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March 1990

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Harlan R. Shuhler
Gladstone, Missouri

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Shuhler, Harlan R., "ITS A FACT! ITS A *PHACT!*" (1990). *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Vertebrate Pest Conference 1990*. 74.

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ITS A FACT! ITS A PHACT!

HARLAN R. SHUYLER,¹ 600 North Kansas Avenue, Gladstone, Missouri 64119-2116.

ABSTRACT: To reduce the costs of providing development assistance in agriculture to the people in the Developing Countries, an international "Post-Harvest Agriculture Computer Teleconference" has been available now for more than 15 months. Suitably supplemented with electronic computer communications networks and their E-mail, these tools allow relatively inexpensive assistance. This combination offers many advantages to the organizations offering assistance and those needing help.

Proc. 14th Vertebr. Pest Conf. (L.R. Davis and R.E. Marsh, Eds.)
Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 1990.

There are among us today many who come from other nations and many who have worked in nations other than their own. Essentially all such persons, and many others in attendance at this, the Fourteenth Vertebrate Pest Conference, are aware of the needs of the Developing Countries for assistance in solving their vertebrate pest problems. But long-term assistance and short-term consultancies are extremely expensive today and disruptive of the careers of some of those who serve. The costs of the training of Developing Country personnel in the more industrialized countries is getting to be horribly expensive. Neither the Developing Countries nor the more developed countries look forward to these expenses today. Is help for the Developing Countries possible without such large expenditures?

YES! A resounding YES! Very much less expensive help is available for solutions of some of the problems due to vertebrate pest infestations in the developing world. When they are used prudently, that help is available through the use of the world's electronic computer networks which are extremely economical to use.

Even better, a potential WORLD of HELP is available through computer teleconferencing supplemented by electronic mail, commonly called E-mail. Still more fortunate for all of us, there is now a computer teleconference dedicated to help in parts of your area of work (Anon. 1988). This help is now potentially available to specialists dealing with vertebrate pests in the world of the South, as the Developing Countries are sometimes collectively called. This assistance is potentially available from scientists all around the world, through the "POST-HARVEST AGRICULTURE COMPUTER TELECONFERENCE," which is using the acronym PHACT, P-H-A-C-T.

Yes, it's a fact. It's PHACT that can serve many of you!

PHACT has been a fact for more than 15 months (Shuyler 1989). It is a technical, structured, international computer teleconference designed to benefit any person whose work relates to the broad field of activities embraced in the world of POST-MATURITY. Post-maturity concerns regarding any of the produce of the world are subject matter—the cereals; other food-grains; other durable products; the semi-perishables such as potatoes and cassava; the perishables such as breadfruit, endive, kiwi, lettuce, and mangoes, on

through to zucchini; the meat products including beef, chicken, ham, lamb, pork, turkey and veal; and the fresh- and salt-water produce. For these subjects, PHACT is for you!

PHACT includes subjects covering everything from choice of variety or hybrid to the appropriate planting time, the period for growing to reach maturity at the optimum time of year, through all of the necessary steps of harvesting, drying, threshing, transport, storage, processing, and marketing, to the final preparation and use by the consumer. PHACT is for you regarding these concerns!

One of the recent comments dealt with the subject of "appropriate technology" (Shuyler 1990). Who decides what is appropriate? When is it decided the most fit techniques that are to be used to accomplish a specific goal? How is the decision made regarding the technology which is correct to use? What are the criteria used in deciding the technology which is most suitable? What is proper for a country that has essentially no foreign currency, is heavily in debt and endeavoring to avoid imports to the maximum? Who approves decisions made regarding the technology that is fit to use? PHACT will help you to think about such matters.

PHACT covers subjects concerning training, education, operations, research, and extension pertaining to any commodity. Produce found in any geographic, climatic, ecologic, or sociologic setting is being discussed, with participants in 35 countries receiving Conference Comment 87 of 27 February 1990 (Newman 1989). Biology, including entomology, plant pathology, vertebrate pests, and weeds are considered in the comments. This does not exclude Conference Comments on engineering, marketing, processing, etc. In fact, Conference Comments on engineering subjects have been submitted and engineering research on grain handling was the subject of Conference Comment 87. PHACT covers your field of activity!

