**Wednesday, April 10, 2002**

AERO Members arrived throughout the day and evening. Some members enjoyed dinner together at Hickory Park Restaurant.

**Thursday, April 11, 2002**

Tour of the Econ/Soc Reading Room: Debra Moore took us on a tour of the library in which she works. The staff salaries for the library are provided jointly by the Economics department and the Sociology department.

Meeting with Dr. John Beghin: Dr. Beghin is a professor in the Economics department and he works with the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development, as well as the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute. He explained that CARD receives approximately two and a half million dollars a year from sources such as Congress, USDA, EPA, the NSF, and industry sources. Besides publishing several journal articles, they also respond to policy advice requests from sources such as the Senate and House agriculture committees. They also offer advice to private sector groups such as the U.S. Grain Council, and international organizations such as OECD and FAO.

Meeting with Dr. Arne Hallam: Dr. Hallam is the chairman of the Department of Economics at Iowa State University. He complimented Debra and the Econ/Soc reading room for assisting the faculty with their research. He explained some of the current project of the department, as well as sharing the budget situation the department is facing.

Welcome: Debra formally welcomed the group to the meeting.

Introductions: AERO members introduced themselves and shared a bit about their facilities/responsibilities.

Overview of AERO 2002 Survey: (Susan Logan, Ohio State University) Susan shared the results of her survey of AERO libraries. The survey covered information such as the size of the library, amount of staff, how many hours the library stays open, number of books, number of journal subscriptions, if the library is part of the larger university library system, and more.

USAIN Update: (Luti Salisbury, University of Arkansas) The executive committee met in January before ALA. They voted for a $500 contribution to an agricultural library that had a fire. They set the dates for the next two conferences. She also explained that USAIN took part in the NAL director’s search, but she is not allowed to discuss the candidates. USAIN has election ballots out and she was happy to announce that AERO’s own Jodee Kawasaki is running for president and Margaret Merrill running for secretary. USAIN also has a has a new Technology Trends interest group that is receiving a lot of attention. The Riley Group is giving USAIN $2500 to do an evaluation of AgNIC.

NAL Update: (Wayne Olson) Wayne explained three things which have made work particularly challenging for him since the last AERO meeting: the director left in June 2001, a F3 tornado hit the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (the funnel went right along the other side of the street) and caused significant damage to all the windows, and testing for anthrax in mail room is conducted monthly. The good news is that NAL is selecting a new library management system. He was on the OPAC evaluation sub-team. Agricola on the web right now is not “robust,” and
they wanted to be sure the system could improve on the interface for Agricola. Additionally, a Blue Ribbon Report, lead by Larry Vanderhoff of UC Davis, was released in Sept. 2001; the main recommendation was to upgrade and improve Agricola, because it is so important. That report is with the Undersecretary of Agriculture. Over the years, the number of indexers has gone way down and the number of journals they index has gone down, as well. But, they just hired two new indexers, which might suggest a turn for the better. They have chosen a new director, but he is not allowed to share information about the choice. One of the major initiatives at NAL is called “Digital Desktop.” It’s where scientists and staff with USDA IP addresses can link to the subscription databases from their offices.

Luti Salisbury asked why Agricola is switching from the CAB thesaurus to a new “National Agricultural Thesaurus.” (NAL’s own thesaurus) Wayne did not know an exact answer and Jim Horsfield offered to comment on the question during his session.

USDA Update: (Jim Horsfield, USDA/ERS) His response is that CAB is a proprietary thesaurus that NAL doesn’t have any input for how to change CAB. CAB doesn’t cover some of the sociology issues that USDA cover (i.e., rural development).

His office is focusing on e-government quite a bit. For instance, they have been working on issues related to the forms for e-loans and e-grants. He is on a team that focuses on content management systems. He is interested in the idea of separating content from HTML. Essentially, the content would be kept in a database and put it in to templates. They have evaluated some CMS systems, but they are still ironing out the wrinkles (how small offices w/o much tech. support could use a complicated system).

