

THE POLAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF MARINE FISHERIES AND OCEANOGRAPHY (PINRO) AND ITS SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY

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The oldest fisheries institute in Murmansk celebrated its 80th anniversary in March this year. The Institute's library was founded as early as 1899 when the Northern Marine Biological Station was established on the Kola Peninsula coast. Important fundamental research in the field of marine biology developed there.

The Institute has a tradition in studying fish biology and ecology, fisheries oceanography and fishery of the World Ocean as well as biological resources of the inland waters of Russia. Since the early days the principal aim of the library is collecting publications, every book and paper published about problems of the Barents and White Seas; another aspect is complementing the stock with publications related to ichthyology, hydrobiology, and oceanography of the world oceans.

Now the library has a collection of about 50,000 volumes of books and scientific journals, and more than 50 journal titles from abroad. The collection includes a number of valuable and unique Russian and foreign publications covering problems of the World fishery and related matters. The archive contains reports and "grey" literature sources related to this region since 1937. The bibliographic index of papers by PINRO scientists has been compiled and published from 1936 until 2000. The subject catalogue embraces all well-known sciences. Also, a list of the new acquisitions has been prepared every month. The Institute is involved in international research projects and programmes related to investigations of the Barents Sea ecosystem.

PINRO maintains close contacts with organizations from 25 countries of the world; such relations are especially close and long-standing with Norway, Canada, Iceland, Germany, Finland etc.

The results of scientific research in the field of fisheries and aquatic problems are represented in numerous articles, reviews, proceedings of fishery international organizations such as ICES, NAFO, FAO, NEAFC.

The library offers its facilities and services to researchers from every concerned Institute, university students, schoolchildren, non-governmental ecological organizations, to libraries of Murmansk Marine Biological Institute and of the Hydrometeorological Agency and private individuals from all over the country.

We have been in a difficult situation for the last ten years. Despite the internal economic and political problems the library of PINRO, as the other libraries in Russia, have continued to work in the traditional manner and style, having no access to on-line bibliographical search services, the use of CD-ROM, or information retrieval systems.

The situation was one of anarchy and duplication of effort. The number of serial publications in the field of marine biology and fisheries is constantly increasing, mainly these can be only obtained by subscription, not by exchange. Subscription rates tend to rise much faster than the budgets allotted to the libraries. We are still feeling the results of policies of the past when the funds allocated for research and development in biological fisheries and sciences were quite insufficient.

There is also a great need for training of our library staff in new techniques related to computerization of information services, as well as in foreign languages; the language problem is a great barrier to cooperation with foreign countries.

One of the most controversial is the problem of salaries of Russian librarians. The level of these salaries is relatively too low. For example, average monthly salaries range from 40 to 100 U.S. dollars.

Since 1995 our institute has been a member of EURASLIC. The first participation of librarian V. Khazova in meeting of EURASLIC Conference was in Poland, in 1994, thanks to Brit Skotheim, Head librarian of Institute of Marine Research (IMR, Norway, Bergen). The first steps of communication with our colleagues from abroad was encouraging and stimulating.

In 1995 according to the programme of close cooperation between PINRO (Russia) and IMR (Norway) our library was provided with the computer program Micro CDS/ISIS. After installation of CDS/ISIS we began to prepare the list of scientific publications of the PINRO's scientists.

Practical experience in studying CDS/ISIS was gained by the librarian Khazova through a training course taken at the library of the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas (Sevastopol) in 1996-1998 thanks to Olga Akimova. It was easier than taking a training course in another country.

The Institute had the possibility to subscribe to the ASFA database on CD-ROM for 1978-1999. The users of the database find it very useful because ASFA allows quick access to the international aquatic literature.

After a long period of repairing of our library (1999-2000) we have a new computer with printer and scanner. It was again due to help from the Norwegian government "to strengthen PINRO".

Since the middle of 2000 our library has access to the Internet. The computers have a connection to the local network of the Institute. After installation of the program ProCITE all recent acquisitions of periodicals and books of the library are entered into the database. The next step is to create an electronic catalogue of the library in the nearest future.

Access to the Internet system highlighted some problems - lack of experience and the need of certain training to get used to the new type of work, and restricted possibility to pay a subscription at a high fee for access to a Website. We hope that we will be able to manage in future.

In the area of interlibrary cooperation a number of new exchange agreements have been set up with other aquatic libraries. Close interaction between PINRO and the IMR, PINRO and the IBSS (Sevastopol), as well as with the Estonian Marine Institute (Tallinn) made it possible visit these libraries to exchange their experiences and discuss future cooperation and relations. We are trying to be optimistic and it helps a lot.

In conclusion I want to express my sincere gratitude to those who have been giving us help and understanding in recent years. They were generous in sharing their knowledge and experience with us and sent papers we requested and donated journals and books.

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