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Library Profile / The National Agricultural Library

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Library Profile

The National Agricultural Library

by **Karl E. Debus** (Head, Monographic Acquisitions and Fiscal Units, Acquisitions & Serials Branch, e-mail kdebus@nalusda.gov.)

Column Editor: **Barbara Dean** (Fairfax County Public Library)

Introduction

Acquisitions work at the National Agricultural Library (NAL) is truly an international effort. With approval plans that cover the world and a gift and exchange program that includes partners in every continent (except Antarctica), NAL's international leadership in collecting and disseminating agricultural information is unsurpassed.

NAL, the world's largest library devoted solely to the collection and dissemination of agricultural and agriculturally related information, is also one of the three national libraries of the United States. While NAL works closely with the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine to ensure coordinated collection development between the three national libraries, NAL also

serves a special role as the departmental library for the 100,000 employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). NAL's VTLS based online union catalog contains information from NAL's five USDA Agricultural Research Service field libraries, the National Arboretum, and cooperators who catalog specialized agricultural information for inclusion within the database. The intermixing of NAL's international, national, and departmental roles makes the business of acquisitions at NAL challenging and interesting.

When most people think of agriculture, they generally think of farms, cows, and crops. The scope of NAL's acquisitions efforts is far broader than this image. NAL's collection of more than two million volumes covers a broad range of topics specific to and related to agricul-

ture. Thirteen specialized information centers identify and request titles in topics as diverse as biotechnology, food and nutrition, and youth development. Other areas of specific concern to USDA and NAL include forestry, animal welfare, water quality, alternative farming systems, global change, rural health, aquaculture, and the Plant Genome Project. The subject specialists in NAL's information centers and reference services request titles that supplement the broader selection activities managed by the librarians of NAL's Acquisitions & Serials Branch.

NAL's Acquisitions and Serials Branch

The Acquisitions & Serials Branch of NAL is comprised of thirty-three staff,

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala., U.S.A. — James L. Smith has joined EBSCO Subscription Services as Director of Sales and Marketing. Smith has worked in the library service industry for 25 years, most recently serving as Director, Sales and Marketing, U.S. and Latin America, for The Faxon Company. As a member of the EBSCO Subscription Services Division team, he will work closely with key staff members to accomplish the company's goal of expanding new services and systems development for libraries.

Smith will also work with EBSCO's regional managers and sales representatives throughout the United States.

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six of whom are librarians. The Head of the Branch oversees three Unit Heads who are responsible for Serial Acquisitions, Monographic Acquisitions and Fiscal Control, and Gift & Exchange. Two other librarians are responsible for collection development, selection of titles, administering the GPO selective Depository Library Program and reviewing titles received from the Library of Congress' Special Foreign Approval Program. In fiscal year 1993, the materials budget for NAL was a little over two million dollars. This represented about eleven percent of NAL's budget. Eighty-one percent of the materials budget was expended on serials; monographic expenditures accounted for nineteen percent. The unique quality of many of the titles acquired by NAL is shown by the fact that forty percent of the Cataloging processed by the Library is original.

Monographic Acquisitions

NAL uses the VTLS integrated library system for acquisitions and fund control of firm ordered monographs. A dBASE IV database is used to track expenditures of books received on blanket orders. The VTLS Acquisitions and Fund Accounting System (AFAS) is divided into three primary functions. The Acqui-

sitions System contains modules for orders, receipts, invoices, payments, credit memos, and claims. Acquisitions Utilities contains vendor, fund accounting, and library address modules as well as utilities that allow the user to select different currencies, develop individualized help screens, generate reports, add user-id's, and close out the fiscal year. House-keeping allows the user to perform reindexing of databases, backups and recoveries, and archiving of outdated receipts and canceled orders. Since AFAS resides on a dBASE platform, members of the Acquisitions & Serials Branch routinely download files from AFAS to dBASE to construct more sophisticated reports than are currently available on AFAS.

AFAS runs on a Novell network. Eight workstations are attached to this network, which is linked to the Hewlett Packard mainframe computer that supports the other VTLS integrated library system modules: OPAC, Serials Control, Circulation, Cataloging, and Indexing. Status information from AFAS is updated within the main VTLS system on a daily basis. All users can identify whether an in process monographic record is "To be ordered," "On order," "Received," or "Canceled."

