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Antoinette Paris Powell

University of Kentucky, toni.greider@uky.edu

Patricia S. Wilson

University of Kentucky, pwilson@email.uky.edu

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Library Instruction vs. Information Competency: It's Not Just Bibliographic Instruction Anymore

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Antoinette Paris Powell and Patricia S. Wilson

Keywords: course integrated library instruction; library skills; users (information).

Abstract: The Agriculture Library at the University of Kentucky has offered library instruction in some form for the past 23 years. The program began in 1974 with the Library Literacy program that offered on demand workshops, an undergraduate for-credit course, graduate workshops and programs to extension personnel. By 1988 the program had moved into a library literacy program that was proactive, provided individualized presentations, and provided a mix of electronic and paper sources. This program gave way to the information literacy program of 1994 which expanded target groups and collaborated with other areas. A shift in the teaching emphasis in the College of Agriculture changed the way that library instruction was offered to the undergraduate students. The information literacy program of 1994 emphasized the ability to use the information system in general. Another shift is occurring and we are now moving into information competency where the goal is that the user becomes fully competent in the appropriate system for the appropriate use. To accomplish this the programs must be user driven, flexible, and assessment must be done to measure effectiveness.

Resumé: Depuis 23 ans, la bibliothèque agricole de l'université de Kentucky forme ses utilisateurs à l'utilisation de la bibliothèque. Ce programme de formation lancé en 1973, offrait des ateliers de formation sur demande, incluant un module pour les étudiants du 1^{er} cycle universitaire, des ateliers pour les étudiants du 2^e cycle et des sessions pour le personnel de vulgarisation. Vers 1988, il est devenu plus pro-actif et offrait des présen-

tations individualisées et un mélange de supports imprimés et électroniques. En 1994, ce programme a été remplacé par le programme d'introduction à l'information qui vise un plus grand nombre de groupes cibles, et collabore avec d'autres secteurs. Ce changement d'instruction pour les étudiants du 1^{er} cycle a eu lieu après la révision du programme de formation du collège agricole. Le programme d'introduction à l'information de 1994 met l'accent sur la capacité d'utiliser un système d'information en général. Actuellement, l'accent est aussi mis sur le développement des compétences en information, afin de permettre à l'utilisateur de choisir le système approprié pour une utilisation appropriée de l'information. Pour atteindre ce but, la formation doit répondre aux demandes des utilisateurs et être flexible.

Resumen: Durante los últimos 23 años, la Biblioteca Agrícola de la Universidad de Kentucky ha ofrecido instrucción sobre el uso de los recursos de la biblioteca en diversas formas. En 1974 se empezó con el programa de capacitación en el uso de recursos de la biblioteca, que ofrecía, según la demanda, talleres, cursos de pregrado que fueran requisitos para el grado académico, talleres a nivel de posgrado y programas para el personal de extensión. En 1988 el programa ya se había convertido en un programa de capacitación en el uso de recursos bibliotecarios que era proactivo, que daba presentaciones individualizadas, y que proporcionaba una mezcla de

fuentes electrónicas y en papel. Este programa dio lugar al programa de capacitación en el uso de recursos de la información en 1994, que se extendió a grupos escogidos y colaboró con otras áreas. Una innovación en el énfasis de la enseñanza en la Facultad de Agricultura cambió la manera en que se ofrecía instrucción sobre el uso de los recursos de la biblioteca a los estudiantes de pregrado. El programa de capacitación en el uso de recursos de la información de 1994 enfatizaba la capacidad de usar el sistema de información en general. Actualmente se está presentando otro cambio: se está moviendo hacia la suficiencia en el uso de los recursos de información con la meta de que el usuario sea completamente competente en el sistema apropiado para el uso apropiado. Para lograr esa suficiencia, los programas deben ser guiados por el usuario, flexibles y evaluados respecto a su efectividad.

The Agriculture Library at the University of Kentucky was formed in 1964 by combining departmental collections housed in the College of Agriculture. During the first decade of its existence, collection building was the focus. By 1974 a fine working collection was in place but little use was made of the collection (Table 1). In 1975 an informal bibli-

Table 1 – Library Use 1970–1973

Year	Graduate Population	Graduate Circulations	Undergraduate Population	Undergraduate Circulation	ILL Borrows
1970	188	4700	666	2381	110
1971	187	6181	814	3244	266
1972	180	7203	956	3466	165
1973	153	6186	1053	117	117
1974	157	6631	1201	3833	136

ographic instruction program began with on demand instruction for specialized tools and over the next 20 years evolved into a program fully integrated into the general courses.

