Welcome everyone to our panel session about Regional Groups in IAMSLIC.

First, I will introduce the Panel members and then give you a brief outline of the formation of Regional Groups. Then panel members will give you brief histories of the formation of their respective Regional Groups, and lastly we will open the floor to discussion and questions.

Our panel members today are Janet Webster (Cyamus), Pauline Simpson (EURASLIC) and Linda Pikula (Southeast Atlantic - SAIL).

From its inception IAMSLIC and its members have worked hard to expand the organization to ensure the inclusion of as broad a spectrum of personal and institutional members as possible. We have accepted to membership anyone who wanted to join and participate in a cooperative organization whose main focus is providing access to literature of all the marine and aquatic sciences whether physical or biological. Much effort has been expended in trying to make IAMSLIC the one truly international organization focusing on the marine sciences.

Over many conferences there has been discussion of how to expand our membership to make us the international organization we wanted to be. Contracts with the International Oceanographic Commission enabled IAMSLIC to support attendance at its conferences of persons from developing countries who otherwise would not have been able to attend. These contracts have continued and have enabled IAMSLIC to expand its membership and contacts in many areas of Africa, the Asian subcontinent and Eastern Europe.

At the same time marine science librarians and information specialists in Europe were discussing the possibility of forming a European association. IAMSLIC was fortunate that some of its own European members attended the meetings of the budding organization, now called EURASLIC, and they urged IAMSLIC to make every effort to have EURASLIC members join IAMSLIC. Many potential European members were concerned that IAMSLIC was too narrowly focused and did not take in the freshwater sciences and their associated literatures.

Many discussions both face-to-face and by e-mail explored how IAMSLIC
could retain the members in Europe who were joining EURASLIC because they would be able to attend its meetings, and obtain its benefits. This was particularly important to European librarians who felt they would never have an opportunity to attend an IAMSLIC meeting because of geographic considerations.

Two significant ideas arose - 1) having one IAMSLIC conference in three held outside the North American continent and 2) the concept of Regional Groups comprised of members who wanted more participation in professional development than they could get from IAMSLIC as it was structured.

We will be acting on idea first by having our first conference in a European venue next year (1992) in Bremerhaven. Bermuda, the site of 1989 conference, is considered by many to be part of North America.

The concept of Regional Groups brought much discussion among the Executive and the membership at large. Close contact with Euralisc was maintained to discover what its members felt was needed to make IAMSLIC more responsive. The 1990 Seattle Conference had a lot of discussion and debate about how to draw Euralisc members into IAMSLIC to prevent the splintering of an already small marine science library community and to make the non-North American librarians feel truly welcome in IAMSLIC.

The membership voted in Seattle to provide for Regional Groups in IAMSLIC. The Executive was instructed to proceed with a complete re-write of the by-laws to reflect the wishes of the membership. Article IV (Commencing on page 8 of the 1990-91 Membership directory) is the result. A most difficult issue was the selection of a regional representative to the IAMSLIC board. It was necessary to be as flexible as possible and at the same time ensure that a regional group which had no IAMSLIC members would not have a vote on the Executive Board. Section 3 of Article IV was the best solution conceived at the time of writing the by-laws.

In addition, the membership agreed that a change of name to International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers would demonstrate our real commitment to having the freshwater information specialists join IAMSLIC.

The proposed by-laws, including one for a change of name, and ballots were mailed early in the New Year and those ballots returned were overwhelmingly in favor of Regional Groups and the way they were to relate to IAMSLIC as a whole.

The new by-laws were accepted in March 1991 and shortly thereafter the first Regional Group (Cyamus) was formed. It was followed closely by the U.S. Southern Regional Group and late this summer EURASLIC voted strongly in favor of forming a regional group. Other Regional Groups are in various stages of formation. We welcome them all.