

**TALKING POINTS
SECRETARY DAN GLICKMAN
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY
COMMEMORATIVE EVENT
JUNE 11, 2000**

Thank you very much. It's an honor to be a part of this celebration. Let me thank Pamela Andre, the outstanding head of the National Agricultural Library, who has led the library through this modernization effort. I also want to single out the co-chairs of this event, my former congressional colleague, Representative Major Owens, and Evelyne Rominger for their commitment to this project.

I'm sorry I couldn't be here earlier today for the discussion about on-farm environmental improvements. But I do believe it's one of the most important issues facing agriculture, and I commend you for highlighting it today.

Let me also heartily second your tribute to Deputy Secretary Rich Rominger. His commitment to this library is just one of the many contributions he makes to USDA's work every single day, on every single issue we face. It's been a unique pleasure to work side-by-side with him for five years. He is one of the finest people I've met in public service.

The National Agricultural Library is as old as USDA itself. Establishing it was one of the first acts of Isaac Newton, the nation's first Commissioner of Agriculture in 1862. It has since grown into the largest agricultural library in the world, internationally renowned, with 3.3 million items, 50 miles of bookshelves and materials in 75 different languages, some of which are more than 500 years old. It is a part of our research facility, but it serves every single one of USDA's mission areas.

The oldest American institutions continue to survive because they are dynamic and innovative, willing to change as the world changes. This library is no different. The renovation that's just been completed will make the library's resources more accessible than ever before. In addition to the improved building infrastructure, the Electronic Information Services Center will allow the library's customers to use information technology to get the materials they need, and new storage space will allow the library's collection to continue to grow.

In celebrating the Millennium, the President and the First Lady have urged us to both "*honor the past*" and "*imagine the future*." It's appropriate, then, that we recognize the Millennium at the National Agricultural Library. Because here the work and writings of pioneers like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington Carver come to life. In that sense, the library is very much a guardian of the *past*. At the same time, its vast resources will help farmers, research scientists, scholars and policymakers make agriculture strong and competitive in the *future*.

Almost 50 years ago, President Eisenhower said:

"The libraries of America are...the home of free, inquiring minds. To them, our citizens...must be able to turn with clear confidence that there they can freely seek the whole truth, unvarnished by fashion and uncompromised by expediency."

In today's world, where information is the key to freedom, security and prosperity, those words ring more true than ever before.

Thank you very much, and congratulations on this magnificent renovation.

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