In the Beginning...

In early 1974 library staff observed that there were a number of undergraduate students who needed help with *Chemical Abstracts*. The technical staff felt uncomfortable answering questions about *Chemical Abstracts* and an open professional position meant that there was not always a librarian available to answer the questions. Out of desperation, a junior librarian called the faculty member making the assignment and offered to do an in class session on *Chemical Abstracts*. During the next year, on demand sessions were continued and use of this on demand service began increasing. No advertising was done and no formal bibliographic instruction program was in place but the need was there. During the first year it was obvious that the program needed focus as the primary service groups for Agriculture were diverse with varying needs. It was apparent that one type of program would not meet the needs of all the clientele. The clientele consisted of undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and research assistants, as well as off campus extension personnel.

Not having enough staff to put programs in place for each group necessitated some type of prioritiz-

ing scheme. Use statistics indicated that the graduate students were the heaviest library users. (Table I) The Agriculture Library staff had observed the graduate students getting frustrated and wasting time trying to find information in a decentralized library system that included 14 libraries spread around a sprawling campus. In the routine of assisting several graduate students, the students requested that some sort of library orientation be offered as they could see the value of it. Thus the idea of the Graduate Workshop (later called seminar) was born and a plan formulated to structure the program. The plan was to make the workshops subject specific and to devise a program that would be flexible enough to meet immediate needs.

Where We've Been

Graduate Workshops

Integration of the graduate workshop program with the College's agenda was necessary for the program to succeed. The Associate Dean for Graduate Research (responsible for all the graduate programs in Agriculture) was approached to discuss the organization and structure of the program as well as to secure both financial and moral support. The concept was well received and the Associate Dean arranged for the librarian to meet with the Graduate Directors of the College of Agriculture to discuss the content for each subject area. "How to find information on the entire campus" was the proposal presented to the Graduate

Directors. The Workshop was designed to be presented in three sessions, two general lectures and a number of two-hour subject workshops. The workshops would be held on Saturday mornings.

The content of the general session was broken down by books and journal articles. The first general session included orientation to the University of Kentucky Library System focusing on the resources available on campus and effectively utilizing the card catalog and basic classification schemes. The second general lecture focused on how indexes are constructed, the multi-disciplinary indexes and abstracts available, and computerized literature searching. The large group was then broken down by subject interests and a seminar on specific resources (on the entire campus) was held. The workshop series began in September of 1976 and was fairly well attended (having the Associate Dean of Research there to take attendance helped). As the series progressed, attendance dropped off. In all, only 16 students (about 7% of the total graduate population) attended all the sessions.

In 1977 the series was repeated in the same format. Only 10 graduate students completed the entire series in 1977, so in the fall of 1978 a different approach was taken. Instead of spreading the information out over three sessions, it was condensed into one three-hour session with a subject emphasis. The session included the library system, the card catalog, indexing techniques, multi-disciplinary abstracts and indexes, specialized abstracts and indexes, and computerized literature searching. A sixteen-page subject handout was distributed and search questions were completed for each session. The number of students going through the seminar series rose dramatically. (Table 2) This program model continued and each fall the Graduate Directors for each subject area were contacted and a seminar was set up for their subject area. Formal assessment of the series was

Table 2 – Graduate Seminar Attendance 1976–1983

Year	Gen Session I	Gen Session II	Subject Sessions	Percent of Population
1975/76	43	31	16	7%
1976/77	29	17	10	4%
1977/78	—	—	84	34%
1978/79	—	—	105	48%
1979/80	—	—	95	42%
1980/81	—	—	123	48%
1981/82	—	—	170	64%
1982/83	—	—	52	20%
1983/84	—	—		

