

United States Agricultural Information Network (USAIN) Fourth National Conference Report

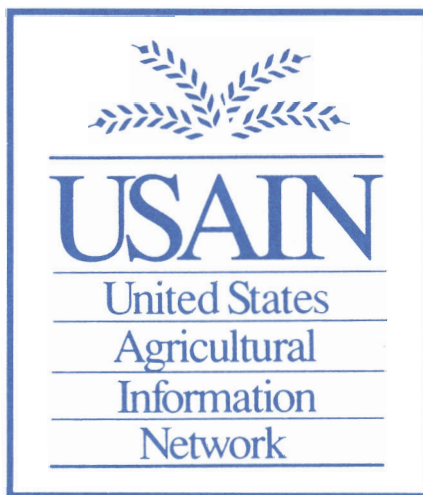
by Dana W. R. Boden with Elaine
Nowick and Mary Cassner
Subject Specialist/Liaison Librarians
C. Y. Thompson Library
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Photographs by Joseph N. Swab
ALIN Editor, NAL

The United States Agricultural Information Network (USAIN) Fourth National Conference was held in Lexington, Kentucky, April 26-29, 1995. The conference theme was "Cultivating New Ground in Electronic Information: Use of the Information Highway to Support Agriculture." Conference attendance numbered 105 professionals from the National Agricultural Library, land-grant institutions, federal agencies, corporations, other libraries and information providers, and vendors.

Wednesday

The first day, Wednesday, April 26, 1995, a pre-conference, "Internet Basics Workshop," was held on the campus of the University of Kentucky. Two sessions, one in the morning and one repeated in the afternoon, hosted a total of twenty-five attendees who gained information about gophers and the World Wide Web. USAIN Committees and Interest Groups met in the late afternoon to conduct business.



Thursday

Cynthia Via, USAIN President, chaired the welcome and opening session on Thursday morning. The featured speaker, Paul Evan Peters, Executive Director of the Coalition for Networked Information, spoke on the topic, "Of Information Highways and Byways: Networked Communication and Publication Strategies for the Rest of the 1990s and Beyond." One of his main points was that libraries have the ticket to the information highway, and the whole country is wondering what is the destination? He noted that four classes of changes are taking place: how information is rendered; how information is packaged; how markets

are segmented; and how value chains are structured and operated. The rate at which changes occur seems to be going faster, and different communities join the information pipeline at different times, dependent upon the benefits that are perceived. He recommended that we not ask what the Internet can do for us, but ask what we can do for the Internet.

Late morning speakers and their topics were: Eric Lease Morgan, Systems Librarian, North Carolina State University—"Using the World Wide Web and WAIS Technologies to Create Electronic Information Systems"; and, David Shipley, Dean of the College of Law, University of Kentucky—"Property Rights in Cyberspace: Copyright Law in the Internet Era." USAIN-L subscribers were happy to put a face with Morgan's name as he was the creator of the USAIN listserv. He noted there are three qualities required of information systems on the World Wide Web or other information system technologies: readability, browsability, and searchability. He then elaborated on the features that contribute to each of those qualities. Shipley provided a detailed handout on his topic. After presenting an informative and thought-provoking overview of the information in the handout, he responded to several questions and

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comments from the audience.

The USAIN Business Meeting and the Committee and Interest Group Reports were the agenda items at lunch on Thursday. The 1995 USAIN Scholarship winners, Mary Cassner, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Debra Currie, Louisiana State University, were introduced and congratulated. Each received \$500 to apply toward the expenses of attending the conference. Amy Paster noted that the Technical Services Interest Group was being disbanded because of lack of interest. No one has shown up to meet with Amy in the past two years. It was noted the Membership Committee and the Collection Management Interest Group have no chairpersons at this time. Under new business it was announced that the fifth USAIN Conference will be held in Tucson, Arizona. Some discussion of how often to have the conference, and during what time of year ensued. The conference is being planned for April 1997. [Editor's Note: It has since been announced that IAALD and the NAL/Central and Eastern European Agricultural Library Roundtable will meet with USAIN at Tucson, April 3-5, 1997.]

