

**SEARCH CRITERIA**

<b>Model</b>	Model D: Information Access
<b>Industry</b>	Agriculture
<b>Focus/Level</b>	Industry
<b>Approach to information needs</b>	Database, website, e-publication
<b>Special Interest Groups</b>	Other

**1. PROJECT TITLE:**

Information and Library Service, NSW Agriculture

**2. FUNDERS:**

Agriculture Library and Information Services

**3. PROVIDERS:**

Agriculture Library and Information Services

**4. KEY CONTACTS:**

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**5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:**

The project primarily targets the NSW agricultural community, particularly extension/advisory staff. It has been a concern of the Library and Information Service for some time that the services offered to this group are not always relevant and/or appropriate services. Often the relevant information sources are not well-covered by indexing services. The staff concerned are traditionally short of time, spend little time in their offices and require information to be provided speedily when inquiries come from the public.

**6. PROJECT CONTEXT:**

The provision of appropriate library and information services to extension officers has been of concern to the staff of NSW Agriculture libraries for some time. The Client survey of 2000 (McCallum and Quinn, 2000) showed that extension officers have information needs. Library and Information Services needed to address the issue of how to provide appropriate services to a group of clients that represent nearly one third of the professional staff of the Department (New South Wales Agriculture, 2002).

Extension/advisory staff do not spend a significant amount of time in their office and yet need to maintain a familiarity with developments in their field. They need to read widely and the development of *Extension Alert* is a way to save their time. There is also an increasing involvement of extension staff in research projects. The

development of an extension portal or “gateway” on the Library Intranet pages is another initiative designed to assist extension staff.

In addition, the timing was pertinent as NSW Agriculture has been placing an increasing importance on the development of its education and extension services.

**7.PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):**

This initiative demonstrates the principles and practice of extension by providing an information service in a proactive fashion to a group of clients.

**8.PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:**

The approach of this project is to collate relevant and trade and industry journals into a searchable database for extension staff. Relevant information including book reviews and statistics are published in the monthly publication *Extension Alert*. This reflects the information access model in that it is a provision of information and communication services to users in a particular industry or area. In this case extension in NSW Agriculture. It also addresses the issue of rural community and industry development by providing the necessary support information service.

**9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:**

The Information and Library Service Network of NSW Agriculture consists of eight staffed libraries located at research and advisory locations throughout the state. Approximately 30% of the staff are tertiary-educated extension staff. Their role is to work with the agricultural community to educate, improve production and efficiency and to transfer knowledge.

**10.PROCESS/METHODS USED:**

Early 2002 the NSW Agriculture Library Services Manager sought input from other departments with similar extension activities, about their provision of library services to extension officers. It was found that very few departments had developed satisfactory services. As a result Library and Information Services made the decision to address the issue in a way that would be useful and acceptable to the clients.

A list of titles of trade and industry journals was developed and expenditure on such titles was increased. This list is currently under review and some titles will be removed from the list and others added, in the light of the development of the product over the past twelve months. Once an issue of a title is received, it is indexed within a week. The aim is to include articles containing “significant” information, with attention given to those topics of current and continuing interest to the department. The science and practice of extension is included. A list of subject headings has evolved over the past twelve months and keywords are assigned to each article.

Every six weeks, the file of articles is edited and a small portion appears in the printed *Extension Alert*. In addition, the printed edition of *Extension Alert* may contain book reviews, lists of new books from each of the Departmental libraries and table of contents from conference proceedings of interest to extension staff. Inclusions vary from issue to issue. Lists of new, revised and reviewed *Agnotes* and *Agfacts* are a regular feature in every issue. The electronic database is updated and now has over 4,000 records. Clients can search the database using keywords and/or subject headings and request copies of articles electronically. *Extension Alert*, both the electronic database and the printed document, are in continual development and aim to be responsive to the needs of their target clients.

**11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):**

As yet no formal evaluation has been carried out of this project. The impacts that can be seen are mainly in the form of the services available to extension staff. These are:

**Extension Portal on the intranet**

(<http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/intranet-lib-advisory>)

The extension portal, developed by the librarian at Wagga Agricultural Institute, provides a "one-stop shop" for many of the resources which experience has indicated extension staff are seeking, such as statistics, maps and atlases, sources of market information, legislation and Departmental publications. The Client Survey of 2002 was also used as a tool in deciding what to include in the portal. Librarians seek the input of their clients in the development of new products and feedback is welcome at all times.