Regarding the current ERS web page, they have also been dealing with consistency issues, when it comes to smaller offices having pages. There are also some odd buttons (one button for Agencies and one button for Offices), too. Thus, there is a Web Presence team. There is another team working on “portals.” (Margaret commented that InfoMine.ucr.edu is a good site). They got a budget for putting together a commodity portal, to gather all the different commodity data. Two other big budget initiatives are related to the ARMS (agricultural resource management survey). Jim handed out a list of ERS publications that are available electronically. They are really toning down paper Situation and Outlook reports. They are also struggling with keeping up their e-publication calendar. He hinted at consolidation/consistency in their magazine publishing.

ESIRC Update: (Judi Dow, Michigan State University) She would like to keep being the liaison. There has been a survey related to the distribution of Choices, which Donna Dunn, of the AAEA, will explain in her session. Unfortunately, Cornell has run in to some difficulties with funding, staff, and the optical character recognition aspect of scanning the back issues of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. At the moment, the project is scheduled to resume again sometime later this year.

AgEcon Search Update: (Louise Letnes and Julie Kelly, University of Minnesota) If you type stats after the URL, you will be able to access a list of the number of times papers have been downloaded. She took us through a demonstration of how she processes files that come in for being posted. She went through the new additions. Jodee Kawasaki asked about the extended funding. Louise said they had to submit a business plan, but it was accepted. She said they are struggling with institutions that have begun putting them up themselves. The library community is concerned that these e-documents will be lost if they are not with an archives-minded group. She suggested getting together as AERO to write a grant for digitizing back issues of working papers.

Julie Kelly shared that AERO might be going for the Review of Ag. Econ. and they are willing to approach other journals. They have done active recruiting of conference papers. They would like to have a button that says, “Would you like your group to be a part of AgEcon Search?” They are going to prioritize publicity and outreach. They are preparing a press release for the Chronicle of
Higher Education. They are also interested in the Issues in Science and Technology e-journal. She would also like to do a “hot topics” section to AgEcon Search.

Panel Discussion: Customer Service in the Electronic Age

Luti Salisbury, University of Arkansas: Why do we still need customer service?

Margaret Merrill, Virginia Polytechnic Institute: Instruction in a Virtual Age.


Anita Battiste, University of Florida: Online “Chat” Reference, the experiences of librarians at the University of Florida.

Copyright Revisited: (Rebecca Bernthal, University of Nebraska) She went through several handouts outlining the current status of various copyright issues. Limits of liability from the Internet Service Provider is what is being figured out in court most recently. Most Universities are dedicating a full time staff member to handle issues related to copyright law.

Resource Sharing: (Wayne Olson, National Agricultural Library) Members shared resources they have found to be useful. There was some discussion about having e-documents cataloged in the online catalog and the challenges of maintaining those links.

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Tour of Parks Library: Jeff Kushkowski lead us on a tour of the main library for the campus. After his tour, we heard a presentation by Pam Williams about the electronic course reserves access that is offered. She discussed the different challenges they have faced, but explained that many people have complimented their efforts.

Panel Discussion: A Friendly, Inviting Library and Keeping in Touch with Patrons

Janet Wilson (South Dakota State University) went through a handout she prepared.

Monica Hagan (California Polytechnic State University): Good attitude, good signage, a more stand-up style reference desk, food area, e-reserves, check-out-laptops and a network w/wireless environment, bookmarks, business-card size of business hours, new faculty are given $500 to buy books or whatever if you find something this campus doesn't have that your last one did, check faculty web sites to understand what is going on in the classes, outreach (Ask for their help with weeding—you'll be surprised…. They like it). Have a book club. Create an atmosphere for people to think about the library in a different way.

Grace Dote (University of California, Berkeley): Remember names (even if you are bad at it, keep asking!), and remember visiting faculty and students. She puts up new book jackets on the bulletin on one side of the door inside the library. On the bulletin board outside the library, she posts info about workshops. She recommends putting notes and fliers in the mailboxes, and sending lots of e-mail about new material or activities. Having a candy dish helps bring people in the library and the usually end up asking a question.