Afternoon programs included: "Connected We Can Learn—Distance Education for the Agricultural Community," presented by Janet Poley, President of A*DEC Corporation; and "Preservation Through Electronic Means: Updates on the Core Agricultural Literature Project at Mann Library and the National Preservation Program," presented by Jan Olsen, Director of Mann Library, Cornell University. Poley discussed changes in the infrastructure of education driven by globalization, changing demographics, restructured employment, technological change, and disintegration of the ivory tower. Distance education is becoming more desirable as well as feasible. Poley recommended titles of several books dealing with change especially in education.

Olsen emphasized the importance of information as the basis of freedom and the basic nature of the agricultural literature. Since 1991, the agricultural literature to be preserved has been prioritized, a proposal to National En-



photo courtesy of Monica Stock

Local arrangements and daily management of the conference and activities were by University of Kentucky staff, (L-R) Lillian Mesner, Monica Stoch, Toni Powell, Pat Wilson, and Joe Miller.

dowment for the Humanities has been written, and criteria for state level participation have been identified.

In late afternoon the recently created USAIN Social Issues Interest Group hosted the program, "Myths and Realities in Agricultural Information." Moderated by Irwin Weintraub, Rutgers University, the program featured three varied speakers: Louis Swanson, Department of Sociology, University of Kentucky, on "Transformation of U. S. Farming and Agricultural Policy"; Dorothy Robertson, a Kentucky farmer, on "Where Have All the Farmers Gone?"; and Gabriel Hegyes, Sustainable Agriculture Network Coordinator, National Agricultural Library, on "The Sustainable Agricultural Network: A Forum for Change in American Agriculture." Swanson, author of *Sacred Cows and Hot Potatoes: Agrarian Myths and Agricultural Policies*, outlined the continuing trend of fewer, larger farms employing fewer people and suggested that government policy encourages this trend. Robertson, an activist as well as farmer, suggested that USAIN has overlooked the farmers. She also maintained that government policy favors corporations at taxpayers' expense. Hegyes defined the goals of the Sustainable Agriculture Network as

providing information, discussion, and news of events designed to sustain human food and fiber needs, enhance the environment, sustain the economy, and provide biological integration over the long term.

Friday

The day began with three concurrent sessions where contributed papers were presented.

Session I: "Improving Access to Published and Unpublished Resources: Librarians' Perspectives" was moderated by Amy Blair, Michigan State University, and featured three presentations.

Claudine Jenda and Elizabeth Weisbrod, Auburn University Libraries, addressed "Accessibility of Federal and State Agricultural Publications: Possibilities and Realities." These librarians were instrumental in developing an online bibliography of selected federal and state agricultural publications which are owned by the Auburn University Libraries. The goal of this project is to provide individual access on a piece-by-piece basis. This bibliography, which is available through the Internet, will eventually be loaded into the Auburn University Libraries' online catalog. Currently agri-