In FY 1993, firm ordered titles ac-

counted for eighty-one percent of monographic expenditures, with approval plans representing the remaining nineteen percent. Approximately twenty-eight percent of all monographic expenditures was spent on foreign titles. The Acquisitions & Serials Branch received and processed 11,000 books. Thirty-eight percent of these titles were received as gifts, including titles received from GPO.

Several of the NAL information centers rely heavily on audiovisual materials. This specialized need is represented by the fact that audiovisuals and other non-book formats accounted for thirteen percent of the total money expended on monographs. The NAL audiovisual collection is particularly strong in the areas of food and nutrition and animal welfare.

Serial Acquisitions

NAL uses VTLS for serials control, which is separate from the Acquisitions system. The Serials Control function, unlike AFAS, resides on the mainframe computer and uses MARC holdings format. Special characteristics of Serials Control include a predictive checkin feature for all serial issues and a well designed function that allows users to checkin indexes and supplements. For

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patrons unfamiliar with MARC, VTLS has developed a screen to allow users to read bibliographic information in library card format. An agent file, which resides in the Circulation module and is linked to Serials Control, merges with a form letter to produce claims. The separate Indexing module links to the main serial title within the OPAC, providing bibliographic information for all AGRICOLA citations and abstracts.

NAL has found it necessary to supplement VTLS with dBASE to attain greater control over serial orders and expenditures. Currently, the Serials Unit maintains seven separate dBASE databases. The Invoice and C.O. databases track all line item expenditures for subscription and continuation orders. Once a month the data in these two databases are merged into the Serials database that contains annual expenditures for each NAL purchased serial title. The Serials Unit also main-

tains the following dBASE databases: Cancellations; Not Kept, (for out of scope and weeded titles); Serials Vendors, (for ordering new serial titles); and Requested Serial Titles, (for titles requested, but not ordered due to lack of funds).

Approximately 22,000 serial titles are currently collected by NAL. Seven thousand of these titles are purchased; sixty-eight percent are received through NAL's extensive Gift & Exchange program. Half of the serial titles purchased are foreign. In FY 1993, the Serials Unit processed 133,000 issues for the collection. Fifteen hundred of the serial titles received at NAL are indexed within AGRICOLA, NAL's bibliographic database of English and foreign language cataloged titles (monographs and serials) and important articles on agriculture and related fields. Over three million citations are currently found within AGRICOLA, which is available on CD-ROM and online.

Gift & Exchange

Approximately 15,000 serial titles are received by NAL through its Gift & Exchange program. G&E receives these titles from 4,700 foreign partners within 135 countries throughout the world. In addition, G&E receives titles from about 3,500 domestic gift sources. Fifty USDA serial titles are exchanged with the partners. The G&E Unit continually verifies whether its agreements are still active. It takes approximately four years to verify all foreign exchange partners.

Most of the G&E information is contained within three primary dBASE databases. The Tracking database maintains information on which titles have been requested to avoid duplicating orders sent to the exchange partners. The Exchange database contains the addresses of all foreign and domestic partners and the Title Bank contains the individual titles and holdings of all serials received on exchange.

G&E also runs two special projects for the Library. The first project, which is funded by the Food and Agricultural Organization and USDA, coordinates the sending of surplus scientific journals to the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The second project, funded by NAL, coordinates the sending of surplus monographs to the 1890 Land Grant Colleges and Tuskegee University.

Electronic Information Initiative

NAL is currently involved in a major Electronic Information Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to fully integrate electronic procedures and materials within all aspects of the Library's functions and collection. NAL has officially announced that in January 1995 electronic media will be the preferred format for all accessed and received titles. To meet this goal, the Acquisitions & Serials Branch monitors developments in the areas of electronic journals and research databases. Members of the Branch are also involved in reviewing titles for digitization by NAL, and developing procedures for selecting, acquiring, accessing, and processing information contained within a variety of electronic formats. As we move toward the twenty-first century, the staff of NAL's Acquisitions & Serials Branch is committed to being on the forefront of developing appropriate procedures for collecting and accessing agricultural information regardless of format. ☛

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