Quarterly Progress Report

**Rebuilding the Agricultural Information System for
Institutions of Higher Education in Afghanistan:
Status, Issues, and Future Plans**

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**Arid Lands Information Center, Office of Arid Lands Studies
University Library
University of Arizona (UA)**

Project Overview: To support ongoing efforts to revitalize the overall agricultural education program in higher education institutions in Afghanistan, this preliminary project, supported by the IALC, has taken the first steps toward developing a modern agricultural information system. The opening of the first electronic library (called the Agriculture Electronic Library(AEL)) in the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University was accomplished in the spring of 2004. Since that time, personnel have been hired to maintain the facility, trainings of library staff and faculty have been conducted, and equipment and materials purchased (including CD-ROMs, Internet resources, and textbooks). It is the intent of this highly successful project to leverage current progress into an expanded activity to advance and provide critical support to the agricultural and veterinary sciences education programs at the regional universities as well as at Kabul University.

Recent Accomplishments

Personnel, Salaries, and Operations

The salary of the Field Coordinator continues at the rate of $100 per month. The Assistant Coordinator of AEL salary rate is $60 per month. They each work 20 hours per week to assist faculty and students in using AEL resources. The AEL is open from 8:30 am-4:00 pm every day except Friday, although during Ramadan the hours were 8:30 am-3:30 pm. Mr. Khalid Madadi, who had been an excellent Field Coordinator, left the AEL in October to begin graduate studies in Plant Pathology at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology. He has been replaced by Mr. Zekrullah Safi, a well-respected instructor in Agronomy; Ms. Noori, Assistant Coordinator, has been replaced by Mr. Mohammad Haroon Zareef, a student with English and computer skills who was trained by Mr. Madadi.

Mr. Safi continues conducting many training sessions in TEEAL and usage continues to grow, which resulted in Mr. Safi reorganizing the AEL to maximize the computer space.

Nicole Joos, TEEAL Coodinator at Cornell University, provided the hard drive for LanTEEAL for Atifa Rawan to deliver to AEL during her visit to Kabul in November. Her trip included meetings to develop action plans for the Afghan eQuality Alliances: 21st Century Universities for Afghanistan.

Equipment

To date 9 computers have been purchased for the AEL, with 7 connected to the Internet. In September 2 computer desks and 2 chairs, as well as supplies and software, also were purchased and installed. In addition, a photocopier and a laserjet printer were purchased and repairs were conducted on older computers to improve performance.

Training/Staff Development

Mr. Madadi conducted training sessions for 20 students, including Mr. Haroon. Mr. Safi has conducted four training sessions for a total of 58 participants and he requested certificates for the trainees, which Atifa will deliver during her visit to Kabul in November. Safi reports that he will request certificates for another 80 students who are attending evening classes.

Electronic Resources and Print Publications

Manual for Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables, in English and in Dari, has been scanned and will be uploaded to the web site about the Afghanistan project, as well as copied to CD-ROM for the AEL. John Santas has generously loaned us his only copies of two manuals *Irrigation Infrastructure Development and Water Management Practices,* which provide information in English and in Pashto, and *Sustainable Use of Water Resources and Irrigation Systems Design.* We are working with these to determine the best way to scan and display them. He also gave us another manual, *Agricultural Extension Manual*, which we will also scan.

Mr. Madadi requested that we help him acquire textbooks he needs for his courses in Japan, we are negotiating with him about his translating specific items in lieu of repaying us for those costs.

Funding Discussions

Proposals have been submitted to Kevin McNamara of Purdue and we are providing information about our training capabilities in response to his request for two month library training in the U.S.

Atifa will participate in developing an action plan Afghan eQuality Alliances: 21st Century Universities for Afghanistan, Nov. 10-17.

Carla Casler has been contacted by Philippe Charbot, USDA FSA, for status and updates on our project.

Publications and Presentations

Casler, C.L., A. Rawan, and B.S. Hutchinson. 2005. "Library rebuilding in Afghanistan." Poster presented at the University of Arizona's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty

Conference, "Bridging Science and Society," August 24.

Casler, C.L. 2005. "Afghanistan's first electronic library." *Arizona Land & People*, 50(1): 5-7.
http://cals.arizona.edu/landandpeople/spring2005/article5_l&p.pdf

Future Activities for 2005-2006

1) ongoing maintenance and support for the AEL, including renewed subscriptions for the LanTEEAL and CABI Compendia, plus salaries for Field Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator. Further appropriate materials, particularly in plant pathology, are being identified.

2) Kevin McNamara presented some suggestions and caveats about our proposed "Forum on the Role of Agricultural Information and Libraries in Rebuilding the Higher Education System in Afghanistan." We are evaluating his suggestions and plan to consider developments from Atifa's meetings about IT Infrastructure

3) develop more training materialsat the AEL for library staff, faculty, and students on accessing agricultural information.