
IAALD's Commitment to and Promotion of Agricultural Information Sharing and the CIARD Movement (with an Addendum on Agricultural Knowledge Sharing in the U.S.)

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As a founding member of CIARD, the International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD) continues to demonstrate its more than 55 year commitment to enabling members and the global agricultural information community “to create, capture, access, and disseminate information to achieve a more productive and sustainable use of the world’s land, water, and renewable natural resources.” Over the years, the Association has evolved from publishing print agricultural information resources to the active use of social media tools to identify and distribute knowledge and relevant resources from around the world. It has also moved to an open electronic publishing format for its international journal. At the same time, IAALD facilitates networking and training opportunities to assist agricultural information professionals to effectively utilize technologies to improve their own information dissemination and knowledge sharing services. Thus, IAALD’s mission and organizational activities are in perfect alignment with the open access and data and information sharing goals of CIARD. Specifically, IAALD:

- **Connects** agricultural information specialists worldwide, providing platforms and spaces for information dissemination, exchange and knowledge sharing;
- **Convenes** agricultural information specialists worldwide, organizing meetings and catalyzing dialogue among all agricultural information stakeholders;
- **Communicates** and **advocates** the value of knowledge and information to its members and others, improving the status and practice of agricultural information management and dissemination; and
- **Collaborates** with members and other partner organizations, facilitating educational and other opportunities across agricultural information communities.

Background

IAALD is a professional non-profit organization formed in Ghent, Belgium in 1955 to provide networking and sharing opportunities for agricultural librarians and documentalists and to create products and services to further the dissemination of agricultural information. It now has members representing more than 75 countries and includes Chapters in China, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Through the years, the all-volunteer organization has held 13 world congresses on six continents, multiple regional conferences, as well as training sessions. IAALD has also been instrumental in producing information tools such as *World Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Abstracts*, now part of the CABI Database and three editions of

Agricultural Information Resource Centres: A World Directory, a publication that compiled information on more than 4,000 agricultural resource centers around the world. The organization has also produced a major serial publication. The *Quarterly Bulletin of IAALD* began as a member newsletter and by 1970 had evolved into a professional journal which became peer reviewed in 1990. In 2008, the journal changed its focus and scope and became an electronic, open access journal titled *Agricultural Information Worldwide* (<http://journals.sfu.ca/iaald/index.php/aginfo>).

IAALD's guiding principle is to improve and promote the practice of information and knowledge dissemination and management in agricultural and all related areas. IAALD does not publish information on agricultural topics; however, the Association does enable members to better serve their communities by facilitating access to this information. The organization brings together a growing global and dynamic community of practice representing a multi-disciplinary membership of traditional and non-traditional agricultural information professionals, as well as information technologists and extension professionals from both developed and developing countries. IAALD also partners with a wide number of organizations, including a formal affiliation with INFITA (International Network for Information Technology in Agriculture) as well as liaisons with FAO, CGIAR, GFAR and CTA.

IAALD Knowledge Sharing and Social Media Services

IAALD's **listserv** (IAALD-L@cals.arizona.edu) is a primary means for the IAALD Community of Practice to receive updates from the Executive Committee and announcements about meetings, upcoming events, and professional development activities such as the new **IAALD webinar series**. Internal member discussions are facilitated through an IAALD Community **Ning** (<http://iaaldnetwork.ning.com/>)

IAALD maintains a **website** (<http://www.iaald.org>) providing extensive information about the Association, and also featuring a variety of social media tools that bring current news and events to the IAALD community of practice in a variety of formats. Very soon a newly redesigned website, implemented by Valeria Pesce (GFAR), Maria Folch (FAO), and Giampaolo Rugo (FAO), will go live. The site more fully integrates all social channels using a Drupal content management system platform. These social media services will promote greater information access including the following:

IAALD's primary information sharing service is the **AgInfo News blog / AgInfo RSS feed** (<http://iaald.blogspot.com>), an online newsfeed maintained by Peter Ballantyne, Edith Hesse, and other members which highlights current agricultural information activities and initiatives taking place throughout the world. AgInfo News is syndicated content powered by FeedBurner which makes it easy to receive content updates from most all news readers such as My Yahoo!, Newsgator, Bloglines, and other news readers. News feeds are available by region (Africa, Latin America), and by language (English, French, and Spanish). IAALD News can also be followed on **Twitter**: <http://twitter.com/#!/iaald>.

