

## **Quarterly Progress Report**

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

**Submitted to the International Arid Lands Consortium (IALC)  
February 2006**

**Arid Lands Information Center (ALIC), Office of Arid Lands Studies  
University of Arizona Libraries (UAL)  
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, to train library staff and faculty, and to purchase equipment and materials (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 Developments in Digital Library Initiatives for Afghanistan:**

*Afghan eQuality Alliances: 21st Century Universities for Afghanistan  
Digital Libraries Workshop*

The goal of the eQuality Digital Libraries Alliance is to develop the capacity of Afghan librarians to work with an open-source digital libraries software and to catalog open content and open educational materials that all Afghanistan universities could share. Achievement of the goal will require a short-term and long-term capacity building program for Afghan librarians.

The purpose of the workshop was to initiate the Afghanistan Digital Libraries Alliance and the project funded by the USAID/Washington State University. The University of Arizona Libraries recently was awarded a sub-contract to develop an integrated library system for five higher education libraries in Kabul. The ultimate goal is to extend the digital libraries efforts into other localities in Afghanistan. Both Atifa Rawan and Yan Han are project coordinators and work closely with other UA library staff members and OCLC on this project. Training sessions were conducted by Atifa Rawan, Yan Han, and other partner members in November 2005 in Kabul.

More information is available at:

- Library Resources for Afghanistan Academic Libraries  
<http://arrakis.library.arizona.edu/afghan/>
- Afghan eQuality Alliances <http://www.elearning.net.af/>

## **Recent Accomplishments of IALC AEL Project**

Note: During Atifa's November visit to Kabul, she opened a bank account at Kabul Bank with a \$2,500 deposit. At that time, she also deposited the balance of Dr. Wassimi's funds that he was holding for the project, and paid the AEL staff through March 2006.

### *Personnel, Salaries, and Operations*

Both Mr. Zekrullah Safi, Field Coordinator, and Mr. Mohammad Haroon Zareef, Assistant Coordinator, continue to provide training and to assist faculty and students on a daily basis. Mr. Safi has also conducted training for evening classes. They have been paid up to March 2006. Part of this time, the university will be closed for holidays and the winter session. 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. The AEL is open from 8:30 am-4:00 pm every day except Friday.

### Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator Activities:

- They are involved in developing the college master plan.
- Mr. Safi sent Atifa an Excel list of their textbook collection for the Afghanistan digital initiative; these books will be cataloged and records entered into the integrated library system currently being developed to provide compatible networking for academic libraries in Afghanistan.
- In November, Mr. Safi and Atifa determined photocopy and printing charges to cover staff time and supplies for maintaining printers and the photocopy machine in AEL.
- Mr. Safi is currently developing a web page for the College of Agriculture based on the training he received in November when he attended the digital libraries training workshop at Kabul University. He has also rearranged the facility to improve access to the computer workstations.

### *Translation*

Mr. Khalid Madadi, the former Field Coordinator for TEEAL at AEL, has enrolled in graduate studies in Plant Pathology at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology and requested help in getting a textbook and CD-ROM he needed for his studies. In return for our purchasing and delivering the materials, he translated the PowerPoint training presentation about TEEAL that Atifa had adapted for an Afghan audience. Atifa reviewed Madadi's Dari translation and stated that it was very well done. In late February, he will translate her AGORA training presentation. These translated materials will be provided to faculty and students in the College of Agriculture and others on request and will be available on Mr. Safi's website and ALIC's Afghanistan project website.

### *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, were also purchased and installed. In addition, a photocopier and a laserjet printer were purchased and repairs were

conducted on older computers to improve performance. Other new equipment will not be purchased until the renovation of the College of Agriculture building is completed.

#### *Training/Staff Development*

Atifa delivered certificates for Mr. Safi's many trainees during her visit to Kabul in November. Both Safi and Zareef attended the training sessions that were offered as part of the Afghan eQuality Alliances meeting.

#### *Electronic Resources and Print Publications*

The *Manual for Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables*, in English and in Dari, has been scanned and will be uploaded to ALIC's website about the Afghanistan AEL project, as well as copied to CD-ROM for the AEL. Two other manuals provided by John Santas have been scanned: *Irrigation Infrastructure Development and Water Management Practices*, in English and in Pashto, and *Sustainable Use of Water Resources and Irrigation Systems Design* in English. He also provided another manual, *Agricultural Extension Manual*, which we will also scan.

#### *Funding Discussions*

Proposals have been submitted to Kevin McNamara of Purdue and we have provided information about our training capabilities in response to his request for providing two-month library trainings at the University of Arizona.

#### **Future Activities for 2005-2006**

- 1) ongoing maintenance and support for the AEL, including renewed subscriptions for the LanTEEAL and Internet access to the CABI Compendia, plus salaries for Field Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator. Further appropriate electronic resources are being identified.
- 2) identify appropriate agricultural electronic resources for the College of Veterinary Science, Kabul University; the College of Agriculture, Nangahar Univeristy; and the College of Agriculture, Herat University.
- 3) develop more training materials in Dari for library staff, faculty, and students on how to access agricultural information.