DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

What is a discourse community? Well according to different authors or the dictionary you may get different answers. The dictionary says communication by words or talk that relates to the social group that the talk is involved with. This is a very basic definition but considering an author like John Swales you come up with something else. Swales believes that there are six essential characteristics to be considered a discourse community. These six characteristics are:

1. Broad, common goal
2. Mechanisms of communication
3. Spread and develop knowledge
4. Have specific genres
5. Have a specific lexis
6. Threshold of members

If a group doesn't meet all of these characteristics Swales believes it is not a true discourse community (Swales 469). Another author James Paul Gee has a broader more realistic definition. Gee says that you can be born into a discourse community or join one and learn by immersion. He also refers to an "identity kit" that includes the appropriate costume and instruction on how to act, talk, and write in a particular role that others will recognize (Gee 484).

The discourse community of agriculture can be broken down into many different smaller discourse communities. We as a group looked at three of the smaller ones. They include: Agronomy, Animal Science, and Dairy Production.

AGRonomy

When looking at the Agronomy discourse community basically what I did was just look at what my classes and my experiences has taught me. Mostly what helped me define the discourse community of agronomy was my experiences that I had during my internship in the summer of 2011. These experiences which mostly included crop scouting helped me determine what the farmers need to do in their fields to help their crops. The internship was a great place for me to start when I began looking into the discourse community of agronomy. The second place I looked at was my classes. These were not quite as helpful as I am just starting to get into my core classes, but they still helped when I defined the discourse community of agronomy.
ANIMAL SCIENCE
Animal science is a discourse community that you can be born into, or join later on. There is some learning that you need to do to be a member of this discourse. There are certain ways of dressing and talking. Knowing the shorthand or abbreviations is quite vital because without them you will get lost. This is especially true when looking at bull sale catalogs. There are so many initials and numbers to keep track of different inheritance traits that you need a thorough knowledge of the program before knowing how to incorporate them into your breeding program. There are many animals that a person would need to know about if they are interested in animal science. Cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, and goats are the main ones. They all have different feeds and requirements. In my classes this year they have shown me how important it is to treat each animal differently depending on what species and gender it is. These are just a few things one would need to know to be in the discourse community of animal science.

DAIRY PRODUCTION
The discourse community of Dairy Production has many people in it and it also contains many different kinds of people. For one this discourse community contains not only dairy producers but it also contains the people that turn the milk into a finished product. In fact people that drink milk can be considered a part of this discourse community because they care about milk. They care about how much it costs, the flavor and maybe even where it comes from.

Dairy Production also includes many different technologies and texts. One technology that is important to Dairy Production is Dairy Herd Improvement Association, DHIA. DHIA is important because it is a way for dairy farmers to test their herd and see where they need to make changes to produce the highest quality milk for the consumer. DHIA provides farmers with information about their herd through charts and graphs. These charts and graphs can then guide the producer to make changes to provide a very high quality product.

These two pictures show two different types of information that DHIA provides. The one on the left is a graph of Somatic Cell counts which is very important because high SCC causes decreased milk production. The picture on the right is what an overall DHIA report looks like for each cow.

Finally, an important text for anybody who ever wondered where milk comes from or just wants to know more about milk is the book Milk: Its Remarkable Contribution to Human Health and Well-being by Stuart Patton. In this book Patton explains what milk is exactly, and he also talks about how milk has evolved over the past hundreds of years since people have been drinking it.
CONCLUSION
In conclusion, the definition of a discourse community can be very vague or very strict, depending on whom you ask. There is one thing we know about discourse communities though, they are full of people with a common goal. Agriculture is a great example of that. The discourse community of agriculture is a huge and has many different parts and other discourse communities within it. Hopefully this page provided you with a better look into three of the discourse communities that agriculture involves.

Works Cited

