DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology, Vol. 32, No. 1, January 2012, pp. 3-4

Guest Editorial

Agriculture has been an integral part of human life ever since the inception of the human race and the requirement for agricultural information is probably almost as ancient as agriculture itself. Clay tablets excavated in the city of Babylon have been discovered containing agricultural information. India is essentially an agrarian society and the life-line of more than seventy percent of the rural population of India.

In India, special emphasis was laid on the development of an agricultural research infrastructure immediately after Independence. During the year 1965, soon after the re-organisation of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the creation of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, the responsibilities of higher education, research, extension, consultancy, and libraries in the field of agricultural sciences including animal and veterinary sciences became the sole responsibility of the ICAR. Since then, the ICAR has been playing a catalytic role in the field of education, research, extension pertaining to all aspects of agricultural sciences and making the country as a self-reliant, hunger-free India as well as a food-secure India.

The agricultural libraries have served the nation since the initiation of the agricultural universities and research institutes. Today, the library network under the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) is one of the biggest networks in the world, which consist of 44 state agricultural universities (SAUs), 1 central agricultural university (CAU), 5 deemed-to-be-universities (DUs), 17 national research centres (NRC), 50 central research institutes (CRI), 6 national bureaus (NBs), 25 project directorates (PDs), and 78 all India coordinate research projects (AICRP).

This special issue of *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology* (*DJLIT*) on 'Agricultural Information Systems and Services in India' covers seven papers contributed by the agricultural librarians, teachers, and scholars. The focus of these papers is to provide comprehensive information on agricultural education and research, agricultural libraries, information resources, services and systems, agricultural research information system (AGRIS), agricultural consortiums, digital agricultural libraries, and web-based agricultural systems and services, all accompanied by extensive literature review.

Dr K.P. Singh in his paper titled 'Growth and development of agricultural education, research and libraries in India' has explored the numerous facets related to agricultural education, research, training and libraries in India and the role of the various committees and commissions constituted by the Government of India for the development of agricultural education, research, and libraries in India.

Hans Raj and V.S. Kaushik in their paper briefly described the history and development of International Information System for Agricultural Sciences and Technology, its network, documentation tools, products/ services, human resource development and capacity building programme, and future plan of agricultural research information centre (ARIC) in India.

Dr Nabi Hasan, in his paper titled 'Web-based agricultural information systems and services under national agricultural research system (NARS)', discussed the major initiatives undertaken by the NARS and national agricultural innovation project (NAIP) of ICAR during recent times in order to establish a national network of the web-based agricultural information systems through *KrishiPrabha*, CeRA and e-Granth and their rationale, mission and objectives of these projects.

Dr Rabindra K. Mahapatra has briefly examined the status of the digitisation of agricultural libraries in India and the role of the ICAR in new digital initiatives in content creation and agricultural digital library management as well as the tools and technologies required for agricultural digital libraries management.

Dr A.T. Francis discussed the wide-spread utilisation of consortia-based digital information resources by the users of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), Thrissur and observes that users are more familiar with the digital information resources in the KAU library access through CeRA and other consortiums.

Dr K.P. Singh and Dipti Gulati in their paper titled 'Agricultural Associations in India: A Study' explored the quantitative and qualitative growth of agricultural associations in India. The paper highlights the various activities of these associations in promotion of agricultural publications, conferences, fellowships/awards, etc.

The paper written by Hemantha Kumar, *et. al.*, discusses the open access scholarly agricultural literature and the contribution of the Indian premier institutions in publishing open access literature in life sciences particularly in the field of agriculture and food sciences in India.

I am deeply grateful to Dr A.L. Moorthy, the Director, DESIDOC and Coordinator, Aero Information Resource Panel, Aeronautics Research & Development Board (AR&DB), DRDO for inviting me to be the Guest Editor of this Special Issue. I would like to convey my special thanks to all the learned contributors for their scholarly contributions which have enabled me to bring out this special issue in time. It is my earnest hope that this second special issue of *DJLIT* (previously Information System in Agriculture in India, 1998, 18(2)) on 'Agricultural Information Systems and Services in India' has more hues and colors on agricultural information that would prove to be useful to the agricultural information professionals, researchers, teachers, and scientists working in agricultural sectors in the country.

Dr K.P. Singh
Senior Assistant Professor
Department of Library and Information Science,
University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007