

Developments in Fisheries and Marine Information in the Nordic Countries

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a report from the first meeting of Nordic marine librarians, which took place earlier this year. The history of cooperation between Nordic libraries is stated and the current situation of marine science libraries in this area is discussed. Finally, the future developments of marine information are accounted for and the role of ASFA as an important part of the dissemination of information on the Nordic marine biology is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The history of cooperation between libraries in the Nordic countries dates back as far as the early decades of this century. The main landmarks are the publication of a Nordic journal on books and libraries started in 1914 and still being published and the Nordic library conferences, which are for public as well as special and research librarians, started in 1926. So far 16 meetings have been organized; the latest one was held in Trondheim, Norway last year and attended by about 400 librarians. These meetings are now held every four years. The Nordic Association for Scientific and Technical Libraries was established in 1947. Meetings are organized every four years, or between the big meetings of the Nordic librarians. These are attended by approximately 120 librarians. In 1956 the Scandia-plan was launched at the initiative of the Nordic Association for Scientific and Technical Libraries. It is the Nordic counterpart of the American Farmington Plan. NORDINFO, the Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries, was founded in 1977 after the merger of the Nordic Council for Scientific Information and the Nordic Research Library Council.

NORDINFO is the main Nordic organ for research libraries and librarianship. In 1988 NORDINFO funded 21 projects with approximately 3 million Finnish marks. The best known ongoing project is the SCANNET project, which is the Nordic database network. NOSP, the *Nordic Union Catalog of Periodicals*, was originally a part of the Scandia-plan, but is now a separate project. NOSP is available on microfiche or online via SCANNET. Consideration is being given to produce a CD-Rom version of NOSP. Another major project funded by NORDINFO is IANI, Intelligent Access to Nordic Information Systems. It is a command Language in English for accessing various databases in the Nordic countries. The prototype is being tested, but the release date of the final product is not yet known.

NORDINFO runs a publications program and publishes the periodical *NORDINFO NYTT* four times a year in the Nordic languages except Icelandic and Finnish. There is also a book publishing program. Up to this date, approximately 20 books have been published, among them an interlibrary loans directory, which is due in the second edition later this year.

One of the projects NORDINFO funded last year was the meeting of the Nordic Marine Librarians and Information Specialists, which took place in January and February this year in Hirtshals, a small town in the northern part of Denmark.

Nordic Marine Librarians Meeting

The meeting was organized by Anna-Liisa Toivonen, librarian of the newly founded Vaasa Research Station for Fishing Technology and Jean Collins, librarian of the North Sea Center in Hirtshals, Denmark. Participants came from Sweden(1), Finland(2), Norway(2), Denmark(2) and Iceland(1).

The meeting started with a short report from each of the participants on their institutes and their work. A report titled "Mapping of the Fisheries Research in the Nordic Countries" by Jesper Bay was discussed. Apart from addresses of 94 marine research institutes in the Nordic countries, the work contains research profiles and the most important cooperating bodies of each institute. All participants agreed that the lack of information on the libraries and information resources of the 94 institutions covered diminished the overall value of the work. Another problem was that only about 60 copies were printed and it is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.

Cooperation between libraries was discussed, both on a national and international basis. In each country the marine science libraries work closely together. In Iceland a working group of librarians in natural sciences institutes was established some years ago. The main task of the working group is to try to coordinate the purchase of periodicals. Other matters concerning the libraries were also discussed. The libraries of the Marine Research Institute and the Icelandic Fisheries Laboratories have merged to become the Fisheries Library, the main library of marine and fisheries-related publications in Iceland. It serves the institute's staff, the University students and teachers, as well as the Ministry of Fisheries. A collection on freshwater fisheries is at the Freshwater Fisheries Institute, which does not have a librarian on its staff and therefore is not able to serve its scientists effectively. They are, therefore, frequent visitors of the Fisheries Library.

Cooperation between marine science libraries in the Nordic countries has not been extensive. It is mainly in the form of exchanging publications and, to a lesser degree, interlibrary loans. It was agreed to exchange lists of periodicals received in the libraries for easier interlibrary loans, as presently only the Fisheries Library in Iceland and the library of the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute input their periodicals holdings to NOSP. It was agreed not to charge for photocopies in the beginning. Two Norwegian libraries input their holdings in NOSP, the libraries of the Institute of Marine Research and Directorate of Fisheries, both in Bergen. I have heard that these two libraries will probably be merged in the near future.

Most of the marine science libraries in the Nordic countries are rather small, with only one or two professional staff, as is the case of most other libraries in this field. Obviously their collections of books and periodicals reflect the interest of the parent institute. The main task of the libraries is to gather information needed for the daily work of the scientists and disseminate research results to the fishermen and others who might need them. The Norwegian Institute of Fishery Technology Research (FTFI) has an information section which publishes research reports and video cassettes of very high quality. Most of the other libraries have purchased material from FTFI. The reports are mainly published in Norwegian, but some are published in English.

