to MSU, the project will provide NAL an opportunity to test the feasibility, costs and effectiveness of extending the digital desktop system to other colleges and universities with programs in agricultural sciences. This project complements decades of cooperation as the MSU Libraries already participates in the NAL's AGRICOLA database, which contains bibliographic records of materials acquired by NAL and cooperating institutions in agricultural and related sciences.

Eleanor, who is co-chair of the U.S. government's Science.gov Alliance, reports that version 2.0 of the Science.gov gateway, www.science.gov, will be unveiled this spring. Version 2.0 will search science.gov's collection of more than 30 databases and 1800 Web sites in real time from a single search box, and introduce a first version of real time relevancy ranking of results from all sources. The Science.gov Alliance is also working on improvements to be added in Version 3.0 of www.science.gov, expected by spring of 2005, and future versions.

Jane Wu, Chief Librarian of the **David Lubin Memorial Library** of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy and Secretary of GIOPS, reports on an exciting blend of the ancient and the avante garde. The Library houses an exceptional number of important works on agriculture, food and nutrition, rural development and related topics. After the United States National Agricultural Library, which has a more national focus, it is believed to be the second largest agricultural library facility in the world. FAO's extraordinary collection contains many ancient, rare and valuable scientific treasures. The Library also has a Virtual Library for FAO staff world wide, (see http://www.fao.org/library) similar to DigiTop but on a much more modest scale, in tune with much reduced budgets. This Virtual Library was also made possible through a very strong collaborative effort within the UN System, that of the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium (UNSEIAC) whereby cooperative purchasing doubles, perhaps triples, buying power. For many years FAO Library has also provided the Secretariat for another cooperative international network for document delivery, the Agricultural Libraries NETwork, AGLINET comprised of fifty-seven large agricultural or specialized libraries. (See http://www.fao.org/library/_info_services/Index.asp).

However the most recent, and in the opinion of many, the best, FAO-led collaborative agreement comes at a time when, as stated at the World Summit on the Information Society, the information divide is greater than ever. Collaboration between the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, Cornell University Mann Library and the major scientific publishers has resulted in the *Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture* (AGORA) initiative which was launched in October 2003. For an overview and to see which countries and institutions are eligible, see http://www.aginternetwork,org AGORA is a global partnership to provide free online journal access to developing countries.

It is well known that many agricultural libraries in developing countries have not received any learned journals in over ten years. Other such libraries have been destroyed by war or economic and political havoc. Without access to current scientific information, scientists struggle – to keep up with advances in science and technology, to publish their own findings in peer-reviewed journals, to update their teaching curricula, to find funding, and in many other arenas. The demand for access to scientific literature in developing countries has gone unfulfilled for many years, and has led to the isolation of a generation of scientists from their peers.

The long-term goal of the AGORA programme is to increase the quality and effectiveness of agricultural research and training in low-income countries, and in turn, to improve food security. To contribute to achieving this goal, AGORA provides access over the world-wide-web to a research level collection of key journals in agriculture and related biological, environmental and social sciences to the poorest countries in the world. It offers to researchers, policy-makers, educators, students, technical workers and extension specialists, a collection of literature comparable to that available to their counterparts in the developed world. While we are at three months after launch and now have over 150 institutions registered, we want more institutions in the developing world to benefit from the tremendous generosity of the publisher partners. All who read this are invited to visit the website at http://www.aginternetwork.org and if you are from, or have contacts in, the countries indicated please act accordingly.

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