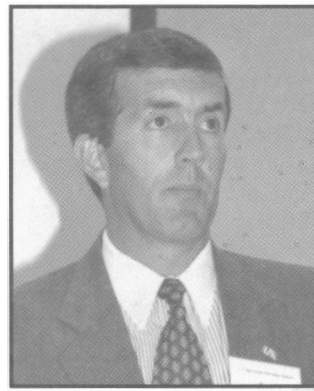
USAIN Conference Speakers



Paul Evan Peters



Eric Lease Morgan



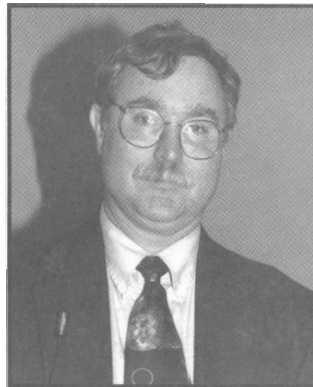
David Shipley



Janet Poley



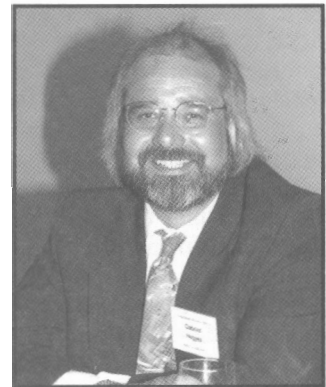
Jan Olsen



Louis Swanson



Dorothy Robertson



Gabriel Hegyes



Claudine Jenda



Elizabeth Weisbrod



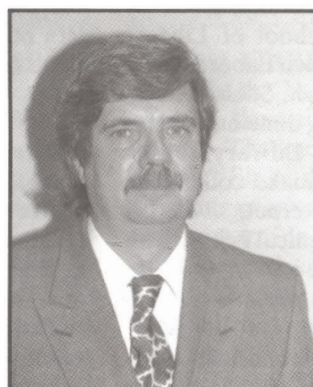
Debra Currie



Patricia Rodkewich



Barbara Hutchinson



Kenneth Sochats



Susan Schram



Constance Britton

cultural literature through the mid-1980's has been completed.

Debra Currie, Louisiana State University Libraries, gave a presentation entitled, "Serials Redesign: Using Electronic Document Delivery to Reshape Access to Agricultural Journal Literature." When faced with cancellation of a large number of serials, LSU decided to take a proactive approach to serial subscriptions. Faculty members were given a CARL UnCover demonstration to enable them to set up profiles in their areas of interest. They were then asked to list up to 45 journal titles, in priority order, which they considered essential for their research and teaching. At the same time faculty were supposed to indicate whether document delivery was acceptable for each of these titles. Only those titles used on a daily or weekly basis or published in a format that requires direct access (such as illustrations which do not photocopy well) were to be noted as requiring a serial subscription. Preliminary results of this project indicate a faculty willingness to cancel a significant number of serials and rely more heavily on document delivery.

"AgEcon Search: Research in Agricultural Economics" was presented by Patricia J. Rodkewich, St. Paul Campus Library, University of Minnesota. Rodkewich stated the need for better access to papers in the agricultural economics field. Consequently, the library has applied for a grant which will, if received, create a national database for these papers. A three-tier approach will be employed. First, the papers will be listed by author, title, series number, and university department. Second, bibliographic information and a summary of the article will be provided. In general, each important word of the paper will be searchable. Lastly, the paper itself will be scanned into a WordPerfect read-only file. This project will be an example of librarians serving as electronic publishers as well as in a preservation role.

Session II: "Development of Internet Resources," moderated by Amy Paster, Pennsylvania State University, also featured three presentations.



At the All-Conference Reception honoring NAL's new Director, Pamela André (center), Oran Little (left), Dean, College of Agriculture, and Paul Willis (right), Director of Libraries, officially welcomed USAIN members to the University of Kentucky.

Barbara S. Hutchinson, Arid Lands Information Center, University of Arizona, addressed "Building an Arid Lands Information Network on the Internet." She and John M. Bancroft, also of the Arid Lands Information Center (ALIC) have built a World Wide Web site known as the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN). Hutchinson outlined the process and described the preliminary modules.

"Promenade: An Internet Database Server for a Virtual Botanical Library," was the subject of the talk given by Kenneth Sochats, School of Library and Information Science Laboratories, University of Pittsburgh. Sochats highlighted the work being done on the National Agricultural Library Image Database Project to make collections available over the Internet. This includes the Curtis Botanical Prints. The URL for the database is:

<http://www.lis.pitt.edu>

Susan G. Schram, Food and Agriculture Program Coordinator, Consortium for International Earth Science

Information Network (CIESIN), reported on the "USDA Global Change Data Assessment and Integration Project." Schram described the progress on this project to identify USDA global environmental change information, assess the quantity and quality of the information, and make it available electronically. A World Wide Web home page has been setup. Called *Information for a Changing World*, it may be reached at:

<http://www.ciesin.org>

Schram noted that the USDA is data rich, but often agencies do not know the data other agencies have. Hopefully, this is a step in remedying that situation.

