COMPUTERS AND COTTON INFORMATION

Billy E. Warrick
Texas Agricultural Extension Service
Soil and Crop Science Department
Texas A&M University System
San Angelo, TX

Abstract

The use of information is constantly changing. In today's world the ability to access information and then manage this information to our benefit is increasing at a rapid rate. The internet provides computer users around the world with access to large amounts of information.

Introduction

Acquiring and using information is not necessarily new to cotton producers. We have been using computer models for over ten years to determine cotton plant development and growth and to make management decisions based on this information.

In 1990 the National Cotton Council developed an electronic index for the 1987, 1988, and 1989 Beltwide Cotton Conferences Proceedings. Through the use of keywords you could locate a paper by title and author and it would list the page number. They did not realize that they were ahead of their time. This form of search and find is the same basic principal that is used to find information on the World-Wide-Web (WWW).

The WWW links together almost two million computers that is accessed by over 65 million people; 40 million in the United States alone. I want to take you on a trip down the "Information Highway" in search of cotton information. Like any trip you will need the basics, but instead of a car and a highway you will need a computer and access to the internet. We will need a web browser to get the most out of the trip. I do not have a preference so lets use Netscape for our browser on this trip. This can be purchased from most of the businesses that sell computer software or you can download a beta version by going to the computer address of http://home.netscape.com/. Note: Electronic addresses usually begin with gopher://, ftp://, or http:// and should not cause you a lot of heartburn, it is not much different than the mailing address of a home or business; every computer on the internet has one and it provides the mechanism to arrive at your desired destination.

Once you have the web browser installed and running on your computer, it is time to go find available cotton information. There are a number of search engines available for use. Note: A search engine is like an electronic index that allows you to type in a keyword and let it look up the addresses of the computers with that match your request. The search engine I usually use is located at http://www.stpt.com/refer.html. I used Savvy Search to look up addresses of computers that have homepages containing the word cotton.

The addresses that are listed below were found using the search engine and from information sent by e-mail from Gerard Lazo and Steve Paz.

1) http://ag.arizona.edu/AREC/cotton/cotton-index2.html
This is a cotton newsletter out of Arizona. It provides the idea that we can get information to county agents and producers faster so management changes can be made to address current production situations.

2) http://ipm_www.ncsu.edu/cotton/cotton_contents.html
This computer has information concerning cotton production. This would be of use to students or producers that are just learning to grow cotton.

3) http://ipm_www.ncsu.edu/
This is the homepage of the National IPM Network. Information available on this computer is from some of the leading specialists in the USA. It provides information on the new Farm Bill as well as other topics of interest to producers.

4) http://algodon.tamu.edu/
This is the homepage of the CottonDB Data Collection Site located at USDA ARS Southern Crops Research Laboratory, College Station Texas. This has a link to the Agricultural Genome Information Server located at http://probe.nalusda.gov/, which has several different genome databases and related biological information. This is a site that would be of particular interest to the people interested in genetic information.

5) http://cygnus.tamu.edu/Texlab/Fiber/cotton.html
This is the cotton section of the Plant Disease Handbook on a computer at Texas A&M University. It allows you to read about the symptoms of a disease and to look at colored template of the disease to confirm your identification.

I see this as the future direction of the information being developed. In the near future there should be computers on the WWW that allow you to identify insects, weeds, herbicide damage, etc.

6) http://www.cbt.com/
The Chicago Board of Trade. This has a link to http://www.cbt.com/mjk-nyc.htm, that gives the closing price of cotton on the New York Cotton Exchange for the previous day.

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7) http://www.nyce.com/
New York Cotton Exchange. This is a new homepage that is under development and should be useful to producers by March 1996.

8) http://www.agriculture.com/
This is the homepage for the Successful Farming magazine. This has a search engine for finding information according to keywords entered.

9) http://mouth.pathfinder.com/@@486@LJGNWQEAQKZO/PF/
This is a homepage for Progressive Farmer magazine. This contains much of the same information contained in the monthly magazine. I expect to see several of their popular bulletins such as "How A Cotton Plant Grows" available before the end of the year. This will be a useful tool for students and producers.

10) http://farmjournal.com/
This is the homepage of the Farm Journal magazine. This site is useful not only because of the information that it provides, but the links that it has with other ag related computers.

11)http://agcomwww.tamu.edu/agcom/egregory/agronomy.html
This location is different from the others listed in 1 to 10. This is the site of agronomic publications at Texas A&M University that are available in an electronic format referred to as PDF (portable document format). These publications can be viewed on the screen and printed with minimal quality loss, by using Adobe Acrobat software. This software is currently free and can be downloaded from Adobe; there address is http://www.Adobe.com/.

The future is bright and at the current rate of change the methods used today will be antiquated in the next ten years. We have access to more information than ever before and hopefully it will be of use to all aspects of the cotton industry.