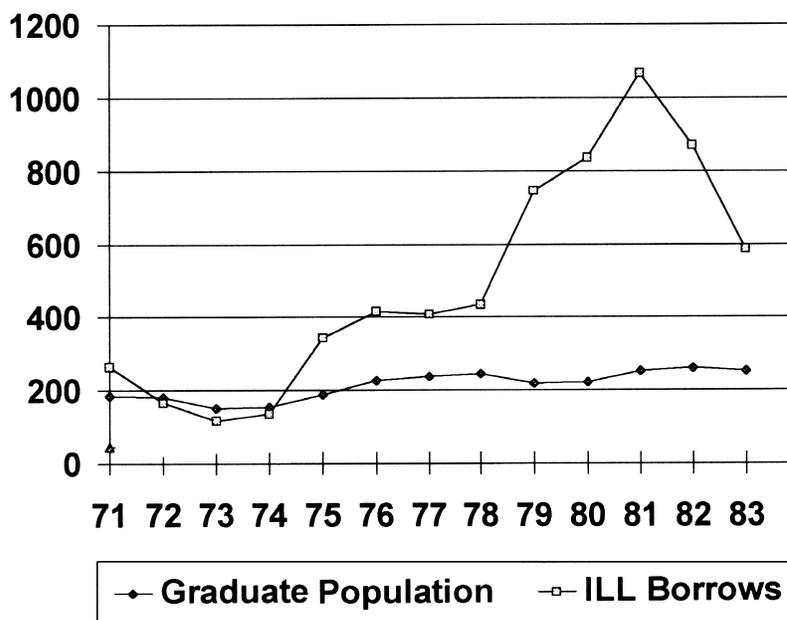
lacking but during the years of the program the graduate student population rose by 22%. By using the interlibrary borrowing service as an indicator (students finding sources beyond what is in the library), library use rose by 71% (see graph). This seminar series continued until 1983 when the Agriculture Library suffered a flood and all staff energy had to go into reclaiming materials. This reclamation project took four years to complete.

For Credit Course

In addition to Graduate Workshops, on demand programs were still offered. Different classes took advantage of this service and the library staff was busy trying to meet their needs. An orientation for the large contingent of Indonesian graduate students was devised and monitoring the needs of our clientele continued. In 1975, to meet some of the needs of the undergraduate students, a for credit course was offered under the experimental education program called Introduction to Agricultural Bibliography. This one-hour for credit elective course was offered on a trial basis. Seventeen students elected to take this course the first semester. The course presented materials on various systems in the libraries, performing basic searching for monographs and articles and required hands on work in the library. Search questions were employed and 50% of the student's grade was based on a bibliography they had created. A large amount of work was required outside of class and students complained that it was too much work for a one credit course. The course was offered again the following spring and only six students signed up. Many of the students were not in the College of Agriculture and were attracted to it because it was a one credit course. The course was dropped after the second year. During the years 1975–1983, 724 students went through the program.

In 1987 the advent of electronic products forced us to focus our en-

ILL Borrows 1971–1983



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ergies on how we did business. Staff efforts went into the integration of CD-ROMs into our service area. It was a time for retooling and retraining and rethinking our objectives.

In 1988 there was a change in the professional staff with a retirement. The position was rewritten to emphasize public services, with enhancing and providing instruction being a key component. As the bibliographic instruction program had been in hiatus, it was a prime opportunity for new energy and ideas. At this point we evolved away from bibliographic instruction into what we called library literacy and totally redirected our programs.

Library Literacy

In 1989 we had one stand-alone CD-ROM workstation with one database, AGRICOLA (the National Agricultural Library's database), available to the public. In subsequent years several other databases plus access to general databases were supplied through the NOTIS System (our automated library system). On demand seminar requests were forwarded to the new librarian as she began working with the in-

struction program. Using an existing structure, the first seminars were team taught to allow the new librarian time to understand the program. It provided an opportunity to observe users and to get a feel for their needs. It also gave the new librarian an opportunity to develop her own style.

CD-ROM instruction was added to the program and assignments were added to reinforce what the student learned. The assignments walked the student through the process and were graded. The program moved away from just library instruction to hands-on instruction to promote a better understanding of the tools. On demand seminars continued to be a key component of the library literacy program.

Information Competency

During the mid-1980s and early 1990s, two major events gave impetus for a change in the direction of the program for students. First, the College of Agriculture did an in-depth review of what the employers of their students wanted in an employee. The employers indicated that they wanted people who could

make informed decisions, communicate both orally and in writing, and think critically. To accomplish this end, the College decided to add two core classes to their curriculum. The classes were to be issue-based, developed by a committee, taught by faculty from a variety of disciplines, stress information gathering, and include a communications component. Knowing this, the Public Services Librarian started lobbying to be included on the committee and pointed out that the Library should be part of the process rather than an afterthought. The groundwork had been laid with a teaching faculty member who had taken advantage of the on demand seminar services. He made the suggestion that information literacy be incorporated into the larger core classes. The invitation came while standing outside with the Associate Dean for Instruction during a fire alarm. During the conversation, the Public Services Librarian lobbied for library inclusion on the Core Curriculum Committee. He asked for a proposal, which was provided, and when the committee appointments were made, the Public Services Librarian was part of the group. All three librarians from the Agriculture Library were included in the six months of training given to the participating faculty. This included areas such as facilitation, team-based learning, and oral communication. The committee for each course started meeting on a regular basis and being in on the ground floor was a real advantage; the library was part of the process, the content, and the philosophy, and it was easier to see what the information needs of the faculty would be for these courses. The librarians were accepted as colleagues and full team members.

