

EDITOR'S CONFERENCE REPORT*

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The International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSLIC) met for the 28th Annual IAMSLIC Conference in Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, 6-11 October, 2002. In attendance were more than 90 people from 19 countries, among them attendees from 7 Mexican States, 14 U.S. States, and 1 Canadian Province. The largest number came from California, followed by Sinaloa. Because this was the first IAMSLIC Conference in Latin America, a number of Latin Americans were able to attend their first IAMSLIC Conference, including attendees from Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, and Trinidad, as well as Mexico. Others came from Australia, England, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Malaysia, Mauritania, Micronesia, Palau, and Switzerland. Conference participants represented a mix of libraries, including one-person marine station libraries in isolated locations, academic and institutional libraries in developing countries, libraries in large research institutions, and large academic libraries. Representatives from CSA, Elsevier, and ISI also attended and gave presentations.

Under the general theme "Bridging the Digital Divide", following the opening reception on Sunday evening, there were three and a half days of contributed and invited papers, panel discussions, and brief oral summaries of posters on display, by librarians, research scientists, and database vendors. The sessions began with a report on electronic publications and document delivery in the large (255,000 students, 139 libraries in 11 States) National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). UNAM has over 5,000 e-journals and their use has tripled in the last year. More people are using the library, in person and remotely. Document delivery is increasing, and the library is promoting the use of Ariel.

A keynote address by the Director General of the World Fish Center, located in Malaysia, outlined the role of aquatic science librarians in bridging the digital divide to provide library services for the disconnected. In a review of the history and present state of Information Communication Technology (ICT) it was noted that rich nations can benefit more from ICT because poorer countries have other priorities. Aquatic resources sectors such as fisheries are often economic activities of the marginal poor and receive little attention. There is less information available on fish in developing countries, and yet there are more species in these countries. Those who do gain access to information often have trouble interpreting it because of language problems, and the ever-present confusion caused by multiple names for the same fish. Solutions include establishing regional centers or information nodes, close to those who need the information but have no computers; making the information more user-friendly; and more outreach efforts.

Sessions on regional collaboration, a topic that is at the heart of what IAMSLIC does, summarized activities in Mexico, South America, the Pacific Islands, European Countries in Economic Transition (ECET), and Africa. Document delivery and unequal Internet accessibility were discussed by several speakers.

Papers and posters on resource sharing included discussions of the newly inaugurated IAMSLIC Z39.50 Distributed Library for ILL and Resource Sharing, on the Web, a database to which a number of libraries have added their serial holdings. ILL requests are now being directed first to the Website to find a holding library, and only if that is unsuccessful, then to the IAMSLIC Listserver, where half the traffic in the last year was concerned with ILL requests. An overview was presented of the Ocean Data and Information Network for the Caribbean and South America (ODINCARSA). Other databases and programs described included PubMed, and the Open Archive Initiative. A paper entitled "MARC and ARC" described various recent approaches to geospatially enabling bibliographic records. Digitization projects in several libraries were described, including oceanographic expedition reports (SIO at UCSD); theses and dissertations (CICIMAR and CIBNOR, La Paz, B.C.S.); Virgin Islands Heritage Collection (University of Virgin Islands and 3 library systems in Florida), and images of aquatic organisms (INOCAR, Ecuador). New technology from IOC (International Oceanographic Commission) includes the OceanTeacher system of training tools for oceanographic data and information management and exchange; OceanPortal, a high level directory of and search engine for oceanographic data; and BeeBox, an affordable, dynamic content management system to enable small communities to build a web presence jointly. Resources and services available were described for libraries in Alaska, Trinidad, and Africa, among others. Presentations on user services included the initiatives undertaken at University of Arizona to create a guide to the Science and Engineering Library in Spanish; and initiatives to improve service at the University of Viña del Mar, Chile. Research scientists described projects underway in Mexico. A report on fish nutrition research at both Wageningen, Netherlands and Mazatlan, Mexico also compared library services at two institutions. A report on IMECOCAL began with a description of the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations program (CalCOFI), which has been producing physical, chemical and biological data from repeated survey cruises to regular sampling stations on the Pacific Coast of North America since 1949. The cruises covered stations off the coast of California and Mexico until 1980, when the Mexican stations were abandoned, and the program continued only in California. In 1997 a new program "Investigaciones Mexicanas de la Corriente de California" (IMECOCAL) was initiated by several research institutions in Mexico to measure the same parameters as CalCOFI, and has been sampling from the same Mexican stations originally established by CalCOFI. IMECOCAL is also expected to expand northward in future.

Other presentations of interest included a report on information sharing among campuses of the College of Micronesia scattered on islands in the Federated States of Micronesia; and a preliminary report on a project to build an annotated bibliography of the classic books in marine and aquatic sciences. This bibliography project, which should be very useful for collection development, is expected to grow over several years, as experts in

various subject areas are recruited to produce certain sections. A preliminary draft of the first section, marine botany, was presented at this session.

The conference was held in the beachside Hotel Playa, which has excellent food and wonderful margaritas. On the fourth day of the conference we enjoyed a gala banquet, with a spectacular program of Mexican music and dances from various eras and areas of Mexico, beginning with an Aztec fire dance.

As usual, the underlying themes of this conference were resource sharing and networking, and both were strengthened considerably during this week in Mazatlan. The next IAMSLIC Conference will be in October 2003 in Mystic, Connecticut.

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