WHY READ THE NEWSLETTER?
A SURVEY OF THE *IAMSLIC NEWSLETTER* READERS

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INTRODUCTION

The *IAMSLIC Newsletter* was conceived as a vehicle for sharing information about the organization and new products and services. The *Newsletter* is a quarterly publication. It has remained basically the same in content since its inception . Information about the organization is provided through committee reports, minutes of annual and Executive Board meetings, and notices of conferences. The new products and services have evolved from mainly books, articles and CD-ROM products to electronically available information, books and articles. As the *Newsletter* evolved, news items about individuals were added. Two years ago the current editors added short articles about members and member libraries.

The sections currently appearing in the *Newsletter* are:
1) The president's letter, which usually contains basic information about events in the organization, post- and pre- reports of conferences, calls for volunteers and general thoughts and observations from the current president.
2) Minutes of the annual business meetings and the executive board meetings.
3) Annual reports of all of the committees.
4) The Electronic Library, which gives URLs and brief descriptions of Web sites of interest to aquatic and marine sciences and libraries and information centers. Earlier issues included a separate *CD-ROM* section.
5) Publications, which gives citations and brief abstracts of books and articles of interest to the IAMSLIC audience.
6) Conference and Meeting Notices

7) News section. This for the past three years section has been expanded to include two sections:

    a) *People* about IAMSLIC people written by members to explain how they came into the profession and the benefits of IAMSLIC membership and;

    b) *Places* a description of libraries and information centers with a description of their collections, with an emphasis on unique collections, and the services provided.

8) Pre-conference program.

9) Post-conference program report and abstracts of papers.

SURVEY METHODS AND RESULTS

As the current editors, we discussed the format and content of the Newsletter and thought there might be a need for more information or that it might be a time for a change in format. So, in the summer of 1999 we conducted a survey to see if the Newsletter was continuing to meet the needs of the readers. The survey was distributed on the IAMSLIC List (iamslic@ucsd.edu). The list contained 297 members, including the two editors. We received forty-two responses or a response rate of 14.2%. The questions and responses were as follows:

1. How would you rank the overall quality of information in the *IAMSLIC Newsletter*?

    Excellent = 15 (36%)
    Good = 23 (55%)
    Fair = 3 (7%)
    Poor = 1 (2%)
    No opinion = 0 (0%)

2. The layout of the *Newsletter* is:
    (rated on a five-point scale from 5 = agree to 1= disagree)

    Easy to read
        5 = 19 (46%)
        4 = 15 (37%)
        3 = 7 (17%)
        2 = 0 (0%)
        1 = 0 (0%)

Pages look crowded.
   5 = 4 (10 %)
   4 = 12 (29%)
   3 = 7 (17%)
   2 = 9 (22%)
   1 = 9 (22%)

Eye catching.
   5 = 4 (10%)
   4 = 8 (21%)

Typeface too small.
   5 = 0 (0%)
   4 = 8 (20%)
   3 = 4 (10%)
   2 = 13 (32%)
   1 = 16 (38%)

Articles too long.
   5 = 0 (0%)
   4 = 4 (10%)
   3 = 11 (28%)
   2 = 12 (30%)
   1 = 13 (32%)

   3 = 18 (45%)
   2 = 8 (21%)
   1 = 1(3%)
Right amount of words.
   5 = 12 (28%)
   4 = 17 (39%)
   3 = 11 (26%)
   2 = 0 (0%)
   1 = 3 (7%)

Articles too short.
   5 = 0 (0%)
   4 = 3 (8%)
   3 = 10 (25%)
   2 = 9 (23%)
   1 = 18 (44%)

3. What do you do with the *Newsletter* when you are through reading it?
   Display in my library = 9 (19%)
   Save the entire issue = 37 (77%)
   Kept parts = 1 (2%)
   Discard it = 0 (0%)
   Recycle it = 1(2%)

4. What would you consider your top three reasons for reading the current issue?

President's column = 9 (7%)
Information about people = 13 (10%)
Descriptions of other libraries = 21 (15%)
Electronic Library column = 34 (24%)
Publications column = 27 (20%)
Information about IAMSLIC = 28 (21%)
Other = 4 (3%)

please specify: 1) Combine the people and libraries section; 2) Products and Services; 3) Job openings; 4) Interesting web sites.

