

Development and Scientific Liaison and Information Services (SLIS)

I. Kelly

This year saw the completion of the planned changes in SLIS. Much more of the routine organisation of the Unit's work is now devolved to Sarah Stephens (looking after science communication and the library) and Ian Pitkethly (looking after Visual Aids and the web site). A new Education Officer, Sharon Neilson, has been appointed to a full time position.

Significant work was undertaken on the planning of the SCRI Science Park and in developing links into Europe. The Institute joined Scotland Europa.

In terms of science communication, press and visitor related activities the Institute has:

- given over 30 public lectures
- participated in 4 science festivals, garden shows, etc. to take our science to the general public
- hosted over 1,300 individuals and groups of visitors
- welcomed local primary and secondary teachers and their pupils to the Institute
- produced 288 refereed and 184 non-refereed papers and articles in the past year

One measure of our impact is the 194 plus press references to SCRI's work.

Politicians continue to appreciate the importance of SCRI's research. We have hosted MPs, MSPs, MEPs and local Council representatives. We continue to liaise with the Information Officers from the other SABRI's, SAC and RBGE and to contribute to reSEARCH, the newsletter of SEERAD's Agricultural and Biological Research Group.

Staff changes in the Visual Aids section reflected the changing nature of presenting information. Two graphic designers and a photographer offer a contemporary professional service to illustrate and record the work of the Institute. Assistance and training is also provided for scientific members of staff who prepare their own visual material. The newly appointed web developer has designed a new web site, integrated with the new SCRI information management system, which will continue to evolve.

The acquisition of electronic journals by the Library has continued to increase this year. The SCRI Library has joined consortia with other research libraries to increase bargaining power. In this way we provide, at the researchers desktops, access to the complete content of Elsevier's science journals through ScienceDirect and Blackwell Publishing's Synergy service as well as to the Nature Group of journals, and Science. These services are heavily used by the staff.

The move towards open access publishing is very slow. While researchers are rewarded for the number of papers they publish in journals with a high impact factor, the commercial publishers will continue to benefit from publicly funded research. The Librarian is looking at the various options for open access publishing to provide SCRI scientists with further avenues for publication of their research.

The appointment of a full time Education Officer to work with teachers, other educators and organisations, is allowing SCRI to develop a wide range of activities and resource materials aimed at encouraging young people to take an active interest in science in general and plant science in particular. The Institute is an active partner in the Dundee City STEM Partnership and works closely with the Dundee Science Centre. This new appointment is unique within the SABRI's.

The end-users in agriculture, horticulture and biotechnology continue to take a great interest in the Institute's research and, indeed, support aspects of it through their membership of SSCR. Information is disseminated through the Annual Report and through Crop Walks for soft fruit and potatoes (the latter in conjunction with SAC and BPC) that attracted 50 and 300 visitors respectively in the year 2002.

SLIS will continue to evolve in three areas:

- to develop and deliver key strategic Institute initiatives such as the Science Park
- to provide quality scientific communication, visual aids, library, web and media services
- to work with our SABRI colleagues in science education and science and society