

## Scientific Liaison and Information Services

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This year saw a consolidation of the services offered by Scientific Liaison and Information Services (SLIS). The goals of publicising the work of the Institute and raising its profile were pursued. The Visual Aids Unit continued to provide top class posters, publications and photographs and the website took on a new and better look. Many visits and exhibitions were organised and the Education Officer was enthusiastic in her mission to take SCRI's research into schools. The Library continued to provide information at the desktops of those needing it.



Visits to SCRI were encouraged and tailored to the requirements of the group visiting. These included groups of university students both from Scottish and overseas universities. One of these was the product of close liaison between Dundee University Medical School and SCRI where the students learnt about the beneficial attributes of fruit and how plant breeding can contribute. School students came to see and get direct experience of laboratory work. Growers from a variety of countries visited. Societies including the Scottish Rhododendron Society, and Young Farmers visited to see experiments in the field and hear from the experts. Politicians and international delegations were also made welcome.

SCRI was represented at the Dundee Food and Flower Show with a very informative display on the history of the potato and the current potato breeding programme; samples of the *Solanum phureja* variety Mayan Gold were given away for the public to try at home. Potatoes were also in the spotlight at 'Potatoes in Practice', back out in the field by popular demand. The British Potato Council-funded trials of SCRI and the Scottish Agricultural College were demonstrated

and poster displays of topical issues such as blight, Potato Cyst Nematode and powdery scab control were mounted. The Scottish Society for Crop Research sponsored fruit walk was expanded to a bigger event 'Fruit for the Future' with seminars as well as the popular new variety tastings and walk around the fruit trials. SCRI and MRS had a stand at the Royal Show in Stoneleigh, this show attracts international delegations and gave us the opportunity to raise our profile world-wide. The posters provided by Visual Aids at these events made the job of attracting people to the stand far easier.



The Education Section of SLIS has presented or facilitated displays, activities and demonstrations to schools, school visits to SCRI and talks to primary and secondary schools throughout Angus, Dundee, Perth and Kinross, Edinburgh and Lothians, Aberdeenshire, the Isle of Skye and Ninestiles Technology School in Birmingham. Educational themes have also been presented at local and national festivals and science fairs. A teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) day was held at SCRI and we have been working closely with Scottish Executive education organisations and facilitators to assist with the current curriculum guidelines review materials. In total, more than 5,000 schoolchildren and teachers have been reached by these events.

The Visual Aids Unit continues to provide a comprehensive service in presenting the work of the institute in publications, at specialist and public events and online. For example 3,000 photographs were taken and 160 scientific posters were made for presentation

around the world. A calendar featuring SCRI photography was designed and sold for charity. The redesigned and restructured website went live and now receives 27,000 visits per month.

The profile of the Institute's environmental work was greatly enhanced by attaining the status as a Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Innovation Centre. This attracts a different section of the general public and provides different topics for engaging with farmers. The in-field experiments related to LEAF topics have provoked a great deal of interest. An area of the SCRI estate has been selected for a new, educational garden called the Living Field Community Garden. The garden links science, agriculture and the environment and will be an integral part of future

SCRI outreach activities to both schools and the general public.

The Library service was disadvantaged by the Librarian taking on the role of Deputy Head of SLIS but was compensated for by the appointment of a Library Assistant; it is to the credit of the staff that there was no diminution of the service. Access at scientists' desktops to scientific publications has made library use much easier and the usage logs show how much the service is appreciated; high use of the scientific literature is an indicator of a healthy research environment. Although there is access to electronic journals published by Elsevier, Blackwell, Nature Publications Group and Science the number of inter-library loans has dropped very little.