

The National Program to Microfilm Land-Grant Agricultural Documents

The origin, implementation, current status, and benefits of an ongoing, nationwide project to microfilm agriculture-related publications are described. The program is a cooperative one between the National Agricultural Library and the libraries of various land-grant institutions, and includes millions of pages of materials published prior to 1970.

MILLIONS OF PAGES of agricultural or agriculture-related publications have been issued by U.S. land-grant institutions. Those published before 1970 will be more widely available as the result of a massive archival microfilming program undertaken cooperatively by the National Agricultural Library¹ and the libraries of these institutions. A portion has been completed and is available from various commercial vendors.

The land-grant colleges and universities were born on July 2, 1862, when Abraham Lincoln signed what is commonly known as the Land-Grant College Act of 1862. Also known as the Morrill Act after its sponsor, Justin Smith Morrill, it allotted the states 30,000 acres of land from the public domain for each of their members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives. This land was to be sold to provide an endowment so that each state could establish "at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and

practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life."² This was further strengthened by the second land-grant act in 1890, which provided each state with annual appropriations of funds for support of instructional programs.

The Morrill Act has been described by the National Manpower Council as "the most important governmental step in connection with the training of scientific and professional personnel . . . which laid the basis for the country's extensive state college and university system."³

The Hatch Act of 1887 provided funds for the establishment of agricultural experiment stations at colleges and universities endowed by the Land-Grant Act of 1862. It stated that their purpose was "to aid in acquiring and diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects connected with agriculture, and to promote scientific investigation and experiment respecting the principles and applications of agricultural science."⁴ With these acts of Congress, a foundation for agricultural research and publication was established in the U.S.

Extension work to give instruction beyond the boundaries of the campuses was authorized by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which stated that its purpose was "to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the same. . . ." ⁵ The Cooperative Extension

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sion Service created by the Congress is a unique partnership between the land-grant institutions and the Department of Agriculture. The research findings of both are carried to the farms by one service.

"In this way, the Great Triad of American Agriculture, the so-called green revolution, was born: (1) the research phase—the use of research data in the education and training of students, (2) the resident teaching phase and the dissemination of the results of research data to farm people, and (3) the extension phase."⁶

This type of cooperation was further extended when a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Land-Grant College and University Libraries and the United States Department of Agriculture (National Agricultural Library)" was established "designating the state land-grant libraries as repositories for the land-grant agricultural publications of their respective states. This agreement was sent in January 1973 to directors or other appropriate officials of the larger land-grant libraries; it was viewed as an interim step to initiation of a microfilming program of this literature."⁷

The signators to the "Memorandum" agreed to "collect, store, and provide ready access to complete files of the major serial publications of their State agricultural experiment stations, extension service, and colleges of agriculture."⁸

Discussion of the possibility of microfilming land-grant agricultural publications continued. "At the Midwinter meeting [of the American Library Association in 1974] the National Agricultural Library revived its plans to initiate a cooperative microfilming program. . . ."⁹

The purpose of the project was defined as "primarily archival since many of the documents are rapidly deteriorating. NAL and the cooperating libraries feel a strong obligation to preserve these documents on film for scholars."¹⁰ It was also felt that the project would "provide participating libraries with the opportunity to reduce the amount of physical space needed to house these publications in paper form . . . [and] could serve as a model for similar microfilming operations."¹¹

The first agreement to film was signed by a group of land-grant libraries in the New

England states—Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont—and by the National Agricultural Library on July 20, 1975. The agreement provided generally for a sharing of the microfilming cost, preparation of the materials for filming by the land-grant institutions, and receipt of copies of the film both by the cooperating libraries and by NAL, which will retain an archival-quality master negative of all items filmed. The company doing the filming was to retain sale rights.

The New England filming was completed in 1976, and other states have followed. Filming has been continued by groups of states with one library supplying a coordinator for the project. Other states (i.e., Florida, Kentucky, Utah, and California) have filmed their material individually.

The filming of the documents of the first twenty-three states has resulted in 801 titles on 1,328 reels of 35mm microfilm plus 1,726 sheets of microfiche.

A general pattern has been followed by the land-grant institutions in their participation and preparation of the materials to be filmed. Initial details of the group endeavors have typically been worked out at meetings of the library directors with NAL personnel. Such details included choice of coordinating library, method of payment, materials to be included, and schedules to be followed. A rough count of titles and number of pages to be filmed was prepared prior to the meeting so that a basis for planning was available.

After this meeting, a formal letter of agreement was sent to NAL. This letter specified the amount of funds to be committed by the land-grant institution and gave the name of its project contact person. The coordinating library then signed an agreement with NAL. A person from that library was designated coordinator.

The coordinator then consulted with each of the libraries in the regional group, giving instructions on selecting titles to be filmed and on the collation and preparation of the materials for shipment to the filmer. At that point, the individual libraries began preparation of their materials while the coordinator handled the call for bids.