Session III: "End Users and Agricultural Information: Improving Connections," with M. Kay Mowery, University of Georgia, as moderator, highlighted two papers.

The first paper, presented by Constance J. Britton, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Ohio State University, was entitled

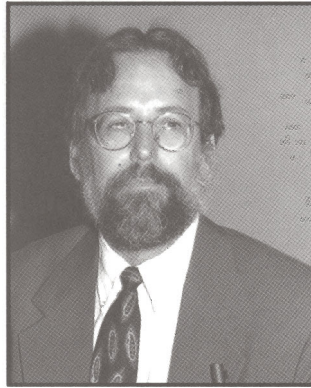
USAIN Conference Speakers



Jan Fryer



Linda Hutchinson



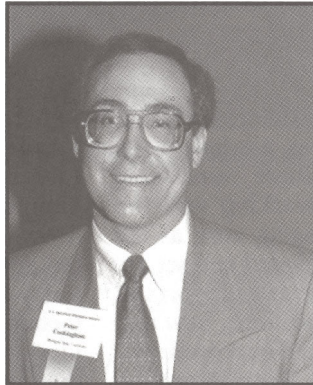
John Ulmschneider



Pamela André



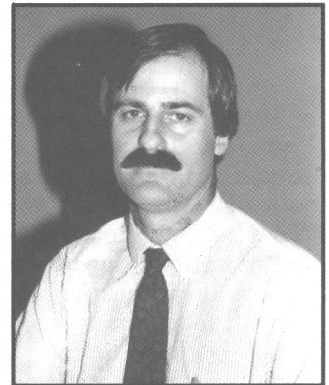
Oya Reiger



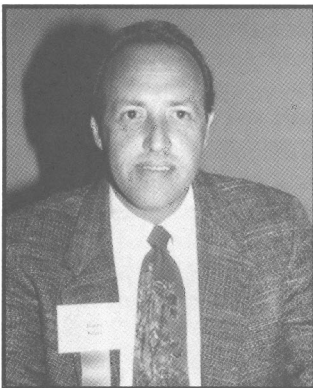
Peter Cookingham



Barbara Lazewski



Rich Gates



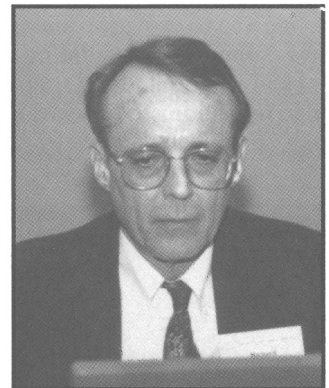
Barry Kiger



Karen Pulliam



Robyn Frank



Richard Thompson

“Agricultural Information via the Cleveland Free-Net.” The Cleveland Free-Net was started in 1986 as a community-based medical question and answer Bulletin Board System, but quickly expanded to cover a wide range of topics and formats. The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) wanted to provide information on the Free-Net on issues of interest to urban dwellers as well as to farmers, and so information on topics such as food and the environment is

included. OARDC information can be found in the home, yard, and garden entry in the Science and Technology menu. The menu page contains an “about” file, a directory of resources, calendar of events, a what’s new section, extension publications, and a question-and-answer forum. Questions are answered on topics such as pest control, laundry care, or yard care, etc., primarily from traditional reference sources. There is a 24-hour turnaround time for questions, and answers

can be posted to the bulletin board or sent to personal e-mail. Presently, the Lorraine County Free-Net is in the process of being set up with the help of Tom Grundig of National Public Telecommunications, a group devoted to extending Free-Net services to rural areas. This Free-Net will have an agricultural orientation and can be run by extension agents once it is established. National Public Telecommunications can be contacted at:

<http://nptn.org>



The AGRICOLA interest group meets on the first day of the USAIN conference.

