BREAKING THE BARRIERS TO THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION: Proceedings of the 16th Annual Conference

Editors

Elizabeth Fuseler McDowell and Stephen Wilst

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Beth Fuseler McDowell
Steve Wiist

15 March 1991

PREFACE

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS TO THE FREE FLOW OF MARINE SCIENCE INFORMATION

The destruction of the Berlin Wall, the emergence of new found freedoms and the disintegration of political restrictions in Eastern Europe dominated the world news when I began Thinking about a theme for the 16th annual IAMSLIC conference. With all these barriers breaking down, I dared to hope that one result might be a freer flow of information.

The theme proved timely even before the Conference began. Financial barriers prevented most U.S. Federal government librarians from attending the meeting and some of the international delegates, who had originally planned to present papers, canceled their trips because of funding cuts. Iraq invaded Kuwait in August and political barriers caused the severance of communications with our IAMSLIC member at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research in Safat.

Papers presented at the Conference identified other problems with the free flow of marine science information. These barriers, as well as positive solutions, were discussed. Reports were given about local, regional, and international networks and which face, and often overcome, political differences, economics problems, geographical distances, linguistic obstacles, telecommunications and infra-structure inadequacies, and cultural obstacles to cooperation. The lack of bibliographic standards and access was explored, as were the problems involved with massive data compilations and their information transfer. Interlibrary loan and document delivery, CD-ROMs, on-line searching and library service were also discussed in this context. An informative workshop on problems of preservation of materials preceded the conference and a lively graphic presentation of barriers imposed by natural disasters completed the sessions.

IAMSLIC, as an organization, broke down some of its own traditional barriers. In the business meetings, the membership voted to include, formally, libraries and information centers dealing with freshwater/aquatic subjects. This will necessitate a change of name, though not of acronym. Also, it was recommended that independent regional groups with similar objectives, such as EURASLIC, be included within the IAMSLIC structure. These regional groups will have voting representation in IAMSLIC and their inclusion will contribute toward making IAMSLIC a truly international organization.

Changes in the terms of officers and in the Executive Board were also considered. Amendments to the bylaws and an all-membership vote on these amendments were planned for early 1991.

My thanks to everybody who helped make the Seattle Conference such a success: to Pam Mofjeld, Kathy Carr, Pat Cook, and Martha Thayer for smooth,

flawless local arrangements; to Tom Moritz for undertaking yet another pre-conference workshop; to IOC for funding the first-time attendance of Florent Diouf from Senegal; to all who gave papers, their own as well as for others who could not attend; to the session moderators; and to Elizabeth Fuseler McDowell and Stephen Wiist for editing these proceedings.

Kay Hale
Conference Convener, 1990
IAMSLIC President