A detailed search of the history of the

parent body was initiated to ensure correct naming of the institution. In many cases, the archivist provided this information. The *National Union Catalog* was also consulted to locate prior usage. Identification of all titles issued by the institution began. The local card catalog was used to assemble the rough list. Again, the *NUC* and *Library of Congress Catalog* as well as the *Dictionary Catalog of the National Agricultural Library*, the *Union List of Serials*, *New Serial Titles*, and state library catalogs were checked to ensure completeness of title listings. This listing was then supplied for the bid process.

A careful inventory of the titles available in the library determined materials needed to complete sets. Letters requesting donations of needed materials were sent to other land-grant libraries, to NAL, and to agricultural personnel associated with colleges of agriculture and home economics, agricultural experiment stations, and extension services. It was sometimes necessary to reassure agricultural personnel that "that old stuff" was really something the library wanted, but much useful material was contributed by these sources.

As material was collected and collated, a Standard Bibliographic Target describing the title and to be included on the film was prepared. This target described not only the history of the parent organization, and the title itself with the peculiarities of issue and printing, but also the actual volumes, issue numbers, inclusive dates, and number of pages on film.

A Document Description Form, to assist the filmer in correctly filming the materials, detailed title changes, missing issues, odd pagination, size variations, etc.

The titles were listed, packed, and shipped in a standard manner, with an optional return of materials available. After filming, each library checked the reels of film and sheets of microfiche pertaining to their documents to ensure accuracy and quality before final acceptance.

During the initial filming by the New England group, a handbook entitled *Microfilming Agricultural Documents* was developed under a separate subcontract with Warner-Eddison Associates. It was seen "as a working tool for planners and implemen-

ters of similar projects elsewhere in the United States."¹²

Later, after going through the filming of the University of Kentucky's materials, Antoinette Powell wrote *Preserving Land-Grant Agricultural Documents* to serve as a further guide to the process. This was prepared from the point of view of an individual land-grant institution rather than that of the group project.

In addition to the microfilm from the libraries in the New England states, that of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Florida, Kentucky, California, Utah, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada is completed and available commercially. The documents of Illinois, Nebraska, and Wisconsin are currently being filmed, and Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Washington land-grant libraries will begin the bidding process in 1980.

Three commercial firms have handled different groups of states, and the appropriate film can be purchased from them. They are Graphic Microfilm, Inc., Western Microfilming, and Bell and Howell. The Utah materials are available from the Utah State Archives, in microfiche format only.

While there seems to be general agreement that the archival purpose of this project has been realized, many secondary benefits have surfaced during its execution. Previously unknown titles have been identified and added to collections, more complete documentation of many titles, both cataloged and uncataloged, has been achieved, and the addition of missing issues to known titles, both in library and archival collections, has been possible.

Staff members participating in this project were reference librarians, serial librarians, and bibliographers. The detailed examination of bibliographic data and the actual publications helped them to become more aware of the scope of these agricultural documents. Materials such as typescript annual reports that were available only at parent institutions are now available to anyone with access to the film.

At New Mexico State University a document delivery system has been established with the Agricultural Information Services,

which should ensure a more complete collection in the future. The project also served to stimulate an updated policy statement within the library describing priorities for the holding location of NMSU documents. This coincided with and aided another concurrent NMSU Library project—the location and reclassification of all state documents including, of course, the agricultural documents.

It also seemed to those participating in the various libraries that the implementation of this project led to an increased awareness of the library and its operation, to a greater degree of cooperation between agricultural and library personnel, and to a greater utilization of the library's resources by personnel from the agricultural departments. The total nationwide project should certainly increase accessibility to as well as expand the amount of information available. It has even been suggested that rural development agents of less developed countries purchase the films for the appropriate technologies that might be derived from them.

The words Alice Sizer Warner wrote as the original New England project came to its conclusion would seem to describe well the feelings of all who have completed one

of these projects. She wrote in a letter to the New England institutions, and quoted it in the foreword to *Microfilming Agricultural Documents*, "None can deny that there have been frustrations. We hope we can convey to you, however, the feeling of excited, exhausted satisfaction in seeing 181 white boxes, neatly stacked, which tell the story of New England's earth and stones, the products that have grown thereon, the animals that have fed thereon, and the people who have made it all work. We have been privileged to trace all this from the first hand-written reports on root vegetables to environmental impact statements regarding the highways we take for granted today."¹³

Auburn Library Topics asks, in writing of the completion of their library's share of this effort, "to what avail?" and answers with the conclusion that "these papers are not only the result of hundreds of man-years of work by specialists in all aspects of rural life but, indirectly, a chronicle of the struggle of Alabama farm families to survive, and if possible, to improve their lives."¹⁴

So, not only are millions of pages of agricultural documents being preserved but also a social history of rural America is being documented.

REFERENCES

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