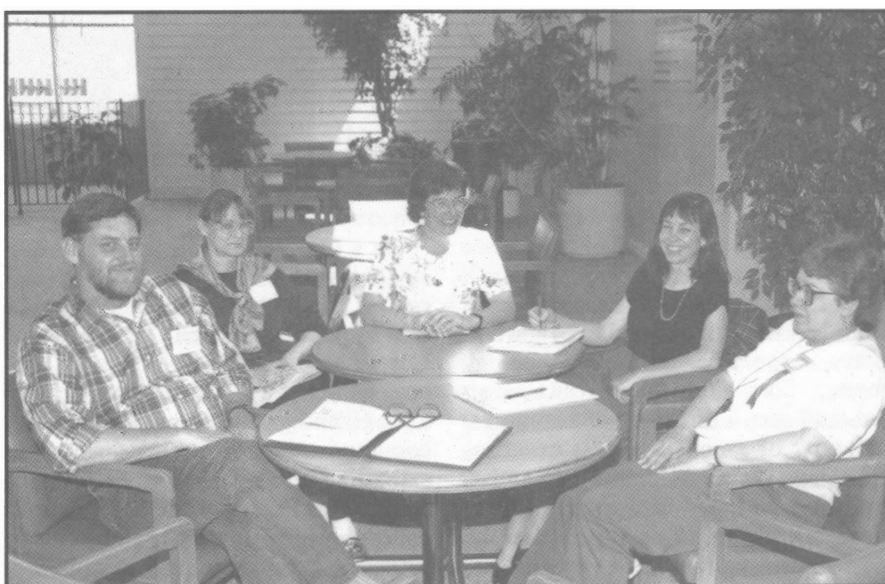


Anita Battiste gives the report of the AGRICOLA group.

The second paper, presented by Jan Fryer, Parks Library, and Linda Hutchinson, Cooperative Extension Service, both of Iowa State University, was "Training Extension Staff to Drive on the Information Superhighway." The Extension Information Network was created under the terms of a \$1.226 million National Science Foundation grant to enable extension offices throughout Iowa to connect to the Internet through the Iowa State backbone and to provide training and ongoing support. Installation proceeded ahead of schedule and training sessions had to be adjusted accordingly. Training schedules were held at one, two,

three, and twelve months after installation. The project as a whole went smoothly although there were some problems with networking and the technology was changing even as the system was being designed and set up. Ongoing maintenance and support will be provided for relocations, new and continuing training, and improved software and hardware. Specific proficiency goals have been established for the ISU Extension staff. These include use of e-mail, telnetting, database searching using Gopher, FTP, and Newsgroups. Field staff also learn how to send and receive files and print to remote locations.

Mid-morning on Friday, John Ulmschneider, Assistant Director for Library Systems, North Carolina State University, spoke on "Document Delivery in the Electronic Environment." He noted where document delivery is today and that software and network technologies hold the promise of an ideal system for document delivery in the future. Patrons want to be able to find any needed item using normal library tools, without being concerned about the format or location. Libraries want to provide that, but presently must be concerned with the labor, time, management, and agreements needed to make it possible.



The Telecommunications and Networking Committee meets as the USAIN conference begins.



Barbara Hutchinson gives the Telecommunications report.



The Rural Information Interest Group meets at the USAIN conference.

The new Director of the National Agricultural Library, Pamela Q. J. André, gave an NAL Update late Friday morning. She spoke about changes resulting from the reorganization within USDA which merged NAL into the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). She outlined staffing and organization changes at NAL including streamlining with a 7% cut in personnel over the next 5 years—about 15 staff. Programs that will continue include the Electronic Information Initiative to acquire, preserve, and provide materials become in electronic format, helping to establish an Egyptian National Library, the Central and Eastern Europe Project, and improving alliances and links with land-grant universities to put together teams for cooperation.

