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TURFGRASS RESEARCH LIBRARY

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The purpose of the USGA Turfgrass Information File is to provide efficient and effective access to all published and processed materials reporting the results of research affecting turfgrass and its maintenance. The access will be provided for the research community, for practitioners [such as golf course superintendents], for extension-type services, and for commercial concerns.

The USGA Turfgrass Information File [USGA TGIF] continues to be housed in an Alpha Micro multi-user microcomputer, using the STAR database management software. Both the hardware and software continue to work well with regular and continuing enhancements to record structure and searching capabilities. Addendum I, "Production Statistics", details records added to the file between May 1, 1988 and April 30, 1989. The total of 2,484, above the intended project annual target and consistent with recent production, is particularly noteworthy in light of the sizable [and increasing] unit time commitment to the searching, technical support, and service roles of the Turfgrass Information Center [TIC]. By October 1989, 16,000 records were in the bibliographic database. Current published literature is added to the file after processing by TIC staff; older materials are being added to the file on a systematic basis. Emphasis continues on the completion of the 1972-1989 conference proceedings and annual research reports.

Subscriber packets and brochures are distributed to callers, visitors, and at conferences by TIC, in addition to USGA Green Section distribution. For subscribers, software will be made available to enable the IBM PC or compatible microcomputer with modem to directly access the file, along with documentation to guide remote searching.

VuePort, the PC software necessary to dial into the Alpha Micro and STAR, is distributed to subscribers, along with the Dial-Up User's Manual. Edition 1.2 of the Manual was issued beginning in April. It includes some revisions, expanded explanations, the use of color coded pages, etc. As of November 1, 1989, subscribers [excluding complimentary users] to online access number 96, from 34 states and provinces. This group of pioneers breaks roughly out as 53% clubs/courses; 29% research/academic; 8% not-for-profit agencies; and 9% private sector [other than clubs/courses]. We are quite pleased with this distribution, which we feel will give us a good feel for expectations from several perspectives.

A total of 390 mediated searches were conducted May 1, 1988 to April 30, 1989. When combined with "information only" queries, a total of 48 states and 5 countries are represented. Addendum II, "Search Statistics", details the distribution of these queries by user type and method of contact.

Monographic requests have been handled per normal Interlibrary loan arrangements. Photocopy requests are a service offered as a part of the supplementary services fee schedule, with discounted rates for subscribers. Photocopy requests totaled 228 items, with 183 supplied.

Continuing promotional efforts involved presentations, mailings, and published articles. A blanket mailing to all known institutions offering certificate of degree programs in turf culture [not already subscribers] was made in late summer. The booth space provided by GCSAA at the International Golf Course Conference and Show [2/89, Anaheim] resulted in hundreds of inquiries, discussions and training opportunities in concert with the Green Section Agronomists immediately next door. We were also represented at the New Jersey Turf Expo [12/88], sponsored by the New Jersey Superintendent's Association, the Michigan Turfgrass Conference, and at a USGA Regional Seminar [5/89, Dayton]. During the year, regular production of The Sward, TIC's newsletter, began in August. It is intended that issues will be produced at least quarterly, providing a regular communication channel to subscribers and other users.

During the year, additional space was allocated by the MSU Libraries to TIC, increasing our physical size by about 25%. This is a prerequisite for future efforts in data preparation, entry, and processing. The acquisition and installation of additional disk storage on the Alpha Micro has provided the ability to:

- a] enhance retrieval sophistication even further this coming year [highlighting of search terms, proximity operators available, etc], and
- b] enable the continued growth of USGA TGIF for several years into the ease of use.

There is no question that "ease of use" issues will continue to dominate discussion of USGA TGIF use now and continuously into the future. We are, in part, attempting to do something that has little historical precedent in bibliographic practice until recently; that is, to provide practitioners in a discipline with article-level electronic indexing, including direct document delivery linkages.

Historically, when such access has been provided, whether in print or electronically, it has been fundamentally designed to serve research and academic purposes. This is its basic role; to serve the literature review process. That it can serve many other purposes, also, is a function of the power of on-line, interactive information retrieval.

As in most software, this retrieval is inevitably a continuous trade-off between convenience on one hand and power on the other. In general, these attributes are inversely proportional. This does not mean, however, that we cannot continue to evolve to serve varying populations; on the contrary, we can continue to modify, permute, and supplement the current "core" [the bibliographic database] with variant and complimentary data structures if desirable, feasible, and practical.

A case in point is our intention, as discussed, conceptually during the May site visit, to make available pre-searched, pre-sorted "bibliographies" online which need only be selected from a list to be downloaded without ever entering STAR [as long as we can identify the "topic" ahead of time]. The bottom line here is an "easier" alternative for some users under certain circumstances. It does, however, mean more "options" on the system. Is this "simplification" or "complication"? It depends on your definition.

We are, of course, continually attempting to make changes to software, displays, etc., to improve ease-of--use. The forthcoming version of STAR [3.0] gives us control over the content of the online help system for the first time. We are currently preparing an interactive, off-line tutorial to literally walk a new user through a simulated online session before they ever use the modem. We'd like to hear more ideas, from users, from the Committee, or from non-users. This feedback is crucial as we continue to evolve.

On July 1, Dr. Richard E. Chapin retired as Director of Libraries, and, as well, as Project Director of the Turfgrass Information File effort. Without his involvement in the turfgrass literature, beginning many years ago, it is unlikely the Noer Collection, Turfgrass Information Center, or USGA TGIF would exist at MSU as we know them today. His leadership, inspiration, and, not infrequently, his sense of good humor and perspective will be sorely missed. We wish him well in future endeavors and "retirement".