The other major event that gave impetus for change was the addition of locally-mounted databases, which took place in the early 1990s. ERIC (Education Resource Information Center) and Medline (the database of the U.S. National Library of Medicine) were mounted first, with

Information Access Corporations Expanded Academic Index, the Newspaper Index, and a business index following. The stand-alone databases in the Agriculture Library are oriented toward production agriculture, which is fine for subject specific sources, but does not provide much information for the issue-based courses. Students had to go to the main library to use the more generalized databases. With the new system, the databases were available in the Agriculture Library as well as remotely. This meant that students could access this general information in the library, at home, in their dorm room, or in the microcomputer laboratories. The thrust of the operation of the course became electronic when it was decided by the Core Curriculum Committee that the students and faculty would communicate with each other by e-mail and listservs.

It was decided by the Core Group that the students could be best served by increasing their information skills in three areas: basic paper reference sources, e-mail, and electronic databases. Even in this day of electronic databases, they wanted the students to remember that dictionaries, both general and specific, encyclopedias, handbooks, statistical sources, almanacs and so forth were valuable tools for them to use. To teach the students to access the electronic databases, sessions were organized in the microcomputer labs which had an interactive software package that allowed the instructor to grab the student's screen and project search examples to each workstation. In addition, basic e-mail and using listservs was taught and the librarian acted as a consultant for these services. Each workshop was two hours long; thirteen were offered over the course of a week and students were required to sign up for a time slot so as to insure one workstation per participant for hands-on practice. Teaching faculty and library staff acted as rovers. The workshops were taught by librarians.

The second core class was of-

fered the second year of the process. Two-hour hands-on electronic database workshops were organized but the focus of subject coverage differed. Fifty percent of the workshop dealt with electronic mail. This was unanticipated but became necessary with the large number of transfer students who did not have the benefit of the GEN 100 workshop. The other 50% of the workshop was on subject specific databases available over the Internet.

Some of the students had participated in training on the system in an English class, and protested at what they thought would be a duplication of a prior experience. After the GEN 100/200 sessions, they usually changed their minds and felt that they learned something.

In addition to the undergraduate program, off-campus faculty and staff were targeted for training on obtaining information at the desktop by piggybacking an existing In-Service Program for extension personnel. The program offered in-service credit for the participants and travel funding was provided. The initiative began by contacting the program director and writing a course description. The program was accepted for the In-service Catalog and agents signed up for the workshop via the In-service office. Participants were limited to the number of workstations in the training lab so that each participant would have hands-on training. Topics of interest were solicited to make the workshop meaningful; the workshop was then written according to those needs and interests. Hands-on time was emphasized with library staff roaming to give individual instruction. The workshops have been a success and continue to have waiting lists.

Traveling Seminars

Training is not limited to the University of Kentucky Campus. Research faculty in the College of Agriculture are physically located from one end of the state to the other, so off campus sessions are of-

ferred to accommodate our faculty on the eastern and western ends of the state. This began in 1984 with visits to the Experiment Stations to discuss their information needs and to show them what could be provided to their stations. At that time what we could offer was limited, but by 1994 circumstances were radically different. In 1994 the Agriculture Library staff once again went on the road to Quicksand, KY and later Princeton, KY. The Librarian realized that there were electronic resources available for off-campus clients and that they had the necessary ingredients to hook up to the Internet. Distance would not be a limiting factor to getting information to their desktop but working in their environment was essential. The librarian made the contact and set up on-site visits. Travel funding was secured from the Dean of Graduate Research and several members of the library staff made the trips. Many of the site problems centered around telecommunications and communication expertise was required. Because of the Librarian's diligence in trying to solve the communication problems, progress was made on long-standing access problems. The staff at both research stations continue to have good communication with library staff. In addition to road trips, voluntary workshops to faculty and graduate students are offered and on demand seminars continue to be conducted. (Table 3)

By 1993 we had moved beyond library literacy to information literacy. Our programs were focused on providing skills for finding information in support of the teaching faculty. By 1996 we moved into information competency, which is providing the skills necessary to negotiate the information superhighway along

