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The DigiTop partnership between the MSU libraries and the National Agricultural Library was recently signed by MSU Dean of Libraries Frances Coleman, left, President Charles Lee, NAL Director Peter Young, and MAFES Director and Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine Vance Watson.

MSU-NATIONAL AG LIBRARY PROJECT BRINGS RESEARCH TO DESKTOPS

By Maridith Geuder

A unique collaboration between Mississippi State and the Maryland-based National Agricultural Library is allowing Mississippi researchers easier and faster access to the most recent science-based agricultural information available.

In a recent campus ceremony, university President Charles Lee and NAL director Peter R. Young officially inaugurated the first-of-its-kind partnership between the Bethesda facility—the world's leading repository of agricultural materials—and MSU.

“This demonstration project will provide MSU faculty members, researchers and students the ability to access leading resources electronically,” Lee said. “Through NAL, it brings the latest, most up-to-date research literally to their desktops.”

Called DigiTop—or Digital Desktop—the service now being demonstrated at Mitchell Memorial Library on campus provides full-text electronic access to resources in the agricultural sciences, as well as reference and article delivery services. The project also is testing the feasibility, costs and effectiveness of the system, with the goal of potentially expanding to other universities.

“Mississippi State was selected because of its significant agricultural instructional and research programs,” Young said.

MSU Dean of Libraries Frances N. Coleman said DigiTop “will greatly enhance our ability to support instructional, research and extension programs by electronically linking us with NAL, the principal U.S. source for information about food, agriculture and natural resources.”

For agricultural researchers at the Starkville campus and at MAFES branch stations, the project will mean easy access to thousands of current journals and newspapers, said Vance Watson, MAFES director and MSU vice president for agriculture, forestry and veterinary medicine.

“Electronic access through DigiTop will improve research productivity of MSU agricultural researchers and will ultimately benefit all Mississippians,” Watson added.

The MSU Libraries already participates in the NAL's Agricultural Online Access, or AGRICOLA, which contains bibliographic records of materials acquired by NAL and cooperating institutions in agricultural and related sciences.

The National Agricultural Library is part of the Agricultural Research Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's primary agency for scientific study. It's on the Web at <http://www.nal.usda.gov>.