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Farming for the future: the AGWEST Library Network

Jane Serventy

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Farming for the future

The AGWEST
Library Network

The futurist Alvin Toffler used the powerful metaphor of waves to describe the significant changes taking place in society. What he referred to as the Third Wave, the period we are currently experiencing, has been variously described as the Post-Industrial Society and the Information Age. Jane Serventy reports on the changes in information delivery at the Library of Agriculture Western Australia.

Agriculture Western Australia is committed to providing the most efficient and effective programs and services to the State’s primary producers and rural communities. Substantial changes will continue to be made in order to develop a strong market focus while incorporating modern business practices.

AGWEST Library Network, the business arm of the Library, is now in a position to offer chargeable services and information packages to external clients. Farmers, consultants and those engaged in a variety of allied industries now have the opportunity to access services previously unavailable to them.

In every field of endeavour information is now seen as a valuable commodity. It is, however, a commodity which presents certain problems and challenges. Of major concern is the ability to cope with the increasing volume and complexity of information and how to judge that information in terms of quality and relevance.

The Library has met these challenges through its professional approach to the management of information; its staff and services affording a means of access to information networks throughout Australia and overseas. The Library also has access to the vast resources of its own collection which was first established in 1894.

Drawing upon this range and wealth of information, the AGWEST Library Network is uniquely placed to provide clients with relevant and reliable information which can be incorporated into modern farming practices. The following services are now available:
"My access to sources of information has improved tremendously... The Library has a great opportunity to improve the transfer of information by using current communications technology."

Simon Foley, Regional Agronomist, Elders Ltd, Merredin

The loan of books, reports, journals, pamphlets and audio-visual material from the Library’s own collection and from external sources throughout Australia and overseas.

Subject searches. The Library can access Australian and overseas databases as well as the resources of the Internet to answer enquiries.

A personalised Current Awareness Service which will enable clients to keep up to date with the latest developments in their fields.

Subscriptions to three, monthly information newsletters which contain:
- references on agricultural extension
- references relevant to marketing, economics and trade
- listings of new material received by the Library

Methods of farming have changed greatly over past years. The future presents many challenges for today’s primary producers; adapting more effective land management practices, winning the battle against soil salinity, coping with pressures to raise productivity levels, competing in an increasingly de-regulated market place and meeting the need to diversify from traditional crops and industries of the past. These are but a few of the concerns farming in the 21st century holds.

Continuing growth in the agricultural sector requires leadership and support, research and development. Crucial to this growth is the need for information which primary producers and allied industries can readily access and use in their operations. The AGWEST Library Network is well placed to meet these needs.

For further details (including charges) please contact:

AGWEST Library Network,
Agriculture Western Australia
3 Baron-Hay Court
SOUTH PERTH. W.A. 6151

Phone (09) 368 3243
(09) 368 3260
Fax (09) 368 3846
Email: agwestlib@agric.wa.gov.au

Jane Serventy can be contacted on (09) 368 3933