Table 3 – Library Literacy 1988–1993

Year	Graduate	Undergraduate	Extension	Faculty/Staff	Session
1988	U/A	U/A	U/A	U/A	U/A
1989	U/A	U/A	U/A	U/A	U/A
1990	U/A	U/A	U/A	U/A	U/A
1991	41	243	0	1	29
1992	107	444	12	3	34
1993	0	409	0	8	23

with the ability to determine the best source for information. This phase of the program is still in development and will continue to be developed in collaboration with our teaching faculty and graduate directors. User input drives the development of this program. (Table 4)

Program Assessment

The area receiving the least attention in our 20-year odyssey has been assessment. This important area has been overlooked for two reasons: just doing the workshops has been all time consuming and we did not have the expertise to carry out a formal assessment. This past year we did some informal assessment with our information literacy campaign. The teaching faculty have included us in their course evaluation and this past year the teaching faculty were asked how well they thought the students did in finding information. Their response was that the students seemed able to find information on the topics, but they were concerned that so much of the material came from the Web and not always from valid sources. There has been some discussion that the information requirements will change with the new semester.

Lessons Learned

The information system has always been complex and to use it effectively in the past, clients had to

come to the library. With today's information environment that is not the case, which makes it even more important for the library to play a role in the education of all of our clients.

In the College of Agriculture, the teaching faculty instruct the student in the various subject areas and the library's role is to provide the means for the student to become information literate in those subjects. This is the key to life-long learning, but the question is how to provide this instruction? Many programs have been developed over the years, including a for credit course, volunteer workshops, on demand workshops, course integration, and piggybacking existing programs. In all cases, there had to be a reason for people to be there, whether it was because the teaching faculty member required them to be there, for their own interest, or they had an assignment. The information presented had to meet the immediate need. Providing this service is a challenge.

The approach to the seminars has always been labor intensive but meaningful to the individuals participating in them. The objective is to teach the student (and the faculty along with them) how to access information at their level of need. Each seminar is subject-specific and tailor-made to provide a pathway to information for that group's "information need". All students have a graded as-

Table 4 – Information Literacy 1994–1996

Year	Graduate	Undergraduate	Extension	Faculty/Staff	Non U of K Presentations	Sessions
1994	0	405	49	17	358	42
1995	82	638	99	20	66	82
1996	24	561	110	0	49	52

signment connected with the seminar.

In today's information environment, access is the key to using the system. This requires more than just educating our clients on how to use the system, for we must also help them access the system. Over the years we found ourselves delving into connectivity issues and we have acted as a go-between for our clients (particularly off-campus) and the computing centers within the College of Agriculture and the University. While this may be seen as "not our job," we believe that this approach has moved us in the forefront of meeting information needs. Our clients feel free to call us with information needs as well as connectivity issues. We can't always solve the problem, but can get them in touch with the right person. It has been beneficial to us as well because we have networked with people in other units and learned more about the communication system and the process of delivering information to the desk top.

One of the biggest challenges beside connectivity has been manipulation of the data, that is the uploading and downloading of data. How you access the system dictates the procedure for data transfer. Methods such as Ethernet, dial access and asynchronous connection all have different protocols. The software used also makes a difference. All of our microlabs have the same access, but remote users from other sites do not have that constancy. The off-campus extension staff use the same software setups so the librarian has been able to deal with their system. For the students, it is a different story as they use varying communications softwares and manipulating the system is a constant source of frustration for them. Downloading records from our NOTIS databases mounted on our mainframe has not been possible in the library as the library is connected via dedicated ports. Yet when the students go to a microlab, they can at least capture screens. Many variant instructions are written but we

do not address everyone's needs. This is an area that needs more work to increase the information competency of the students.

Where We Are Going

We will continue to work with all areas of our clientele. We will continue our course integration ap-

proach in our undergraduate efforts as well our on demand programs. In the future we hope to develop interactive web-based instruction for both general application and subject-specific areas. These will be used to supplement the existing programs and be made available to all of our client groups. For the graduate students we will offer subject-

On Demand Seminars

The process for an on demand seminar begins with an interview with the teaching faculty member requiring the service. The class syllabus is reviewed and referred to during the process. The class goals are discussed and sources that may fill the information needs are reviewed with the faculty member. From this interview and syllabus the seminar is written and the master copy is given to the faculty member to be reviewed.