The Sustainable Agriculture Program at ISU: Dr. Michael Bell, ISU Dept. of Sociology, gave us an overview of the new interdepartmental graduate program in sustainable agriculture. It is the only grad. Department in Sustainable Ag. The problems of agriculture are the problems of not having a broad enough vision of what the issues are. Agriculture should be envisioned as interdisciplinary. The students in the program have to have a home dept., such as Sociology, or Agronomy. They have a series of core seminars. Two instructors can split up a semester, but they both get full-semester teaching credit. Soc, ag. education, anthropology, agronomy, ag. engineering, animal
sci, entomology, plant pathology, horticulture are some participating departments. Notable absences: Economics, the humanities departments. 52 faculty members. 8-10 students was their hope and they got 19. A key has been that it was defined as interdisciplinary, but beyond that, they don’t try to define what Sustainable Ag. is. Judi Dow asked, “what was the “germ” that got this started?” Reply: They always had the Leopold Center for Sustainable Ag, that started in the 80’s. (Leopold started the tax on pesticides.) They also had an org. called Practical Farmers of Iowa. They had to present ISU with five different placement ideas for graduates of the program: non-profits interested in sustainable issues, state-national-local governments, industry, academics, farming. Regarding the possibility of going in to Academics, they are encouraging people who want to teach to get dual degrees with another department. Monica Hagan asked how they are doing with making international connections. He responded that they are having their first exchange of students and faculty with Peru. Rebecca Bernthal asked for sample seminar topics. He responded, Pest Management Strategies, Crop/Livestock Interactions, Social Technology Issues (the social dimension of technology issues). Recently, the students had two weeks of field trips that highlighted agro-ecological issues. They visit a wide range of farms (small organic to BIG farms). Monica Hagan asked, “How are you promoting it?” Reply: brochures, web site, word of mouth. They are being flooded with applications. Rebecca Bernthal asked, “What is the composition of your applicants?” Reply: his current 25 person class has 6 international students (Brazil, Columbia, Peru, Zimbabwe, Botswana), Iowa residents, people both coasts of the US, people with farm backgrounds, as well as lots of other backgrounds. Anita Battiste asked, “What are the main majors?” Reply: agronomy and sociology are providing the most support, so they have the most people focusing on their classes. Ag. Engineering is third and Animal Sci. is fourth.

Digital Preservation: (Jim Horsfield, USDA/ERS). USDA had a workshop in 1997 about preservation of digital documents. The UDDA Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) is at the heart of info. policy for the Department. One challenge is that the staff of the CIO are “records managers,” not librarians or archivists really. What is a gov. record and what is a publication? By the end of this year, the recommendations in the report might become USDA policy. Mainly, there needs to be a “visible” archive of older electronic documents.

Technology enhancements that are helping: digital object identifiers, content management systems that enforce metadata standards and follow version identification.

An archive isn’t just a way to preserve things, but you need to clean up web sites. You have an electronic archive. Jim offered, “Make things a little bit harder to find.” At the moment, old documents are being found by search engines at the same level as new documents. If there is proper archiving, your first attempt at finding material will only pull up recent or classic material. Then, there can be a different search on the “archive.” The archive should look like the current web site, but change it slightly, like a change in the background color.

Discussion:

Jim went to talk to Evelyn Frangakis (National Agricultural Library Preservation Officer) to discuss some policies, such as citing electronic pubs in their c.v.s, and have them be available somewhere. It is an intellectual, academic creation that needs to be preserved for future retrieval. Margaret Merrill: Has anyone used an “instructional designer” to look at web site issues? Reply: In general, no. But, they have worked with some contractors and done some usability testing. Louise Letnes: What is the current relationship between ERS/NASS and Cornell? Reply: It is still in place and evolving. ERS is going to take more control of distribution of the Situation and Outlook Reports. They are facing the challenge of the listserv software (many people are signed up on a listserv list to receive the reports electronically). Cornell does that very well. ERS is still working on choosing and training people for listserv management. Plus, Cornell has been extremely prompt about getting the S & O outlook reports. BUT, Mann is going to continue to remain the archive for ERS reports. The hardest things for ERS to archive are some of the “grey”
briefing papers, one table here or there, people updating data and not keeping historical copies. What is the estimate of net farm income in 1980? Response: We don’t know yet!