An International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (still known as IAALD) Planning Meeting, open to all interested in international agricultural information and moderated by Barbara S. Hutchinson, Arids Lands Information Center, University of Arizona, and Antoinette P. Powell, Director, Agriculture Library, University of Kentucky, was held Friday evening.

Saturday

Saturday's sessions began with four speakers on the theme "Internet Re-

sources in Agriculture," moderated by Jean Gilbertson, University of Wisconsin.

Oya Reiger, Mann Library, Cornell University, spoke on "Mann Library on the Net and the USDA Statistics and Report System." Reiger indicated that the system accessible via telnet will be phased out and that the World Wide Web site is accessible at:

<http://www.mannlib.cornell.edu>

The globe icon indicates open access, while the Cornell logo indicates databases available to University-affiliated persons only. She outlined the wide range of information available, invited attendees to "check it out," and noted data accessed via the USDA Economics and Statistics System can only be downloaded using a Lotus 1,2,3 system.

Second, was Peter Cookingham, Michigan State University, who enlightened attendees with "Turfgrass Information Center and TGIF." Cookingham noted that the target audience for the Turfgrass Information File (TGIF) is field practitioners, and that there is little federal presence in the turf area, since turfgrass is not considered an agricultural crop. Information in the field is hard to access because of the range of publications that



Margaret Merrill presents the Rural Information report.

may cover it. Articles may be indexed by *Reader's Guide*, *AGRICOLA*, *CAB International*, and others. The file must be subscribed to for access via the Internet, at a rate of \$75 annually. The file not only covers articles, but also book chapters, state and regional turf conferences, etc. As a result the file contains a high percentage of unique holdings. Document delivery online is available with a 48-hour turnaround.

"University of Minnesota Forestry



Irwin Weintraub reports for the Social Issues Interest Group.



Kay Mowrey (L) and Rita Fisher (R) visit with Carol Robertson at IAALD's information table.



Biddanda Ponnappa talks to Ellen Mimnaugh, representative of Chemical Abstracts Service.

Databases on the Internet," presented by Patricia Rodkewich, University of Minnesota, noted that topics covered by the databases include Social Sciences in Forestry, Urban Forestry, Tropical Forestry Conservation and Development, and Trails Planning, Construction, and Maintenance. Jean Albrecht started and works most directly with these databases. To reach the databases point your gopher client at:

minerva.forestry.umn.edu (port 70)

Barbara Lazewski, University of Wisconsin-Madison, enlightened the group with her "Favorite Agricultural Internet Resources." She noted that Gopher is passé now that the World Wide Web has been unleashed. She provided a handout with information on the resources she covered and their addresses.

Following the above presentations, Saturday morning breakout exhibits/demonstrations were held to allow attendees to gather more information on the items that most piqued their interests.

Over lunch, talk tables were held. Attendees signed up ahead of time at the registration desk for the topic of most interest to them. Many topics were related to areas covered by

USAIN Interest Groups, while there were some others such as one on USAIN-L. Short reports on the discussion at each table were presented after lunch. Also candidates for the USAIN Council were announced.

Saturday afternoon a panel moderated by Pat Wilson, University of Kentucky, addressed "Experiences of Internet Users." The panel consisted of non-information professionals who work with Internet resources speaking on their Internet experiences. Panel members, all from the University of Kentucky, were: Rich Gates, Research Faculty, Agricultural Engineering; Barry Kiger, Morgan County Extension Agent for Agriculture; and Karen Pulliam, Technical Support Programmer, Agricultural Economics. Each member of the panel addressed a list of questions including how they got started on the Internet, what training they have had, how they choose resources, and what the potential of the Internet is in their field.

Robyn Frank, National Agricultural Library, addressed "NAL and the Internet." Frank discussed the Internet access aspects of NAL's electronic information initiative, its impact on NAL and its impact on NAL's patrons. The potential for wider, increased, quicker access and visibility, resulting in

reduced and/or shifted costs was highlighted.