Do you have a special need for which PHACT might be helpful? Any participant is expected to make any entry pertinent to that person's needs at any time (Licklider 1982). Do you specialists that are from another nation than the USA have need of a special search of the literature? Ask PHACT to help! Do you need special information about analysis of your data that you didn't anticipate when you began your research? Ask PHACT to help! Do you have an urgent need for a particular reprint? Why not see if PHACT can help? Do you want help in deciding whether you need to request in-country help of a consultant that is a vertebrate

¹Dr. Shuyler is and has been Moderator of the "Post-Harvest Agriculture Computer Teleconference" (PHACT) since its inception on November 22, 1988.

pest control specialist, a behavior specialist, a toxicologist, or an ecologist? Ask PHACT for help!

This ongoing teleconference is available at very low cost. You control many of the factors regarding cost. You can obtain information from this personal computer-centered activity at your convenience. You can pass along information to PHACT when it's convenient for you to do so. The time zone in which you live and work doesn't matter. The passage of information occurs very quickly, is usually completed within 3 to 9 minutes after you enter the electronic network. Five pages of information, the maximum desired in PHACT in any one Conference Comment, will be transferred from you or to you within 9 minutes or less. Telex costs a great amount more. Facsimile, called FAX, costs much less than Telex or western Union's Easylink but is more costly than E-mail. DIALCOM saved one large group of people more than US \$1 million in "cable" costs during their first year of use of E-mail (Telematics Intl. 1984). PHACT may save you money!

One is generally in touch with only one or a very few addresses by facsimile or Telex. As a general rule, PHACT puts you in touch with more than 100 specialists in approximately 24 hours. In addition there are hundreds and hundreds of additional E-mail addresses available to you one at a time or in groups with the pressure of your fingers on a few keys of the keyboard. And this can be done at very little additional cost. PHACT brings you the availability of all the individuals, cooperatives, corporations, and persons in several different governments that are subscribers using the DIALCOM or EIES mainframe computers. In addition, you can arrange to pass E-mail to and from those that use BITNET and many additional electronic telecommunications networks (Ferrarini 1985) that are not subscribers to the DIALCOM or EIES networks. Use of PHACT may allow you to have access to needed E-mail addresses.

If you are acquainted with the organization in which the specialist you need to contact is working, you may have indirect access to that person through another E-mail addressee in that organization. Large quantities of data are available to many specialists, e.g., agricultural economists. CARINET is one of the electronic telecommunications networks on which PHACT is carried. CARINET includes the data of Market News Service, International Trade Centre, UNCTAD/GATT, the United Nations (Anon. 1990). Many hundreds of data bases, including such well-known ones as DIALOG, are available through DIALCOM and EIES (Shuyler 1989). PHACT also uses CGNET, the network used by the Consultative Group for International Agriculture Research (CGIAR). CGIAR provides consultative guidance for the International Agricultural Research Centers (IARCs), such as the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). Might you be able to influence the CGIAR and/or the IARCs by participating in PHACT?

Being a part of PHACT can allow you to request rapid access to equipment specifications, and allows requests or directions to be made regarding shipping time and routes. I

am told these E-mail routes are used for purchases and sales (Balson 1985) and almost anything else you can imagine. Will PHACT increase your flexibility?

A 17-line cable was sent from Kansas City to Bangkok, Thailand, in late 1987 at a cost of US \$27.47. About 6 weeks later, a needed E-mail message filling the 39 lines on the screen of the monitor was dispatched from the USA for Bangkok, Thailand, for US \$1.84. And that message was composed while the sender was connected by telephone with the mainframe. This same message can be sent at much lower cost if it is sent by transmitting from a memory file in the computer being "read" from that pre-composed message. If you are involved in international activities to any significant degree, E-mail on DIALCOM and/or EIES may be a key to lower costs! PHACT may be the key to more and better agricultural development assistance! It's a fact. For better vertebrate pest management it's a PHACT!

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