Agricultural Information Worldwide or 'AgInfo World' is an electronic peer-reviewed journal covering all aspects of the agricultural information profession. Currently, subscriptions to the current year of the AIW are included in IAALD membership and to other subscribers. The archives are open access. Topics are generally of a practical and applied nature. Subject coverage includes articles on information and knowledge sharing related to agriculture, life sciences, food, natural resources, the environment, and agricultural extension and education. To access the AIW online go to: <http://journals.sfu.ca/iaald/index.php/aginfo>

IAALD's photo stream is available on **FlickrR**: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/iaald/>. This includes photos from a variety of IAALD events and related member activities. Members can share their own digital photos by opening a free account on Flickr and uploading them with an "IAALD" tag.

Presentations by members of the IAALD Community are available on **Slideshare**: <http://www.slideshare.net/iaald>. In addition, there are relevant Powerpoint presentations from people the IAALD Community follows as well.

Currently, IAALD Community videos are available through **BlipTV**: <http://blip.tv/iaald>. A new YouTube option may be available in the coming months.

To access IAALD's **Facebook** page, use the following link. Check out related like-minded organizations and current news and comment postings - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/International-Association-of-Agricultural-Information-Specialists-IAALD/1217266866>

ADDENDUM

An Overview of the Agricultural Information and Knowledge Sharing Situation in the U.S.

For more than a decade, various agricultural information groups¹ in the United States have been discussing the need for and working toward a more coordinated approach to provide easy and open access to the wealth of critical agriculture-related knowledge located in universities (particularly Land-Grant Universities (LGUs)), government entities (such as the National Agricultural Library (NAL) and US Department of Agriculture agencies), as well as related organizations. While there has been some progress at certain levels – a number of LGUs have implemented institutional repositories with strong agricultural components², NAL has developed a National Agricultural Library Digital Repository for USDA publications (<http://naldr.nal.usda.gov/>), and AgNIC (<http://www.agnic.org/>) (a

¹ United States Agricultural Information Network (USAIN), the U.S. National Agricultural Library (NAL), AgNIC and its Born and Reborn Digital Committees, American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC)

² Texas A&M CALS Repository - <http://repository.tamu.edu/>; UC Davis Ag & Natural Resources Repository - <http://ucanr.org/repository/>; University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy - <http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/48246>; University of Florida Food and Agriculture Sciences Digital Collection - <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/fao1>

CIARD partner), provides access to subject-based agricultural resources through its partnership - there is no one central point of open access to all of these agricultural information resources. In fact, the situation remains quite fragmented and the players, whether at the institutional or governmental level, remain under-resourced to achieve this end.

Numerous attempts to raise the awareness of this need have been made with minimal success to date. However, at the request of the Western region College of Agriculture Deans, a new opportunity is beginning to be organized. This past February both Library and Agriculture Deans at all Western Land-Grant Universities received letters from the University of Arizona inviting their institutions to participate in discussions to explore the development of an online Land-Grant University Knowledge Discovery System - an initiative to build on, strengthen, and expand agriculture-related institutional repositories. The response to this call was quite positive. Ten of the Western LGUs said they would send representatives to such a meeting, and another four from other regions who were contacted separately also said they were interested in participating. At the time, the expectation was to hold a face-to-face meeting of interested parties. However, during a conference call between the University of Arizona and University of Florida counterparts, the idea of holding a virtual meeting was determined to be a more inclusive and economical approach. Now, the tentative plan is to hold the virtual meeting during the latter half of this September, hosted by the University of Florida, and co-facilitated with the University of Arizona. A multi-institutional planning team for the meeting is currently being formed. Each participating institution is being asked to designate up to two official representatives for the proposed virtual meeting who can represent both agricultural information and IT perspectives and expertise. The intent is to produce a brief proposal that will be made available to the Western Library and Agriculture Deans for advocacy purposes. Additionally, this proposal will be disseminated to administrators in other regions and will provide the basis for submitting competitive grants applications to targeted funding agencies and sources. It is the hope of many agricultural information specialists throughout the U.S. that this planning meeting will lead to greater support for developing comprehensive agricultural institutional repositories and a means for openly sharing and accessing the resources contained in them.

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