Marine Science Library Networks:
National and International

Editors
Frances F. Swim and Judith Brownlow

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PREFACE

The 11th annual meeting of International Association of Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers had as its theme "Marine Science Library Networks: National and International." The theme session had six papers on library networks. Of these six, two described networks of marine science libraries within government departments: the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Library and Information Network (NLIN) and Canada's federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans library network. One paper described an international network: the fishery library network within the framework of the FAO.

Defining a network in the library field may be done as follows: Prior to the automation of cataloging functions, a network was usually a group of cooperating libraries which agreed to share resources and grant interlibrary loan privileges to libraries with similar collections and missions: thus many academic library consortia were formed and regional cooperatives of public libraries were common. The modern concept of library networks came into being within the past two decades with the application of computers to basic library functions and the automation of bibliographic records. In the United States, large bibliographic utilities were formed which held millions of bibliographic records for books and serials. However, in the modern usage, a network is a group of libraries which 1) formally cooperate to build a common bibliographic database which can be accessed by its members through a telecommunications link; 2) share resources; 3) share information through meetings; and 4) have a governance structure.

An overview of networking activity in special libraries is given in the first paper by Beth Paskoff. The possible contributions of a bibliographic utility (OCLC) in the formation of a marine science library network are given in the last paper by Bruce Preslan. The use of CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read Only Memory) technology are discussed in that paper. Three papers in the session are descriptions of actual marine science library networks which have been operational for a number of years. The FAO fisheries library network described is one of cooperation of widely distant field libraries in this case automated resource sharing is not a factor in the network.

In the 1985 IAMSLIC meeting in Virginia, a proposal was submitted for a "National Oceanographic Information Resources Network." At that time, the definition of such a network could not be agreed upon by the membership. However, the proposal brought much discussion in the meeting and in subsequent issues of the newsletter. The theme of marine science library networks was selected as a theme for this conference to establish issue papers based on this proposal.

IAMSLIC itself has many of the attributes of a network: a formal governance structure and cooperative resource sharing among members. Its Union List of Serials and Duplicate Exchange Program are services usually offered by networks. What is lacking is a bibliographic database of holdings which can be accessed by all members through a telecommunications link. Although groups of IAMSLIC members have formed networks within certain contexts, we are still a long way from forming a network which can encompass the whole of marine science libraries within our membership.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the participants in the 1986 IAMSLIC meeting for a successful and stimulating meeting. For those who could not attend, I hope that the Proceedings will be a secondary way to experience the intellectual content of the meeting. Of course, there is no substitute for the magnificent setting of the Oregon coast surrounding Newport which those present were able to enjoy.

A very special thanks to Ruth Grundy, who has carried this proceedings through to publication after both the editors left library science.
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