

Chapter 2.10

Sharing Digital Knowledge with End-Users: Case Study of the International Rice Research Institute Library and Documentation Service in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This chapter portrays how resources of the International Rice Research Institute Library and Documentation Service are harnessed to develop its collection of technical rice literature and other information sources by searching, selecting and organizing print and electronic resources for addition to its Web page or the online catalog. With the acquisition of an integrated library system in 1996, the creation of its home page, at <http://ricelib.irri.cgiar.org>, became a major concern. Links to digital resources, like Web sites, databases, full-text electronic journals and newspapers, and reference materials are now available through this page. The Library operates on the principle that electronic resources must supplement rather than replace printed sources. The author intends to share the mechanics of linking digital knowledge

with users, the problems embedded in this activity, and possible ways of dealing with them.

INTRODUCTION: INITIAL STEPS TOWARD A DIGITAL LIBRARY

This chapter describes work carried out by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Library and Documentation Service (LDS) focusing on digital delivery of rice-related and other information. IRRI, established in 1960 and located in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, is one of the 15 international centers under the umbrella of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Its goal is to “improve the well-being of present and future generations of rice farmers and consumers, particularly those with low incomes” (IRRI, 1996). In pursuance of

this mandate, a Library was established in 1961, which now houses the world's most comprehensive collection of rice technical literature. The Library and Documentation Service (LDS) has clients, which include rice scientists from more than 58 countries all over the world. It has a staff strength of 14 (five librarians and nine paraprofessionals), all equipped with computers. While utilizing advances in information technology, it is the responsibility of the LDS to link knowledge sources with potential users everywhere.

The changing information needs of IRRI staff and worldwide clients and the recent advances in information and communication technologies make digital delivery of information a necessity. The IRRI LDS management opted to take advantage of available technology and offered the convenience of digital access to its users.

Early attempts at computerization were focused on the rice bibliography, the library's flagship project, which is a compilation of the world's technical rice literature. In 1989, with the acquisition of additional personal computers, a field structure for the main catalog was devised using an early version of *Cardbox Plus* (Cardbox, 2003). The program was deemed to be sufficient at that time because exposure to more sophisticated systems was very limited. Searching and retrieval was faster than using the card catalog. However, the non-expandable fields did not lend themselves to efficient data entry.

This system was in use till migration to an integrated library system, the *Innopac* (Innovative, 2003), took place in 1996. The initial database consisted of 10,000 records imported from the Cardbox Plus database. From 1996 onwards, updating of the card catalog ceased. Retrospective conversion was finished in mid-2002 and this manual searching tool, which has been an effective instrument for many years, was relegated to the background.

The adequate computer facilities of IRRI enabled the staff to be adept with the use of computers and to avail of information sources

which otherwise would be difficult to access. An upgrade from the character-based *Innopac* to the Web-based *Millennium* took place in 2003.

From here on, efficient linking of electronic resources to library users became a reality. This is one of the initiatives that qualified the IRRI LDS to be awarded as the Outstanding Academic/Research Library for 2001 by a major library association in the Philippines, the Philippine Association of Academic and Research Libraries, in January 2002.

TOOLS FOR LINKING USERS AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

In this age of shrinking budgets, the IRRI Library is trying its best to develop its collection by searching, evaluating, selecting, and cataloging online information sources for addition to its Web page and online catalog. Byrne (2003) gives three elements that must be included in building a digital library. These are "integrated content provision, support and training, and library effectiveness." Careful evaluation and selection of content are vital in developing and maintaining a digital library. Materials for the Web site are included on the basis of relevance to IRRI's research program. Since the integrated library system being used, the Millennium, is user-friendly, there is no need for formal training. However, brief orientation is given to new staff, walk-in clients, and visitors to make them aware of what the library could offer and what digital resources are available through the library's Web site. Library effectiveness is a product of the extent to which digital resources are used by clients. In the IRRI Library, the digital tools being utilized are:

- The Library's Home Page at: <http://ricelib.irri.org>

As a consequence of computerization, the next step pursued was the creation of the Library's

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