Headings in the portal are currently as follow:

**Books and Journals**

*Library Catalogue*

*New Books*

*New Departmental publications*

*Australian Crop Report*

*Journal titles for Advisory/Extension Staff*

***IBIS Industry Reports***

Extension Alert

Library Request Forms

About your library

*Sites and Cites library newsletter*

*Contact you Librarian*

Useful Information

*Statistics*

*Library Alerting publications*

***Maps and Atlases***

*Information On.....*

*Sources of Market Information*

*Legislation*

Departmental Publications

*NSW Agriculture bookshop*

*Plant Slants*

*Animal Activity*

*Regional Review*

Intranet links

*Natural Resources and Environment*

*Weed news and information*

*Drought information*

Resources for DA's (District Agronomists)

Farm Product Integrity Program

**Statistical information for Extension Officers**

(<http://wwwi.agric.nsw.gov.au/intranet/lib-asi.htm>)

Statistical information has always been of vital importance to extension staff. The advent of the Internet and the Departmental Intranet has allowed statistical data to be provided to staff at their desktops. A link to the Library webpages agricultural statistics pages is provided from the Extension Portal, as indicated in the above section. In recent months, Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics (ABARE) publications have been available on the Intranet pages. These include such publications such as *Australian Commodities*, Research Reports, Farm Survey reports and *Australian Commodity Statistics*. It is possible to link to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publications and the latest agricultural survey (2001) is presented as a searchable database. Links are provided to major sources of statistical data such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) and ABARE.

It should be noted that the Network Services Unit purchases statistical publications in various formats. Librarians are able to provide details of this material and use it to answer statistical inquiries.

**Training and information skills**

Librarians are available to provide one-to-one training to all clients in the use of various library products. An Information Skills program is currently being developed to formalise the training that is already provided such as the effective use of the library catalogue, Internet searching and the Winspurs/Webspurs databases. It is anticipated Library and Information Services will be providing training in various other aspects of our service such as the use of e-journals and copyright issues with Departmental publications.

**12. EFFECTIVENESS:**

Evidence of the efficiency and effectiveness of the work may be seen in the increasing number of requests for articles and loans that are generated by the database, both the printed format and the electronic database. Up to sixty articles or more are requested from each issue.

**13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:**

Anderson, Sally C. Targeting our clients : the development of information and library service products for agricultural extension officers in NSW Agriculture. *Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Special, Health and Law Librarians' Conference, 24-27 August, 2003, Adelaide, South Australia*

Anderson, Sally C. Extension officers : development of targeted information and library services. *Proceedings of "The Beef Products Program : Technology – Our Future, Tocal College, Paterson, May,2003.*

Anderson, Sally C. 2003, Information and Library Service - NSW Agriculture, *Nomination for Awards for Excellence in Extension, NSW*

**14. ISSUES:**

The future of *Extension Alert* will depend on client need. It is the aim of NSW Agriculture Library and Information Services to at all times and in all facets of its operation be proactive and responsive to their clients, the staff of the Department. Continual evaluation and monitoring will be an important part of this the future of this project and its relevance to the target audiences.

**15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:**

Information and Library Service believes the *Extension Alert* initiative could have a broader application and there has been some discussion about making it available on the Department's internet site. Sally Anderson has attended both the beef programs conference and the wool and sheep meats program conference to speak to extension staff about the database and other Information and Library Services.

Both the Extension Portal and *Extension Alert* are products that are monitored continually to allow them to be responsive and useful to extension staff. The fifth issue of *Extension Alert*, released in late March, included a feedback form for clients to comment on the product. Comments will be acted upon to suit client needs.

Requests for articles are noted as statistics although this cannot be regarded as a true measure of how the publication is being used. Clients are possibly just noting the details of articles appearing in the printed and electronic version and not asking for the full article or seeking the full article in their own library without the intervention of library staff. The URL is also given for those titles available electronically and clients have access to the article at their desktop.

**16. REVIEW METHODS:**

- Review of available documentation
- Consultation with Sally Anderson