

The collective research results of a large, widely-dispersed organization like the CGIAR can lead to an advancement of knowledge that is unattainable by individual Centers working on their own. To create new knowledge, scientists build on existing research results. Therefore, if knowledge is to be truly useful, it needs to be shared.

## CGIAR Researchers

Access to high-quality scientific literature has always been key when it comes to carrying out quality research in the CGIAR. However, locating relevant, timely information across the System's 15 Centers has often been a long and tedious process, despite the fact that much of the CGIAR's current scientific literature is now available in electronic form.

With the launch of *CGXchange*, an intranet/extranet system that spans the CGIAR Centers and beyond, this is almost a thing of the past.

The *CGVlibrary*, which is accessible through *CGXchange* as well as its own URL, can now make it as easy as a few clicks of a mouse to find scientific information. A single search will reach across multiple bibliographic databases, including those of commercial providers. Researchers will then be able to click on a link to see all the possible resources where a particular piece of scientific literature may be found and access the most appropriate one directly. If the full text is not available online, a request for a copy of the complete document can be sent to the researcher's Center library without the need to re-enter any information.

By making the process of locating and obtaining information as easy as possible, the *CGVlibrary* can help researchers save time and improve the quality of their research.

## CGIAR Partners

The *CGVlibrary* will also help meet the needs of colleagues from the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) by providing both a directory of resources and a way to integrate information using the same simple search tools that are available to CGIAR

researchers. By providing NARS researchers with single site access to worldwide library and research information in the field of agriculture, the *CGVlibrary* will help them maximize the use of the resources that are freely available to them.

## The development of the Library

The *CGVlibrary* was developed by the Virtual Library Service (VLS), one of seven integrated activities under the ICT-KM Program's Content for Development Project.

### Working virtually

The development of the *CGVlibrary* has been, in many ways, a virtual process: the final service will be the result of the time and effort of a number of people, many of whom have never met. Luz Marina Alvare, the VLS Coordinator, and Nancy Walczak, the Technical Advisor, both work at IFPRI in Washington DC and see each other frequently. In contrast, they both worked intensively with Belgium-based information management consultant Ron Davies for twelve months before they had the opportunity to meet him in person.



**4th Annual Meeting of the CGIAR Information Management Professionals, WorldFish Center, Penang**

Their first meeting in the lobby of a hotel in Penang, Malaysia, where the three of them were attending the 4th Annual Meeting of the CGIAR Information Management Professionals in September 2004, was a surprising experience for all as their

implicit expectations of each other's physical appearance were put to the test.

Selecting software for the *CGVlibrary* was yet another experience of virtual collaboration. This time, though, it involved an electronic Request for Proposal, electronic replies, web-based product demonstrations and long telephone conversations with participants in three different continents.

Throughout the *CGVlibrary*'s development process, from initial proposal to initial implementation, input was provided by the information managers and researchers from the 15 Centers, and a steering committee, without the need to meet face to face in the same room.



### Pre-VLS Collaboration

The ground work for the **CGVlibrary** began long before the formal VLS activity was conceived, when the librarians and information managers from the various Centers began coordinating their efforts through the development of a strong community of practice. This collaborative effort culminated in the creation of the CGIAR Libraries and Information Services Consortium (CGIARLISC), which in turn resulted in, among many other benefits, a joint subscription to multiple journals. These Consortium journals now form an important part of the resources made available to CGIAR researchers through the **CGVlibrary**.

Although working virtually across Centers, continents and time zones requires discipline and openness, the successful formation of the **CGVlibrary** shows that such work can be effective.

### The future

The future success of the **CGVlibrary** still depends on the input of those individuals who continue to work behind the scenes ensuring that researchers have access to the CGIAR information resources they need, the moment they need them. These librarians, information managers, and other key contributors may not have the opportunity to come face-to-face altogether in the same room very often, but the results of their work will be viewed on computer screens in more rooms and offices around the world than they might possibly be able to imagine.

While talking about the idea of a CGIAR virtual library, Dr Joachim Voss, Director General CIAT, summed it all up when he said, *"If we can share those [library] resources, if we can provide common access through one portal to the information that we produce, if we can have the power of the whole System in negotiating for access to journals and information, then we're all better off."*

The Virtual Library Service (VLS) activity was established to create a CGIAR web-based virtual library (now known as the **CGVlibrary**), where researchers at any location and at any time could have easy networked access to a variety of electronic library services. The aim was, and still is, to provide one-stop shopping through the **CGXchange** for identifying, locating and using a variety of high quality information resources, such as full text documents, bibliographic databases, online reference tools, citation indexes and document delivery services. Researchers will eventually have integrated one-search access to all CGIAR information materials as described in the CGIAR library catalogs, as well as the wide range of information available over the Internet on free, commercial and licensed sites in the area of agricultural science.