The Danish Institute of Fisheries and Marine Research and the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute cover both freshwater and marine environments. The Danish library is on three sites in Denmark and serves some other research institutes, as it houses the major collection in this field in Denmark. The library's headquarters are in Charlottenlund, near Copenhagen. The Finnish library is also the major one in Finland, serving more than twenty research and fish culture stations around the country, as well as the headquarters in Helsinki.

The Swedish participants came from the Secretariat of Development Cooperation of the Swedish Board of Fisheries. The collection of its library covers mainly development of fisheries in the developing countries. The users are the staff of the Secretariat and university students.

All of the participating libraries cooperate with international organizations, such as FAO and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). FAO publications form an important part of the collection of every marine science library. The major libraries receive the publications on exchange or free of charge,

but none of them had a complete collection. Now it is possible to subscribe to the publications on microfiche, and the cataloguing records are available in machine readable form. The Danish fisheries' libraries are interested in including these records in the FISHLINE database.

ICES is the major international organization for fisheries research in the North Atlantic. Its extensive publication program is of great importance for scientists both in this and other parts of the world. All the major series are sold on subscription bases, but that is only a part of what ICES is publishing. Of great importance are the working group papers and Council meeting papers, but they are very difficult to obtain as IAMSLIC, among others, has pointed out. ICES sends only two sets of these papers to each of the member countries, one to each of the delegates. This arrangement began in 1986 and was done to reduce the demands on storage in the Secretariat. Since then the Secretariat stocks only reports of working/study groups, workshops, and so on. A meeting of the Bureau of ICES, which took place last June, discussed this matter and considered the microfiching of the ICES papers, and, as far as I know, the microfiching of the papers has already started. Consideration has also been given to storing the papers on optical disc, which seems too expensive at the moment, but this option will be considered as a part of a new computer system in the Secretariat.

One of the most discussed items on the agenda of our meeting was the *Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA)*. As the most important source for bibliographic information, it is of great importance to the marine libraries. At present none of the libraries use the CD-ROM version, but the Library of the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute plans to purchase it. Most of the libraries use ASFA through the German online search service, DIMDI or the American, DIALOG, the former being much less expensive to use. All of them are subscribers to the printed version.

The input policy of ASFA was also discussed. Presently Norway is the only Nordic country which is a partner in Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Information System (ASFIS), having the national input centre at the Norwegian Oceanographic Data Centre. Denmark is discussing the possibility of becoming an ASFIS member country. The input policy of the Norwegian centre is not known, and so far the Norwegian FTFI has not been involved in discussions on the input of their publications, but as I mentioned earlier they are one of the major publishers of marine related reports in the Nordic countries.

The work of IAMSLIC and the informal group of European Marine and Freshwater Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalists was discussed. It was agreed to try to have someone from the Nordic countries always present at the meetings of these groups and to report to the librarians unable to attend the meetings. It was thought that the Nordic librarians would feel more "at home" as members of the European group than in IAMSLIC, but as IAMSLIC is becoming more international this attitude is probably subject to change, especially if the meetings are held in Europe every third year as planned. Only two of the participants, Jean Collins from Denmark and I, have attended the IAMSLIC meetings. Delegates from Denmark and Finland attended the meeting of the European group in Plymouth in April 1988. It was agreed to inform both the European group and IAMSLIC of this meeting and the future activities of the Nordic group. At present, no steps have been taken toward formalizing this group.

A short report was given by each participant on computerization in the represented libraries. The most advanced systems were the Norwegian MARINET, which covers mainly aquaculture, and the Danish FISHLINE. FISHLINE was discussed at the 1984 and 1988 conferences of IAMSLIC. Inhouse software packages included MICRO-POLYDOC used by FTFI in Norway, PRETTY-REF, PRETTY-LIB and dBASE III in Finland and PROCOMM in Denmark. MICRO-CDS/ISIS was mentioned as a way to extract bibliographic records from databases for inclusion in local databases. It is also used as a tool for input of abstracts to ASFA.

Only Norway and Denmark participate in the GLOBEFISH database. Iceland is considering joining, but probably not for a year or two.

The Future

As I mentioned before, the Nordic libraries want to expand current marine science library cooperation and make it more effective by improving the communications among them. While only the Icelandic delegate has access to SCIENCENET, the others are interested in acquiring access, although financial restrictions are

in the way. The Vaasa Research Station for Fishing Technology, for example, has an electronic mail connection through INTERNET, and is therefore able to contact everyone using BITNET.

