

INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the Proceedings of the 29th Annual IAMSLIC Conference, held in Mystic, Connecticut, USA, October 5-9, 2003. This year's conference was ably hosted by the University of Connecticut, Avery Point Campus with the assistance of colleagues from neighboring New England states. I would like to express my gratitude to the Avery Point Campus for providing a tremendous range of support toward the conference planning, for hosting one day's meetings, and for the opportunity to hear engaging presentations from several of their research scientists.

The conference was entitled "Navigating the Shoals: Evolving User Services in Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries," a theme that drew upon the common mission and challenges faced by libraries of all types and sizes as they seek to provide the best mix of services and resources to their respective users. Theme sessions during the program offered the opportunity to delve more deeply into specific types of services and compared and contrasted the approaches being taken by different libraries in each area. As summarized in the Editor's Report below, conference participants heard about the use of technology to enhance user services, the challenges of serving geographically-dispersed users, and the practical advice from library practitioners across the globe. Thanks are due again this year to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and its ODINAFRICA project for providing the generous financial support that made it possible for five members from Africa to attend the conference.

Over the past 12 years, IAMSLIC has successfully pursued a strategy of moving its annual conference site to different regions of the world in order to stimulate new membership from within those regions and to make attendance more affordable at least once every few years for members in each region. This was the first IAMSLIC conference held in the United States in three years and it was extremely successful in attracting new members, especially from across the Eastern United States. Nearly one-third of the registered participants were attending their first-ever IAMSLIC conference and many of them presented papers or gave poster sessions that contributed significantly to the overall effectiveness of the meeting. It was refreshing and rewarding to hear new voices and new perspectives added to the mix, along with the infusion of energy and creativity that our new colleagues brought to the conference. A number of them volunteered to serve on various committees and task forces that carry out important functions for the Association between conferences as well. I look forward to the

continuing contributions of these colleagues over the years to come and hope that we are similarly successful in expanding regional involvement during the next Annual Conference to be held in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia in September 2004.

I hope that these Proceedings will provide some measure of the informative and motivating experience that was to be had at the conference itself.