

Expanding the Value of SARE Publications through Electronic Distribution

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Summary

Many SARE projects produce educational materials for wide distribution. Hard copies (books, guides, posters, etc.) are tangible documents that lend credibility to the material, while electronic copies are easy and cheap to distribute in PDF format via the Internet. The numbers of copies distributed and associated costs are compared for three SARE projects.

Projects

1. Orchard Alley Cropping in the Subhumid Tropics (R&E, 1995–97, AW95-103)
2. Agroforestry Guides for Pacific Islands (PDP, 1998–2000, EW98-004)
3. Species Profiles for Pacific Island Agroforestry (PDP, 2002–4, EW02-001)

All projects produced extension-level materials in both hard copy and for electronic distribution over the Internet. The hard copies were sent free of charge to public and university libraries, USDA NRCS and university extension offices, and agricultural NGOs throughout the U.S.-affiliated Pacific islands. The electronic copies are available for free download and reproduction as PDF files from agroforestry.net.

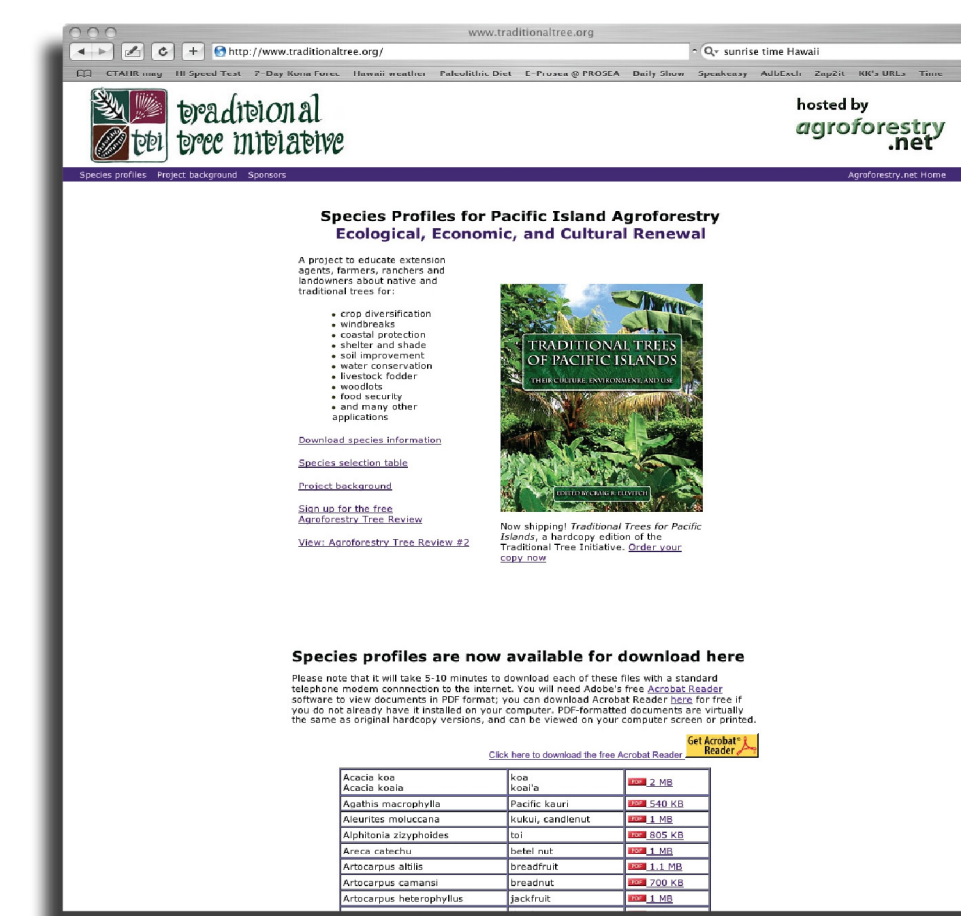


U.S.-affiliated Pacific islanders at the Western SARE Subregional Conference in Guam, Oct. 17–18, 2007, our target audience.

Comparisons

Comparing hard copies and electronic copies is not straightforward. Each medium has its strengths:

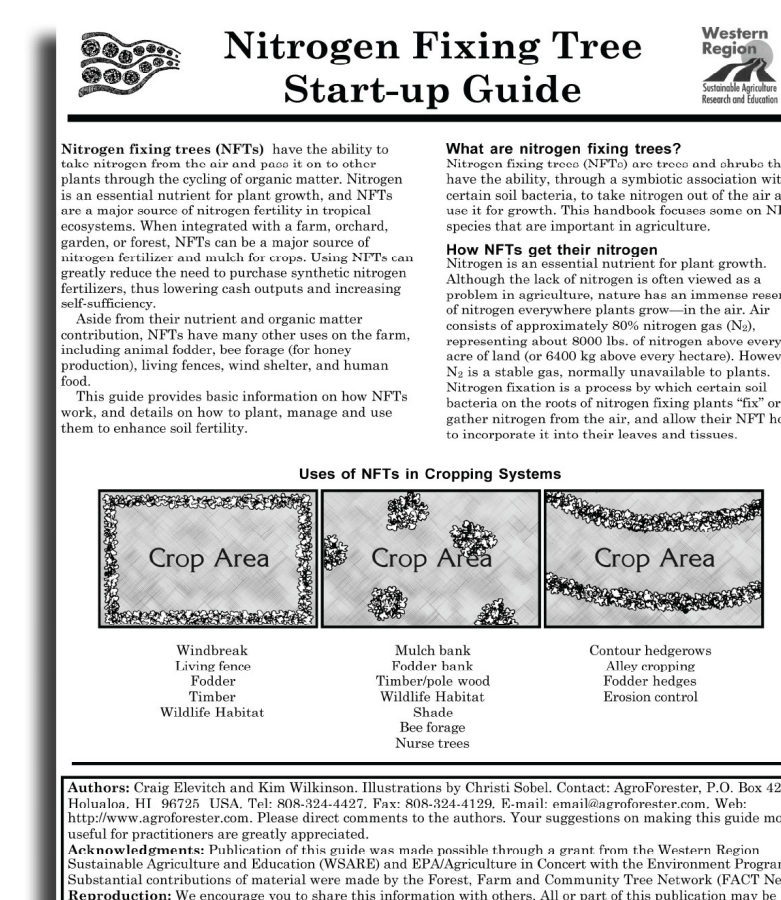
Hard copies	Electronic copies (PDF format)
Feel “tangible” and “real”	Cheap to distribute by Internet
Lend credibility to the material	Reach a widely distributed audience
Easy to read because printed on paper	Speed velocity of information flow
Can be used without a computer	Relatively easy to revise if necessary
	Easy to search
	Relatively friendly for sight impaired
	Allow distribution of long or full color documents that are prohibitively expensive to print
	Do not degrade with age, but risk becoming unreadable with future technology



A comparison of hard copy and electronic media is not straightforward, as each has different characteristics and qualities. Below, we make a simplistic comparison by number of copies distributed and an estimated cost per copy.

Project publications

The following publications were produced with SARE funding. In some cases, matching funds were used to fund printing of hard copies.



“A Guide to Orchard Alley Cropping For Fertility, Mulch and Soil Conservation” (pp. 10) and “Nitrogen Fixing Tree Start-Up Guide” (pp. 12) by Craig R. Elevitch and Kim M. Wilkinson. 1999. PAR, Hōlualoa, Hawai‘i.