Concluding the sessions at the conference was Richard Thompson, National Agricultural Library, speaking on "The Agricultural Network Information Center (AgNIC): A Model for Access to Distributed Resources." Thompson introduced and elaborated on the plan for AgNIC which was drawn up at a December 1994 meeting. The model as presented was inviting and it is hoped the plans can move forward to implementation.

Other Events

Exhibitors at the fourth USAIN Conference were Acres U.S.A., CAB International, Chemical Abstracts Service, International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD), and the National Agricultural Library. Vendor representatives participated with conference attendees in many of the meetings, discussions, and social events, as well as presenting the latest information about their products in their booths. This contact is always beneficial to both the vendors and the information professionals.

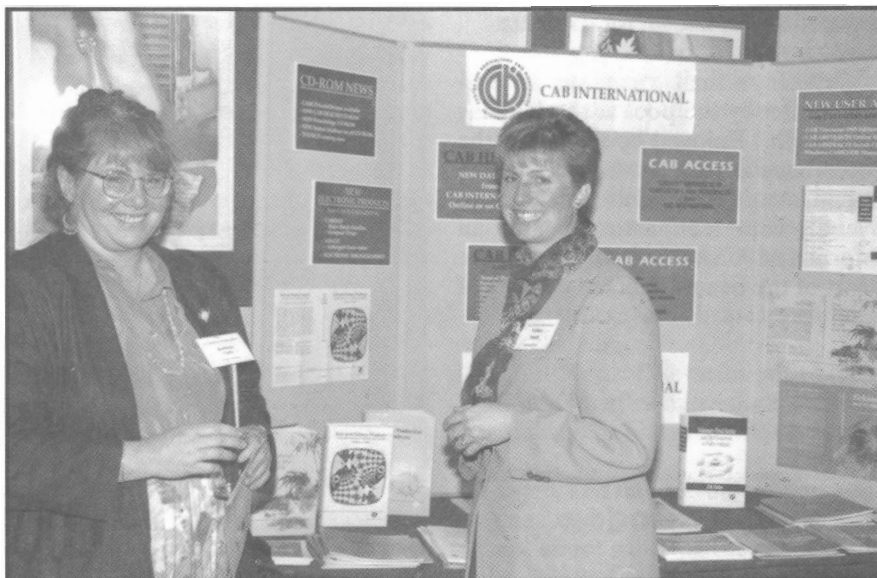
A quite enjoyable event included for full conference attendees was "Old Kentucky Night at the Kentucky Horse Park" on Wednesday. This treat in-

cluded our own maize colored bandanas to designate our group. Highlights of the Kentucky Horse Park included hayride or walking farm tours of the park, the Hall of Champions and the Breeds Barns, the International Museum of the Horse, the Gift Shop, and the film "Thou Shalt Fly Without Wings." A special treat was seeing preparations for the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event which began the next day. A wonderful dinner buffet, with several traditional Kentucky dishes, was enjoyed by all. The after-dinner entertainment got everyone tapping their toes and clapping their hands. Several attendees found themselves dancing off some of their dinner as the McClain Family Cloggers from Georgetown, Kentucky, got many up on their feet and out on the floor to learn some steps with them.

Thursday's activities were concluded with an All-Conference Reception honoring Pamela Q. J. André, recently appointed Director of the National Agricultural Library. Welcoming remarks were provided by C. Oran Little, Dean of the College of Agriculture, and Paul Willis, Director of Libraries. André then responded and expressed her appreciation for the reception in her honor, and highlighted her hopes for NAL's future.

Friday morning early risers were encouraged to join a walking tour of the University of Kentucky Coldstream Farm. Located just across Newtown Pike from the Holiday Inn-North where the conference was held, the farm is one of the University's large animal experimental farms. The invigorating three-mile walk gave the participants a lovely view of a Bluegrass sunrise.

