NOAA FISHERIES LIBRARY CONSORTIUM (NFLC): PROJECT OVERVIEW, PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

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Project Overview:

The libraries of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS, also known as NOAA Fisheries) comprise nearly half of the libraries serving the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These libraries are distributed around the United States with 16 libraries in 11 states (Figure 1).

The NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium (NFLC) was formed in 2004 in order to fulfill a directive by the NOAA Fisheries Science Board to review existing library services and to make recommendations for improvement throughout the agency.

Figure 1 – Distribution of NOAA Fisheries Libraries

![Map of NOAA Fisheries Libraries]
The NOAA Fisheries libraries began discussing the project in mid-2004. E-mail and conference calls were used to communicate and prepare for the initial meeting in October 2004. Agency support for the project included Science Board mentorship, travel support, and funding a professional facilitator.

The first meeting of the NFLC took place October 2004 at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. A work plan was developed and committees were formed to complete a needs and capabilities assessment, develop recommendations, and plan for implementation. Committee reports were finalized and collected into the final project report which was presented to the Science Board in February 2006. The primary recommendations of the NFLC report were:

1. The NFLC be accepted as a standing advisory group on library issues for NOAA Fisheries.
2. Agency-wide electronic resources should be centrally funded.
3. A new full-time librarian be hired to negotiate and manage these resources.

These recommendations were accepted in principle by the NMFS Science Board. The NFLC continues to meet and work toward implementation of the report recommendations, while waiting for the funding necessary to fully put them into action. The timeline in Figure 2 illustrates the development of the NFLC and completion of various project elements.

**Figure 2 – NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2004</td>
<td>Approval from NMFS Science Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2004</td>
<td>Initial meeting and creation of NFLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>Data collection and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2005</td>
<td>Implementation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2006</td>
<td>Final report compilation and review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>???</td>
<td>Presentation to Science Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>???</td>
<td>Action by NMFS management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Process:**

Effective communication within the NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium was extremely important to the successful completion of the project. Working with a professional
facilitator in the initial phase focused the group’s efforts helped develop the work plan
and project timeline. E-mail and conference calls were convenient and cost-effective
ways for the group to communicate after the initial meeting, and they continue to be used
as the primary means of communication. NFLC progress was communicated to the
Science Board through our mentor, and to other NOAA Libraries at annual meetings.

The NFLC web page (http://swfsc.noaa.gov/nflc/) provides information on the project
and access to finalized NFLC documents. During the initial project, a separate document
depository was maintained for group access to draft documents under review.

NFLC libraries were surveyed on key elements of library services for the needs and
capabilities assessment. Data was collected on core print and electronic resources,
cataloging, facilities, budget, staffing, equipment, and collection value. Data was
compiled and analyzed in a Microsoft Access database. The results were reported in the
NFLC needs and capabilities assessment, which served as the basis for our
recommendations and implementation plan. Individual committee reports were reviewed
by the entire group, then compiled into a final report including an executive summary.

Outcomes:

The formation of the NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium has strengthened cooperation
and communication among NMFS Librarians. The needs assessment project highlighted
existing strengths and enabled the group to formulate a plan for improving agency-wide
library services. The final project report accepted by the NMFS Science Board in
February 2006 provides a roadmap for the NFLC to move forward with the
implementation of our recommendations.

Additional information on the NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium including the final
project report is available on the NFLC website at: http://swfsc.noaa.gov/nflc/