

Participating in the Frankfurt Book Fair

Thomas R. Hargrove

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the world's largest publication display and market place. About 5,200 publishers from 70 countries participated in the 1982 fair last October. About 500,000 visitors — mostly librarians, distributors, and buyers — attended. The fair is also the world's largest rights market where publishers from around the world negotiate translation/copublication rights.

Direct sales are not permitted. The fair is a display to give publishers an opportunity to show their products. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily the fair is closed to the general public and open only to buyers, distributors, and other publishers interested in copublication.

Our participation in the 1982 fair was probably the first for any International Agricultural Research Center (IARC). IRRI sponsored a 4- x 2-meter exhibit in the Science and Technology Exhibition Hall. We displayed 82 books, 61 audiotutorial modules (sets of slides, cassette tapes, booklets on rice production and research), and 3 periodicals (including 79 issues of the IRRI Research Paper Series).

I left Manila on October 3 and arrived in Frankfurt the afternoon of October 4. The next day I arranged delivery of our air freight shipment of publications and rental of other necessities such as electrical outlets and furniture and prepared our booth. Formal opening of the fair on the evening of October 5 found us ready.

Activity was hectic. We really needed two persons to keep the booth going. I had to remain with the booth from 0900 to

Hargrove is head, Information Services Department, International Rice Research Institute, Los Banos, Philippines.

1800 hrs each day; when I was away, there was no one to talk with distribution agents, potential copublishers, etc.

It would be almost impossible to list all the contacts I made, but October 7 was fairly typical:

- Met N. Jayasekera, managing director, Abacas House, U.K. who wanted to discuss the possibility of distribution of IRRI materials in less developed countries.
- Ken Collins, vice president, John Wiley, came by the booth and we discussed IRRI-JW joint ventures.
- Don MacMaster of International Educational Representatives proposed that their offices in Liberia, Nigeria, and Kenya promote IRRI materials in Africa. Then his firm mails from the USA.
- Dr. Hans Emeis of the International Scholarly Book Services discussed the possibility of handling European distribution, on an exclusive basis.
- Jonny Wolff of Livaria Canuto Ltda., Brazil came to inspect our books (and later placed a substantial order).
- Discussed copublication of an Arabic edition of *A Farmers' Primer on Growing Rice* with Samir Saad Khalil of the General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo.
- Science Press of Beijing came by and set an appointment for later in the week.
- Ahsan Jaffri, director, Pak-American Booksellers got details on prices, discounts, and terms of payment, and indicated that he would place an order on his return to Pakistan.
- Discussed possible UNESCO funding of Vietnamese editions of *Rice Improvement* and the revision of *Field Problems of Tropical Rice* with Bruce Clark of UNESCO, Paris. He indicated that our cooperator in Vietnam should contact the Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO in Ho Chi Minh City and request the funding as a "Participating Program Request." He also expressed interest in participation in the proposed copublication workshop.

Two large orders were placed at the fair. Mitsuo Nitta, president, Yushodo Booksellers, Tokyo placed a \$3,218 order for 120 bound volumes of the IRPS, and Livaria placed an order for \$1,250 worth of books for EMBRAPA, Brazil.

I also learned that it is unlikely that IRRI will find a distributor who will handle our publications in the more developed countries — *because they are too inexpensive*. The distributor's percentage on an \$80 book, for example, is a lot more profit than on a \$10 book.

Several distributors indicated that they would like to handle our publications if we would raise our prices by about 400%, and raise our discount to 40-50%! Or if we would provide the books at our current price and allow them to raise the price by about 300-400%. *And offer exclusive distributorship.*

About midway through the Fair I saw that I might miss the *History of IRRI* book launching if I stayed through the entire Fair. So I arranged to fly to Amsterdam the evening of 10 October.

I hand-carried 400 packets of flyers to the fair. Each contained a combination book description and order form for each material exhibited. We sent another 600 packets via air freight.

The subsequent air shipment was delayed in Kuwait and did not arrive until late October 9. What should I do with the 600 packets? Throw them away? We had already paid for the freight to Frankfurt.

About that time I was contacted by IBIS, a computerized mailing service, specializing in book promotion, based in London. For about \$300 we bought a mass mailing of the packets to 600 libraries of agricultural research organization in West Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe (areas in which our distribution is weakest). I then arranged to have the packets transshipped to London.

Another problem was disposal of the 100 kg of IRRI educational materials we had on display. Air freight back to Manila would probably exceed what the materials cost IRRI.

Gesellschaft Fur Technische Zusammenarbeit is a large donor to IRRI. So, on October 8, I called Dr. Werner Tritz, GTZ agriculture director in Bonn, explained our situation, and offered to donate the publications to GTZ. He was pleased and sent a representative to accept the materials the afternoon of October 10. Most of the books will go into the GTZ library, but the AT modules will be sent to GTZ country projects in rice-growing LDCs.

In summary, I think IRRI's participation in the fair will pay off many times, not only in increased exposures of IRRI and our information program, but also in cash sales. I found it a hectic and tiring — but exhilarating — experience.

And I'm thinking ...next year, why not organize an IARC Book Exhibit at the FFBF. It would be easier than the China book fair, because each Center could freight its books and promotional materials directly to Frankfurt. We could cooperatively rent a much larger display area and gain exposure for all the IARCs. Like the China fair, each IARC could decide whether to send a participant, or only send display materials. Those who participate could represent all exhibiting IARCs.