National Agricultural Library 2000-2002

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Agricultural Research Service

National Agricultural Library

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Abstract

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Summarizes the accomplishments of the National Agricultural Library from 2000 to 2002.

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

About the Cover

The images featured on the cover are drawn from various manuscript collections from Special Collections of the National Agricultural Library.

1. The swallow-tailed butterfly. Drawing by C.V. Riley, 1858. C.V. Riley Collection.
2. Field notes on disease in Maryland peach orchard. 1887. Erwin Frink Smith Papers.
3. P.H. Dorsett (second from right) and his Chinese interpreter Peter Liu on the trail. About 1929-1931. Dorsett-Morse Oriental Agricultural Exploration Expedition Collection.
4. Color landscape painting of Rhine river banks at dusk. No date. C.V. Riley sketchbook of art studies from 1856-1859. C.V. Riley Collection.

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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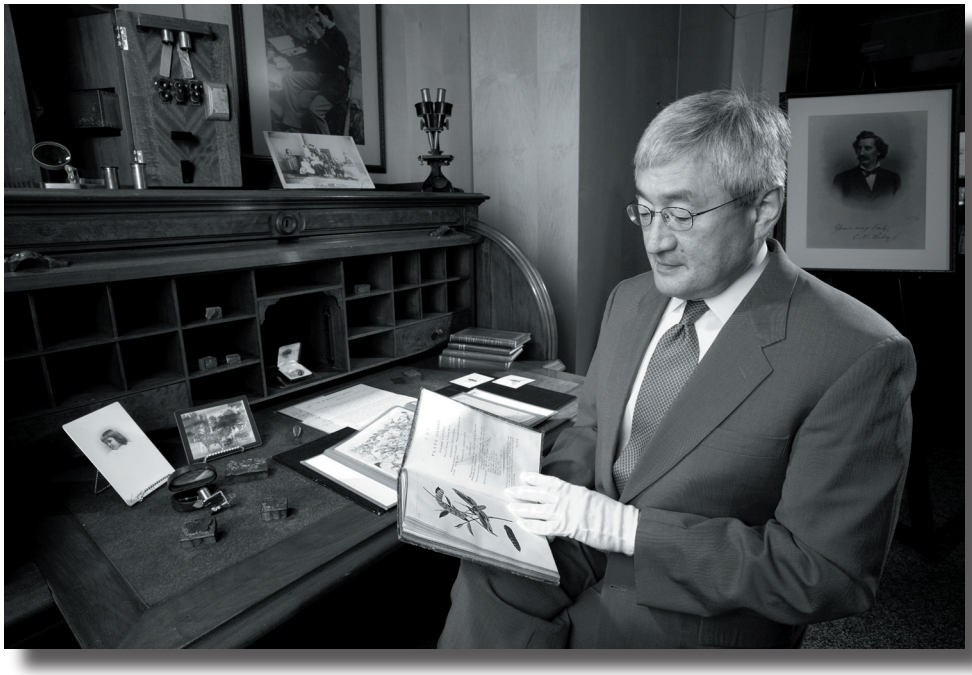

Director Peter R. Young examines National Agricultural Library special collections, including a desk and other items in the C.V. Riley Collection. ARS photo by Stephen Ausmus.

From the Director

Since it was created within the Department of Agriculture in 1862 and established by the Congress as a national library in 1990 charged to "serve as the primary agricultural information resource of the United States," the National Agricultural Library (NAL) has continued to grow in size, capability, and mission. Today, with more than 3.5 million items in its collections and significant strengths in most core sciences of agriculture, NAL is the largest agricultural library in the world. The library' s Web presence and state-of-the-art document delivery services equip it to instantly connect customers in the United States and the world with the information they seek about agriculture and the array of sciences that it entails.

This combined-year report for the National Agricultural Library is its first in the 21st century and my first report as its director. Our purpose is to give you a 3-year statement of NAL's accomplishments across its mission in calendar years 2000-2002.

I began serving as NAL director nearly at the end of the 3 years covered by this report—in June 2002. To my predecessor—NAL director Pamela Q.J. André—to NAL's fine staff, and to cooperators and contractors working at the National Agricultural Library, therefore, goes credit for the achievements described here.

The National Agricultural Library's mission is reflected in six broad areas; on the next several pages, we list NAL accomplishments in each of these areas.

Throughout this report we highlight some accomplishments that reveal how NAL is working to build for the future—collaboratively, digitally, globally, and for the long term.

To help shape that future, then USDA Deputy Secretary Richard Rominger and Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE) I. Miley Gonzalez appointed an interagency panel in October 2000 to review NAL activities and make recommendations on "NAL's management, staff, programs and operations."

The interagency panel's August 2001 report to REE Under Secretary Joseph J. Jen recommended that NAL "move as quickly as possible to attain and maintain a leadership position in obtaining, managing, and distributing new and previously

unavailable agricultural knowledge using the tools of the electronic digital age to meet demands of customers located anywhere and in need of information anytime." The interagency panel's report recommended steps to reach that end but made it clear that NAL would need an immediate infusion of funds to revitalize its services and achieve its potential.

In August 2002, Under Secretary Jen requested public comment on the interagency panel's report (http://www.nal.usda.gov/spevents/commentrelease.html) and asked USDA's National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board to review the panel's recommendations as well as public comments in developing its own specific recommendations for the future of the National Agricultural Library. In its December 2002 letter to Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and to the chairs of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, the NAREEE Board wrote that NAL "is a great national resource with untapped potential to provide information resources to the benefit of all Americans and peoples around the world," but requires "a renewed commitment to ensure that it has the necessary human and financial resources" to reach its congressionally established goal. The NAREEE Board strongly endorsed all the interagency panel's findings with "particular emphasis that NAL's national mission be carried out with the highest visibility to scientists, educators, producers, industry, and American citizens." The NAREEE Board recommended that the Secretary of Agriculture "be NAL's champion and help support its positive growth and increased visibility as a national public resource," that "revitalization and visibility of the NAL should be high on USDA's overall priorities for the future," and that Congress provide increased support and funding for NAL.

You can read the interagency panel's full report, a summary and analysis of public comments received, and the recommendations of the NAREEE Board on the NAL website at http://www.nal.usda.gov/assessment/comments/index.html.

I invite you to read these assessment documents and this report. As they suggest, and with the help of its dedicated and talented people, NAL and the developing National Digital Library for Agricultural Information have a bright and exciting future.

Agricultural information—information encompassing an array of sciences— is increasingly vital to the prosperity of the United States and the capacity of the world to feed and sustain itself. While NAL is clearly successful across its broad mission, it is still only on the threshold of what it must become within this decade to better serve the people of the United States and the world with information about food, agriculture, and natural resources.

Toward that end, please share with us your own suggestions for NAL's future. You may e-mail me your ideas and concerns at Director@nal.usda.gov. I look forward to hearing from you, and we look forward to your help in shaping NAL's future vision and direction.

Peter R. Young
Director