5. Which method of delivery would you prefer?

Mailed printed newsletter = 30 (60%)
Receive message when latest issue is available on web site in PDF format = 10 (20%)
Sent to you in PDF format via the IAMSLIC List = 6 (12%)
Other = 4 (8%)

Please specify: 1) e-mail version with hyperlinks; 2) e-mail attachment; 3) News of events; 4) prefer as a mailed newsletter, but .pdf file would give added value of having hyperlinks.

6. Is the Newsletter meeting your information needs?

Yes = 40 (95%),
No = 2 (5%)

If no, what could be done to improve it? 1) Need more on freshwater. 2) Question isn=t whether it is useful, but how useful is it. It is good.

7. General Comments: 1) We do not need a glossy publication, 2) Want more conference information, 3) There is not enough information on the (IAMSLIC?) conferences.

CONCLUSIONS

The physical format of the *Newsletter* is acceptable to the majority of the readers. Surprisingly, 60% prefer to continue to receive it in paper copy. This is perhaps because over 95% either save the entire issue and/or display it in their library. Only 4% recycle it or save only part of it. Because over 45% replied that the pages look crowded, there could be some improvement in the layout . This may result in a longer newsletter. The majority of the readers found the *Newsletter* easy to read and articles are the correct length, neither too short or too long.

The information presented also seems to be meeting the needs of the readers with 95% saying the Newsletter meets their information needs. The top three reasons for reading the *Newsletter* were The Electronic Library column , The Publications Column, and information about IAMSLIC. In the recent issues the editors have been trying to include more information on aquatic/freshwater topics. We will continue this and try to expand this area. Because the abstracts of the papers presented at the Annual Meeting are now available on the conference Web site, we will no longer be publishing the abstracts in the November issue.

A mailed paper copy is still the preferred way to receive the Newsletter (60%), although over 30% would prefer to have it a in PDF format. We discussed continuing to mail out paper issues, as a benefit of membership, and placing back issues on the Web site. Recent discussions of the Executive Board have included this option for a section on the IAMSLIC web site.

Overall, it appears the IAMSLIC Newsletter is meeting the needs of the members in the format they prefer and no major changes are necessary.

THE EASTERN AFRICAN COASTAL MANAGEMENT DATABASE

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SEACAM is developing the Eastern African Coastal Management Database to meet the need for enhanced, high quality, and timely information sharing on ICZM activities in the region. It will be an easily accessible tool for the region, and an up-to-date source of information on the African Coastal Zone.

The Eastern African Coastal Management Database is a unique source of information on coastal management activities in Eastern Africa. It complements other databases on scientific data or regional scientists.

It will be disseminated on the World Wide Web and in print. It will be text based and geo-referenced with a simple overlay.

Available Information

The Eastern African Coastal Management Database can be searched for:

Critical information on projects, programs, research activities, institutions, practitioners (decision makers, scientists, planners, NGOs etc.), ICZM documents and www-sites within the region.

Access to the database

The database will be accessed through the SEACAM website (www.seacam.com).

Searching for information

After accessing the database, the user can search the information by selecting keywords in the interface or by clicking on maps of the Eastern African countries. The information displayed from the database is about
specific projects, programs, research activities, institutions, practitioners, ICZM documents and www-sites within the region.

The key words are categorised as projects, research activities, practitioners, WWW-sites, programs, institutions and bibliography. In addition to countries of the region, sector, type, ecosystem and external
support.

The maps of the Eastern African counties facilitate the search for information related to a specific area. A click on the area will display related information.

Users

The Database has been developed to assist policy makers, managers, and everyone who is interested in the activities on the coast of Eastern Africa. The major users include national governments, national and international NGOs, donors, scientific institutions and the private sector.

Updating the database

Accurate, reliable and up-to-date information is the main factor for the success of the database. Users will assist SEACAM in collecting, validating and updating the information in it. They can add information, update or correct existing information directly through the website or by sending to SEACAM a fax, email or letter. The