Friday, a special treat was offered to forty attendees who made reservations in advance for an afternoon at the races at Keeneland Race Track. The slogan at Keeneland is "Racing as it was meant to be." There is no public address system at Keeneland, which has been designated a National Historic Landmark, and two of the day's nine races were on turf. A tasteful buffet was included in the accommodations in the Kentucky Room located four floors



Kathleen Clark (L) visits with Andrea Powell, representative of CAB International, at the CABI exhibit.

above the finish line. To truly experience Keeneland one had to visit the paddock area to see the jockeys and the thoroughbreds with their trainers prior to racing. The paddock area, with its tall trees, is located between the grandstand entrance and the main grandstand. All attendees came away winners from experiencing the beauty, atmosphere, and good time, whether their pocketbooks showed it or not.

Conference-goers who did not go to

Keeneland enjoyed other attractions of the central bluegrass area, such as the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event at the Kentucky Horse Park, touring some of Lexington's historic places like Transylvania University (first institution of higher education west of the Appalachian Mountains), Ashland (Henry Clay's home), or the downtown Historic District. Others ventured to the shopping malls, the University of Kentucky campus, or to the nearby



Cynthia Via, USAIN President, presided over the conference.



Toni Powell, host of the conference, is next USAIN President.

town of Berea, known for its crafts.

Saturday's final event was an evening buffet by the pool at the Holiday Inn-North. Enjoyed by several of the conference attendees who were still in attendance, it featured a full dinner and friendly conversation to conclude an informative USAIN conference in the heart of the beautiful horse country of Kentucky.

Dana Boden

Dana W. R. Boden, one of the authors of the report on the USAIN conference, is an Associate Professor and Subject Specialist Librarian at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She has liaison responsibilities for five departments in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, namely Agronomy, Biological Systems Engineering, Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Plant Pathology, plus the Center for Biotechnology. She holds a B.S. in Agriculture and an M.A. in Education from Western Kentucky University, and the M.S.L.S. from the University of Kentucky. She currently is working on a doctoral degree in Postsecondary Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



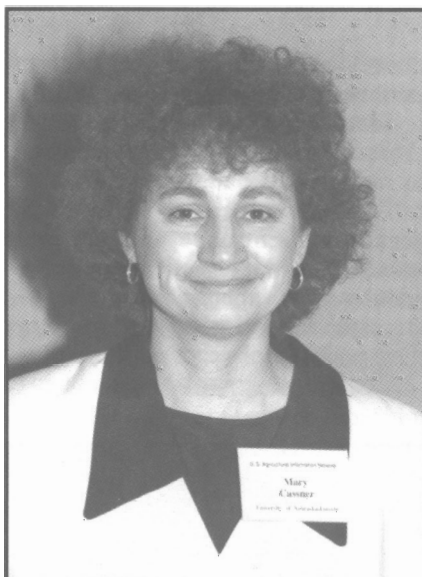
Dana Boden



Elaine Nowick

Elaine Nowick

Elaine Nowick, one of the co-authors of the report on the USAIN conference, joined the library faculty at C. Y. Thompson Library of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in February of 1995, having completed an MLS through Emporia State University's "Emporia in the Rockies" program in December 1994. Her duties at C. Y. Thompson include reference, collection development, and liaison activities to the Departments of Animal Science, Veterinary Science and Biomedicine, Biometry, and Food Science and Technology. Nowick also holds advanced degrees in agronomy from Colorado State University and Iowa State University.



Mary Cassner

Mary Cassner

Mary Cassner, one of the co-authors of the report on the USAIN conference, is an Assistant Professor and Subject Specialist Librarian at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her duties include reference, collection development, and library instruction in her liaison areas of Forestry, Fisheries & Wildlife; Agricultural Meteorology; Entomology; and Dentistry. She holds B.S. and M.Ed. degrees from the University of Nebraska as well as the



Debra L. Currie

M.L.S. from Emporia State University. Cassner was a scholarship recipient at the 1995 USAIN Conference.

Debra L. Currie

Debra L. Currie, in addition to Mary Cassner, was a scholarship recipient at the 1995 USAIN Conference. She is the Agriculture Reference Librarian at LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA. She received a B.S. (Animal Science) and an M.S. (Library Science) from the University of Kentucky.