

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN ECONOMIC TRANSITION GROUP

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ABSTRACT: Information management in most ECET-countries has undergone substantial change and in many cases led to a decline in services and existing library networks. Support from international organizations was needed to reestablish information management sector to current international standards. The already existing ODIN-networks in other areas are good examples of the kind of support sought. A European ODIN will include ECET Union Catalogue of Serials project and the Black Sea Library Cooperation Project.

Cooperation between the aquatic libraries in Central and Eastern Europe is given strong support from IODE IOC, IAMSILIC and EURASLIC. To adapt a marine information management in the region to international standards and to support the networking of libraries, a series of initiatives should be put into practice, in particular, those related to continuous professional development of the personnel and up-to-date re-equipping of the libraries. Integration of the libraries of so vast the region into a unified network and involving them in joint projects is an essential though difficult task.

The survey initiated by the EURASLIC ECET (European Countries in Economical Transition) Group and conducted in 15 aquatic libraries of Russia and Ukraine in autumn 2005 has shown that:

1. most of the staff need receiving intense training in marine information management;
2. the libraries are usually technically under-equipped and therefore cannot satisfy today's needs to the full;
3. the fact that the personnel cannot use foreign languages obstructs the international cooperation.

Moreover, in Russia the national network of aquatic and marine libraries is more dead than alive. In the scientific world the stated factors inevitably reduce the status of library from the institution's division of top importance to a ballast.

In other regions librarians also face similar difficulties. A possible solution to the problem is creating a network of the aquatic libraries and information centers as a constituent of the Ocean Data and Information Network (ODIN) projects supported by IODE IOC. A good examples are the ODINAFRICA and ODINCARSA projects which are successfully implemented in 25 African and 18 South American countries.

In Europe the situation is of a special character. Unlike other regions where similar projects suggest both marine information and data management, in Europe the first stage of the ODIN project focuses on the marine information sector alone as the best prepared for successful implementation. A contributing factor is that the EURASLIC ECET group actively participates in the joint projects. Later, the marine data sector will also be developed as a component of the project. What is important is that we are not developing the regional aquatic library network from zero but rather reviving and adjusting the once efficient network to the modern reality.

In 2004, the 8th session of the IODE Group of Experts on Marine Information (GEMIM-VIII) of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) was held. The participants of the meeting have adopted the proposal made by Jan Haspeslagh, EURASLIC president about uniting the aquatic libraries of Central and Eastern Europe into an actively operating network that would be a project incorporated into the ODIN serial project. The 18th session of IODE (Oostende, 26-30 April 2005) has approved the report submitted from the GEMIM that set the essential preconditions for drawing up the pilot project.

In October 2005 the session of the Coordinating Group (IODE Project Office, Oostende, Belgium) took a decision to elaborate a concept document that would specify the goals and tasks of the project and the steps towards their realization. The project was named The Ocean Data and Information Network for the European Countries in Economic Transition (ODINECET). Its first stage concentrates on marine information management and all aquatic libraries of Central and Eastern Europe are welcome to participation.

The kick-off meeting of the coordinating group was held on 25th March 2006 in Oostende, Belgium; the document about launching the ODINECET project was adopted and the main objectives were formulated as follows:

1. **To support the networking of aquatic libraries in ECET countries.** Secondly, a coordinating center should be organized in Russia. The latter is of special significance because of the huge expanse of the country where the number of aquatic libraries and marine information centers is so large. An on-line survey will be undertaken to clarify the needs and the actual state of marine libraries in the region. The documents should be drawn up ready to be used for recruiting more participants in the project.
2. **To support the development of national aquatic information centers and the related national/regional projects.** The activities related to the project ECET UNION Catalogue of Serials, in particular, updating the catalogue with meta-data having been collected through the Black Sea Regional Cooperation project (BLICOP) will be continued. The ECET UNION Catalogue of Serials project suggests that in the nearest future the electronic repositories will be created in the participating institutes.

These repositories will comprise both published (proceedings, articles, dissertations) and unpublished (research reports, papers on methodology, etc.) works. Selecting materials for inclusion into the institute's e-repository is up to participants of the project. The ODINECET project implies that a training course on using the pertinent software be offered to the participants given the financial support of the IODE Project Office.

Technical needs are also taken into consideration. The nearest task is to specify what kind of equipment (computers, scanners, printers) the libraries would need to carry out the works on ODINECET projects and to identify possible sponsors in cooperation with the IODE Project Office.

