

IAMSLIC AND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS: AN APPROACH TO TRANS-PACIFIC INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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International organizations like IAMSLIC serve an important service in forging collaborations across borders, but their effectiveness can be limited by the breadth of membership. Opportunities to develop collaborations with other organizations, in this case international scientific organizations, hold the promise of synergistically addressing the missions of both organizations.

In the 1980s, an effort was made to establish a “Center for Marine Science Information Exchange” by the Scientific Committee on Marine Science of the Pacific Science Association (PSA – www.pacificscience.org). Academician Viktor Ilyichev, director of the Pacific Oceanological Institute (PIO) in Vladivostok, USSR, and chair of the committee, worked to establish the Center at his institution, with scientific materials being submitted by committee members from countries around the Pacific Basin. The nominal purpose of the center was for collation, dissemination, and exchange of scholarly output in marine science. The proposed benefits were to i) increase awareness of research across the Pacific and ii) to create linkages, partnerships, and collaborations among member nations and institutions. There may have also been some unstated benefits, including improving the availability of scientific literature to Soviet scientists and, in the era of *glasnost*, to promote publications by Soviet scientists in the international refereed literature.

Despite many members submitting materials to the Center, it failed to fulfill its goal, and was deemed a failed effort. The reasons are likely quite diverse, but some of them include the following:

- No strong proponents providing continuous support;
- A lack of commitment from the parent organization;
- A lack of timeliness in receipt or response (the materials that were distributed were copied in mimeograph);
- A lack of awareness of the Center by potential users; and
- A lack of commitment from the partners.

While the degree to which the PIO library staff was involved is unknown, I would contend that the lack of involvement by professional library staff in the member nations at the outset contributed to this failure. This is often a common fate in international organizations – there is no lack of good ideas, but often a lack of commitment and follow-through.

The objectives of the Center were good ones, but the effort may have been premature. Times have changed since the mid-80s; new publication, information, and communication technologies, as well as new organizational structures, present new opportunities. IAMS LIC already provides many of the linkages, but in some countries of the North Pacific, broader membership by marine science librarians would strengthen the function. An opportunity to collaborate with an international organization is presented by PICES, the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (*www.pices.int*). PICES is an intergovernmental scientific organization established in 1992. Its current member countries are Canada, Japan, Peoples' Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the US. As elaborated in its strategic plan, selected objectives pertinent to potential collaboration include:

- Promote and coordinate marine research in the North Pacific and adjacent seas;
- Advance scientific knowledge about the ocean environment, global weather and climate change, living resources and their ecosystems, and the impacts of human activities; and
- Promote the collection and rapid exchange of scientific information on these issues.

PICES publishes extensively, both with in-house documents and in refereed journals (often from workshops and scientific sessions at the annual meeting). A recent annual meeting in Honolulu included 11 scientific sessions, 6 workshops, 403 registered participants from 12 countries, 227 oral presentations, 122 posters and 7 electronic posters. PICES is dedicated to capacity building in its member nations, and information exchange can play a role; there is no formal participation, however, of the marine science librarians in the member nations in PICES activities.

A challenge is presented to IAMS LIC as an organization; engage PICES as an example of how marine science libraries can work with international organizations to achieve objectives in marine science information exchange. Strong potential exists to activate linkages with Russian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese marine science libraries, and PICES can assist in this communication; the net result will be to strengthen both PICES and IAMS LIC as organizations. IAMS LIC should discuss and identify a cooperative role consistent with its own aspirations as well as with PICES strategic plan elements. It could lay the groundwork with colleagues in PICES member nations. To move forward with this activity, IAMS LIC should attend the 2007 PICES annual meeting in Victoria as a "cooperating organization," learn more about the organization, and propose mechanisms to move forward with collaborative efforts.