

## **THE *CROSSETT STORY*, REVISED: UPDATING A FORESTRY CLASSIC**

Don C. Bragg, James M. Guldin, and Michael G. Shelton

**ABSTRACT.** The *Crossett Story* slide show was developed in 1980 to detail the history of logging, field forestry, and research centered on the USDA Forest Service's Crossett Experimental Forest (CEF). However, science and technology have advanced considerably over the last several decades and the regulatory environment has changed, making an update of the *Crossett Story* inevitable. The original slide show involved a montage of historical photographs, recent images, and commentary from Russ Reynolds. Using desktop computers, scanners, audio and video editing software, and an expanded selection of photographs and research, we updated the *Crossett Story* to a series of digital formats, providing CD-, DVD-, and internet-based delivery mechanisms with captioning capabilities.

**KEY WORDS.** Crossett Experimental Forest, Arkansas, digital update, ADA, DVD

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The original *Crossett Story* slide show elaborated on the long history of logging, field forestry, and research centered around the USDA Forest Service's Crossett Experimental Forest (CEF) in southeastern Arkansas. Developed in 1980 by Larry Bishop, Russ Reynolds, and Jim Baker, this slide show introduced visitors to the experimental forest and has been enjoyed by thousands of people over the years.

### **REASONS FOR THE UPDATE**

The first *Crossett Story* worked well for many years, but an update was necessary because of the changes in science, technology, and regulations. We decided that a digital product was preferable to revamping the existing slide show because of its greater flexibility for future modification, easier transportability, and improved long-term production quality and maintenance. For example, modern tools--such as digital scanners, graphical editors, and presentation software--allowed for the incorporation of both digitally-restored and contemporary images. Additionally, the availability of this technology meant that it could be developed in-house using existing materials and personnel.

Produced using some of the best techniques available in 1980, the original *Crossett Story* consisted of a montage of historical photographs, contemporary images, and a narrative that included commentary from Russ Reynolds, the first researcher at the CEF. The slides were shown using a synchronized twin-projector setup driven by a cassette tape deck. However, over twenty years of use had taken its toll on the images and audiotape, and picture quality had also become inconsistent as slides were added and removed. Another critical motivational factor behind the *Crossett Story* revision arose from the

need to meet regulations related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law requires government agencies to provide accessibility to public buildings and products, including items like the *Crossett Story*. The addition of closed-captioning and alteration of the CEF facilities to improve access further justified updating the format and delivery of the *Crossett Story*.

## RESULTS

Using desktop computers, scanners, audio and video editing software, and an expanded selection of photographs and research, a new *Crossett Story* exists in a series of digital formats. We now have CD-, DVD-, and internet-based mechanisms for delivering a modernized tale of forestry in the Crossett area. All products will be offered with captioning as an option.

This revision also placed more emphasis on current research efforts in the CEF, including the cooperative efforts with regional universities and both private non-industrial and industrial forest landowners. Furthermore, greater emphasis was given to the educational and extension role of the CEF. Wherever possible, better quality and more relevant images were included.

## CONCLUSIONS

The production of a digital public interface has many advantages. First, the quality of a digital product is easier to maintain and improve upon over time. Second, modification of the material when needed (e.g., to update results from research studies) is an easy task. Finally, digital media are much easier to transport to venues beyond the CEF, allowing for the greater dissemination of the message. Given the relative affordability and accessibility of the technology needed to create such a complicated product, it made little sense not to update this forestry classic.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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