- 3. Providing training opportunities in marine information management, applying standard formats and methodologies as defined by IODE.** The financial support from the IODE Project Office allowed to have organized the first two-week training course on marine information management (MIM, basic level) that 15 librarians from Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia and Croatia received before the ODINECET project has officially been launched. The participants have learnt about the possibilities offered by IOC, the activities of IOC Project Office for IODE and about OceanPortal, too. A special lecture told about benefits of international networking (IAMSLIC, EURASLIC and IOC). The lectures by Paul Nieuwenhuysen on Databases, computerized information retrieval + assignments and Online access information sources and retrieval stirred up considerable interest. The principal task that the course set to the participants was to specify Strategic Action Plan for their libraries. All the participants have learned much new through the training and gained a valuable experience.

The timetable for 2006-2008 suggests giving a series of basic and intermediate training courses in marine information management at the IODE Project Office: the regional basic training course in Ukraine timed for the 12th Conference of EURASLIC to be held in May 2007, the training and consultations to the trainers on adaptation the OceanTeacher programme to the regional background.

- 4. Assist with development and dissemination of aquatic information responding to the needs of the regional scientific community.** The partnership will concentrate on updating the directory of experts in aquatic sciences (Oceanexpert) with regional information and on involving more aquatic libraries of the region in the EURASLIC and IAMSLIC ILL-networks.

Urgent tasks set to the Intersessional Working Group are, firstly, to conduct the survey on the current state and needs of regional libraries and, secondly, to identify the subjects for the forthcoming training courses based on the questionnaire results. Two regional marine information projects are also carried out under supervision of the working group.

The ECET UNION Catalogue of Serials and BLICOP projects are worthy of special consideration. These projects were initiated several years ago and are partially supported through grants from IAMSLIC and EURASLIC. First results have been reported at the

conferences held by these associations (1, 2). Recently the activities planned by the scenario of ODINECET projects were revived.

The ECET UNION Catalogue of Serials.

By now the Catalogue holds data about 154 regional periodicals and serials, predominantly in Russian, which are found in nine libraries participating in the project. Six of the libraries are in Russia, two in Ukraine and one in Estonia. The centralized data input is performed in the library of the All-Russian Federal Research Institute of Fishery and Oceanography in Access format. The resulting file was sent to VLIZ to import the batch of data into the IMIS database. Since May 2006 the ECET UNION Catalogue is accessible without limitations through <http://www.euraslic.org>. Copies can be requested directly from the serial record without exiting the database.

Originally, the Catalogue was thought to comprise data about all periodicals and serials available in the participating libraries. However, during the meeting organized within the framework of the 11th EURASLIC Conference, the EURASLIC Workshop adopted a decision to confine the first stage of the project to regional periodicals only, putting particular emphasis on the quality and fullness of the information. This opens the access to rare publications of the past, information about which is nearly absent in Internet. Presumably, the next step will make e-repositories of the institutes accessible through the Catalogue.

BLICOP

Black Sea Regional Cooperation Project (BLICOP) started in 2002 as a preliminary stage. The project core group currently includes the scientific libraries of the Institute of Oceanology (Varna, Bulgaria), the Georgian Marine Ecology and Fisheries Institute (Batumi, Georgia), the Research Institute of the Azov Sea Fishery Problems (Rostov-on-Don, Russia) and the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas (Sevastopol, Ukraine). It is anticipated that aquatic research institutes in both Romania and Turkey will also be involved in the implementation of the Project.

Phase 1 in detail was: An assessment of the literature resources relating to the Black Sea held in all relevant institutions in the Region.

Questionnaire was compiled and emailed to each of the Institute libraries to assess the status of the collections and equipment in aquatic science institute libraries in the Region. Based on the answered Questionnaires The Directory of relevant institutes and their libraries was compiled and the availability of equipment, electronic catalogue and software was ascertained. The results of the survey indicate that almost all the libraries possess a computer or even few. However, some of the equipment is rather old. One of the items of the Questionnaire was about card and online catalogues on the Black Sea. The tentative survey indicates that the number of the cards held in the libraries totals **35528** and the inputs into e-catalogues - **7917**. Some of the libraries do not have e-catalogues.

Now it approximates the second stage and is believed to happily develop further. In Ukraine all the preliminary work was done in two aquatic libraries in Sevastopol – one at

the Marine Hydrophysical Institute and the other at the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas (IBSS).

Scientific library of the Marine Hydrophysical Institute has compiled the annotated English/Russian Electronic Index of the institute's scientific papers that have been published for 75 years. Most of these publications focus on diverse investigations conducted in the Black Sea. The Index is to be the basic tool in solving the tasks set by BLICOP. Scientific library of the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas has accomplished compiling the electronic catalogue based on the institute's card file of publications on the Black Sea, the first records of which are dated 1871 - the year when Sevastopol Biological Station, later the IBSS, and the library were founded.

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