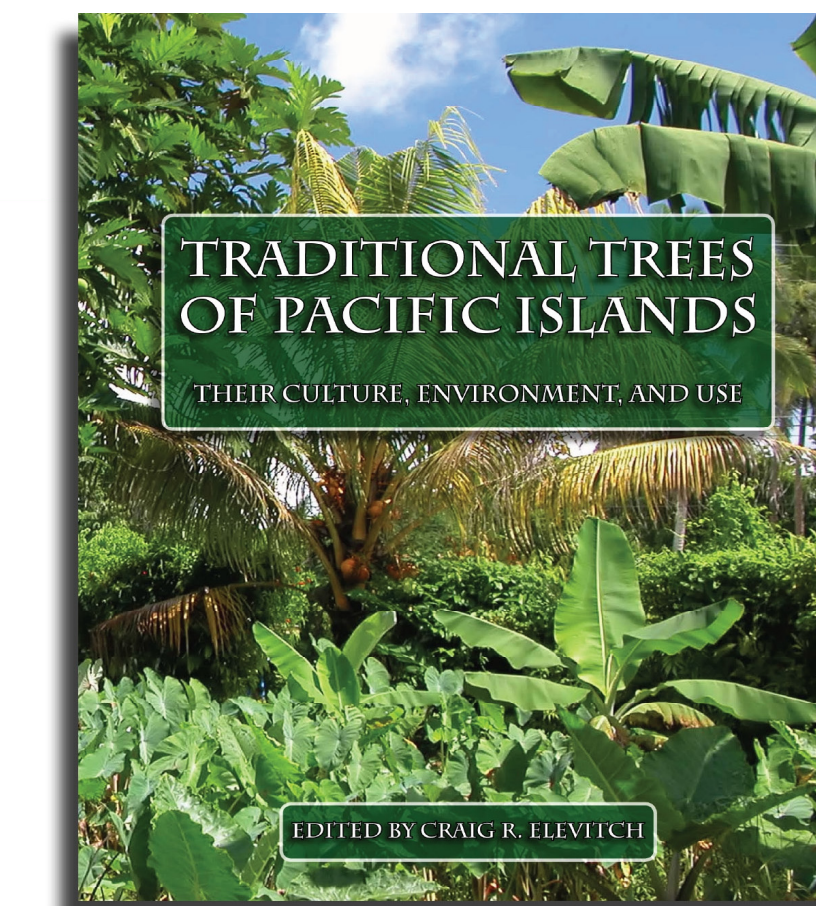
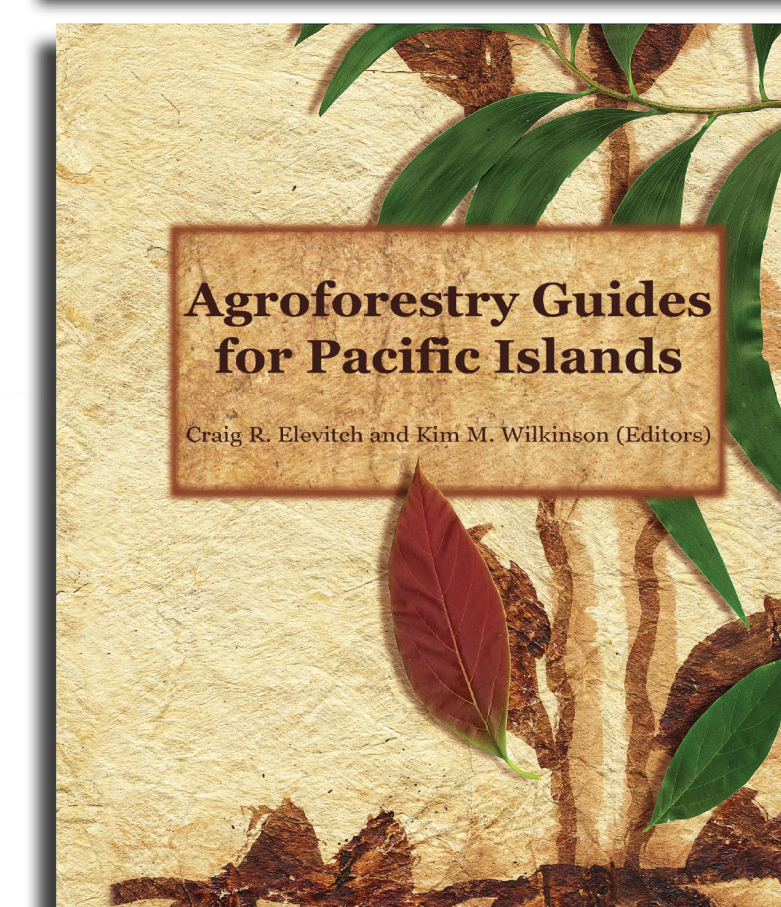
an output of

Orchard Alley Cropping in the Subhumid Tropics (R&E, 1995–97, AW95-103)

Agroforestry Guides for Pacific Islands by Craig R. Elevitch and Kim M. Wilkinson (Eds.). 2000. PAR, Hōlualoa, Hawai‘i. pp. 248.

an output of

Agroforestry Guides for Pacific Islands (PDP, 1998–2000, EW98-004)



Traditional Trees of Pacific Islands: Their Culture, Environment, and Use by Craig R. Elevitch (Ed.). 2006. PAR, Hōlualoa, Hawai‘i. pp. 812.

an output of

Species Profiles for Pacific Island Agroforestry (PDP, 2002–4, EW02-001)

Numbers of hard copy and electronic copies distributed

The numbers of hard copies are based on our print runs. Electronic distribution is measured by web hits during a given time period (as noted below). Web hits include Internet requests for a document, including requests from search engines.

SARE-funded publication	# hard copies distributed	# individual chapter PDF web hits	
		Total thru Dec 07	Rate/month (Dec 07)
Alley cropping	100	105,000	930
Agroforestry guides	150	280,000	4,300
Species profiles	300	1,260,000	39,000

Cost comparison

Costs for hard copies are based on printing and shipping only, i.e., they exclude authoring and production costs to prepare and format the material. The cost for each electronic copy is based on an estimated “website overhead” cost for maintaining and hosting a website at \$2 per PDF file per month.

SARE-funded publication	cost per hard copy distributed including shipping	# of PDF files per publication	cost per PDF download	cost per full pub. download	Hard copy/PDF cost ratio
Alley cropping	\$5	2	\$0.0043	\$0.0086	580
Agroforestry guides	\$20	8	\$0.0037	\$0.0296	675
Species profiles	\$40	47	\$0.0024	\$0.1128	355

Conclusion

All three projects produced educational materials in hard copy and electronic form. The hard copies (two books and two guides) were sent to organizations and educational institutions throughout the U.S.-affiliated Pacific. Although the hard copies were greatly appreciated by the target audience, they were an estimated 355–675 times more expensive to distribute than PDF documents (at their current download rate). In other words, the PDF documents reach significantly more people than the hard copies at a very small fraction of the cost. PDF downloads of all these SARE project publications continue in the 1,000s of copies per month, expanding the value for the foreseeable future.