The most effective way to disseminate information on marine research in the Nordic countries to the rest of the world was considered to be through ASFA. As the delegates were not satisfied with the Nordic input to ASFA, one way of improving it was thought to be the establishment of input centres in the Nordic countries.

Bent Gaardestrup, librarian of the Danish Institute for Fisheries and Marine Research, was present at the ASFIS meeting in Rome last June and asked about the input policy of ASFIS for serials and monographs. He found out that no such policy ever existed. Furthermore, he found out that it is up to the input centres to decide what is core material.

I have recently learned that Reidar Leinebø at the Norwegian Oceanographic Data Centre, which is a member of ASFIS, has applied for money to the Nordic Commission of Ministers on behalf of all the Nordic countries to improve the Nordic input to ASFA. His plans are to establish an input centre in each of the Nordic countries, and this input centre would be responsible for material published in its geographic area. The abstracts would be mailed to SCIENCENET, so people could read and download them. The abstracts would be mailed to ASFA as well. The money Reidar Leinebø applies for would cover one staff person in each country, who would coordinate the input for four years, 1990-1993. After that it would be a routine and a part of the duties of the libraries and paid by their budget. Reidar Leinebø of the Norwegian Oceanographic Data Centre did not contact any of the people he is involving in this project beforehand, and this says more than anything how much we need cooperation.

According to Reidar Leinebø, he is not optimistic about receiving the money he applied for from the Nordic Commission of Ministers because he thinks there is no understanding of the importance of this work. It would be very bad for us, the Nordic marine librarians, if this project did not receive any funding. I think we would have to find another way to improve the Nordic input to ASFA.

In a paper given by Anna-Liisa Toivonen at the Nordisk-IOD conference in Århus, Denmark last August, she estimated that the Nordic input to ASFA should be at least around 500 abstracts yearly. This estimate is probably too low, as the Baltic Sea Bibliography adds about 450 references each year. The *Baltic Sea Bibliography* is partly included in ASFA.

With regard to Icelandic input to ASFA, I have no idea who does it. I send the publications from my institute to the input centers in Germany, England and Norway apart from FAO and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts. A short search on CS=ICELAND? on the host DIALOG resulted in 265 postings. A similar search on the German host DIMDI revealed that some of the Icelandic postings are input from the German centre. Only three postings were published in 1988 and none in 1989, as can be seen on the following table.

**The Nordic Countries As Corporate Source (CS =) 1984-1989 (August)
ASFA on DIALOG**

Year	Iceland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	Finland	Total
1984	10	99	223	201	100	633
1985	13	109	238	197	116	673
1986	10	103	198	174	105	580
1987	12	90	188	183	79	552
1988	3	64	127	133	57	384
1989*	0	3	4	9	2	18
Total 1978-1989*	265	5251	4072	2906	1349	13841

*January-August

The table shows also that 12 postings dated 1987 showed up for Iceland. Only four articles out of these 12 came from my Institute. When I checked the list of publications from the MRI for 1987, I found about 12 references suitable for inclusion in ASFA; ICES papers not included. The other postings were from other marine related institutes, such as the university and its institutions. The conclusion is that we could do better. As I mentioned earlier, there seems to be no one who decides which journals or monographs are included, and therefore the input is dependent on what the input centres receive from time to time, and what they feel should be included.

The table shows also that the Nordic input is generally on the way down. This is probably because of a great backlog of abstracts, an estimated 57,386 for the years 1984-1988. The input from the Norwegian centre is 233 for the same years.

Finnish input to ASFA is fairly good. Part of the Finnish publications are input through the local *Baltic Sea Bibliography* and part again included in ASFA, as I mentioned earlier. The Danish librarians feel that the input of Danish material is very bad. Bent Gaardestrup has estimated that the annual Danish input to ASFA should be around 850, but the actual input figures show around 100 items in the database.

CONCLUSIONS

From what I have said it is obvious that cooperation and more cooperation is what we need in the Nordic countries to be able to find a way to promote the work done in our area. The second thing we need is money. A regional meeting of librarians and information specialists like the one we had in Hirtshals is necessary for starting things, and we would need to meet more often to get things going. We have not talked about another meeting, but I feel that we would have to meet at least every other year for starting a real project and keeping going. Therefore, I think that Reidar Leinebø did a good job when he applied for money from the Nordic Commission of Ministers, although he did not contact anyone beforehand. He saw the need and did something about it.

As most of us are rather lazy letter writers, the communications are a bit in the way at the moment. Most of the other librarians in the Nordic countries do not have electronic mail facilities, and therefore it is always more difficult to communicate fast. When we have solved that problem and, last but not least, when we have the money which makes it possible to make the Nordic input to ASFA better, you will be hearing more from us up there in the North.

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