While the subject matter differs, each seminar has common components. A customized handout is written with a descriptive annotation of every database and abstracting and indexing tools applicable to the session. Cut and paste samples of the tools are also provided to reinforce what the tool looks like and how to access them. If additional sources are required such as Standards for Agricultural Engineering, they are handled the same way. A different reference question was written and assigned to each student. During the practicum part of the program the student is required to find a specific reference using a source covered in the seminar and located in the Agriculture Library. Students are required to find the article and document their pathway so their professor can follow in their tracks. Students must provide where they found the reference, give the subject heading used, the bibliographic information, the call number of the source journal, and turn in a copy of the first page of the article. All questions are written for the paper tools, but students are also required to search them on the parallel CD-ROM databases. All answers are handed in to the faculty member and the assignment is graded. The assignment may vary for some classes and instead of each student having a different question, several questions are written on the tools covered and each student answers the same question. The outcome is the same, the student is required to use the tools and they are made aware of the sources available to them and how to use and interpret them.

The presentation of the program also varies. Whenever possible, groups are kept small, generally 6 to 8 people and the seminar is given in the library. Sources are pulled so every student can look at them while they are being discussed. They are walked through the paper tool and then CD-ROM instruction is given. Everything is related to the subject coverage of the class. At times the number of students to attend the seminar is too large to have in the library. In this case overheads are employed that duplicate the handouts and if required multiple subjects are covered. The decentralized library system makes it necessary to use sources in other libraries. When that happens the librarian goes to the appropriate library and checks all of her information. When students are expected to use other libraries, exact locations are given for every source, such as M.I. King Reference Table 2—PAIS, Reader's Guide. The practicum is still required and is handled much the same way as the small presentations.

specific workshops and delve more in depth into the mechanics of searching. We will offer the same to the Faculty and Research Assistants, but we will also add an alerting service on what is available to them and do small informal workshops on topics of interest. We will continue to act as consultants on their information needs even though at times they do not think they need us. Our extension program will continue as part of the In-Service program and in the next year we will be working with new agent orientation. This year, our workshops for the Extension In-Service will be subject-specific. In the coming years we plan to take our training on the road by partnering with our Community Colleges and offering training through their facilities around the Commonwealth.

Collaboration is going to increase our effectiveness. We will collaborate with our Community Colleges as well as divisions within our College and the University. A dependency on computing and communications will only continue to grow and we will need to do more collaborating with this group. Through this collaboration we will more effectively serve our clientele.

We are a small staff but we firmly believe that you must be proactive and anticipate needs. Because we are in the "right place," we have the inside track in seeing what is available for our clients and what might be useful to them. We promote our services by offering and continuously developing programs to present those

sources and technologies to them. We continue to make an effort to find out our client's needs and to be receptive and aware of those needs. This is done by talking to people in social and business settings, by targeting groups and meeting with them, and by letting people know that you are available to support their information needs. It is done in an unobtrusive manner and generally in a neutral environment. Interaction takes place on many levels and suggestions, ideas, and new technologies are explored. Needs are assessed and creative approaches are developed so we do not get overwhelmed. We are realistic in our promises but also recognize that if a need exists, it will be filled. If it is not filled by us, it will be filled by some other source. To survive, we must make a commitment to continuous learning and realize the information environment is ever changing.

No one knows what the future will bring. Information and its delivery continues to evolve and so too must our programs. We have to be prepared to meet immediate needs by being flexible enough to change our content and approach as circumstances demand. It continues to be a challenging and exciting era in information competency.

FURTHER READING

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ANTOINETTE PARIS (TONI) POWELL began her library career as a cataloger at the University of Kentucky Agriculture Library and in 1974, she became director of that library. Much of her service emphasis over the years has been effective use of information resources. Ms. Powell has had an active professional career and is currently serving as the Editor for the *Quarterly Bulletin of IAALD* and President of the U.S. Agricultural Information Network. She holds a BA in history and an MALS in Library Science from the University of Kentucky.

PATRICIA S. (PAT) WILSON is Reference and Instruction Librarian at the Engineering Library at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Ms. Wilson is the Chair-Elect of the Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition Division of the Special Libraries Association and is a member of the USAIN Executive Council. Ms. Wilson holds a BA in Chemistry and Biology from the University of Indianapolis and an MSLS from the University of Kentucky.

CONTACT ADDRESS:

Antoinette Paris Powell
Director, Agriculture Library
University of Kentucky
N-24 Ag Science Bldg.
Lexington, Kentucky 40511
USA
Telephone: +1 606 257-2758
Fax: +1 606 323-4719
E-Mail: apowell@ca.uky.edu