**Tour of the National Animal Disease Control Center:** Here is a brief overview of the NADC:

“The National Animal Disease Center, an arm of Agricultural Research Service, is the major U.S. Department of Agriculture center for research on livestock and poultry diseases that occur in the United States.

Our mission at NADC is to conduct basic and applied research on selected diseases of economic importance to the U.S. Livestock and poultry industries. The goal of our research program is to produce research knowledge and technology to:

- reduce economic losses of the livestock and poultry industries and the associated rural agricultural community from infectious, genetic, and metabolic diseases.
- Reduce or eliminate pre-harvest contamination/infection of livestock and poultry with food-borne human pathogens.
- Prevent suffering and death caused by diseases in agriculturally important livestock and poultry.”

(http://www.nadc.ars.usda.gov/)

**Meeting with Donna Dunn, Executive Director of AAEA:** She started by mentioning the switch to Blackwell. They wanted online availability and for marketing. Blackwell is currently using Ingenta and they are moving away from that. They (Blackwell) are creating their own platform for e-journal interface. RAE is at twice a year and they are thinking about upping it to 4 times, to get it in to Social Science Citation Index, plus it has gotten too big. They are working with Blackwell and thinking about changing in content. Blackwell holds the rights for electronic files for 5 years, then AAEA gets the rights back. Choices is really in flux. It will be reformatted. It will be a monthly, partially electronic/partially print publication. They have to do the business model related to it. They are thinking about moving away from academic writers to having it written by a journalist. The newsletter is also changing; it is probably going to being more frequent.

**Discussion:**

Rebecca Bernthal: The print would be different from the electronic version? Reply: It will be more like the Kiplinger Newsletter. Margaret Merrill: There is a problem with having the two separate documents. Anita Battiste: Could you rename the preview publication to Choices Digest or something? Reply: Possibly. (Donna noted that there is beginning to be a shift in how ag econ write, too).

Donna Dunn also shared that AAEA has also established a committee to review the identity of the Association. They are discussing how the Association, and the field of agricultural economics, in general, is perceived by the public.

**Core Ag Econ Journals and Which are Available Electronically:** (Anita Battiste, University of Florida) She went over the handout she prepared.

**Panel Discussion: How Special Libraries and Survive Tough Financial Times**

*Louise Letnes, University of Minnesota,* discussed how smaller departmental libraries are unique. *Linda Davis, University of Wisconsin,* reinforced the sense of professional isolation and seeking out other librarians. Louise then went over the survey she sent out and called on several members to discuss some of their strategies. Grace Dote (University of California, Berkeley) discussed selling journal duplicate issues, charging fines, and document delivery. Linda explained
that her department’s info. committee does an assessment. The faculty are charged a fee for supporting part of the library and the computer lab. Each faculty member is charged $300; it comes out of their grant funding. Louise explained her assessment is around $20 per professors and $10 to students per year. Louise also courts alums. Judi Dow (Michigan State University) discussed thanking professors for donations and the challenges of depending on a donation. Susan Logan (Ohio State University) mentions she does selective bibliographies for faculty members who discuss research topics with her and she prepares overviews about who is going to give seminars.

Measuring User Satisfaction: Judi Dow (Michigan State University) provided an overview of LibQUAL and how aspects of it can be used even if you are not in a large library participating in LibQUAL. Here is a brief description of LibQUAL:

“LibQUAL+ is a research and development project undertaken by ARL in collaboration with Texas A&M University and with financial support from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) through September 2003. LibQUAL+ is defining and measuring library service quality across institutions and creating useful quality-assessment tools for libraries; it is one of the ARL New Measures Initiative projects, which seek to develop innovative ways for libraries to describe their contributions to their institutions.”

(http://www.libqual.org/)

Friday, April 13, 2002

Activities for those who stayed after the “official” meeting/workshop included visiting the Iowa Historical Building/Capitol, the welcome center for the Living History Farms, and Valley Junction in West Des Moines.