



*Participants to the IAMSLIC Conference, Rome 2005*

## **FAO FISHERIES LIBRARY: PART OF A WORLDWIDE NETWORK**

Jean Collins<sup>1</sup>

**A**s anyone who ever used a Library knows, what you see is actually much less than what you can get. Most libraries have their own core collection and also provide a window on the world of information outside of their walls. With the advent of the digital age, this is more than ever the case as libraries move towards providing access rather than physical ownership of parts of the collection. Whether providing access to digital resources or obtaining copies of print and multi-media information from external sources, one thing which has not changed is the inter-library collaboration and networking that allows libraries to serve users more quickly and less expensively than otherwise possible.

### **LOOKING BACK**

I was reminded of the development of fisheries library networks last year when I wrote a small obituary expressing appreciation for the work of my predecessor in FAO Fisheries Library, Clare Cuerden. Clare passed away in July 2005 after enjoying fifteen years of retirement from FAO. Because she was known to so many fisheries people, the message was widely distributed and

the responses have acknowledged her work of building and managing the FAO Fisheries Library collection for over 20 years. In particular, the collection of fisheries publications from developing countries has made this unique information available to the staff and many visiting experts at FAO, to the Aquatic Science and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA) database and in some cases has probably saved it from extinction.

Clare's priorities were clearly expressed in the paper she presented to the 12th Annual Conference of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSLIC) Conference in 1986. The paper "*Including fisheries: the development of a fishery library network within the framework of FAO*" gives a brief history of the FAO Fisheries Library and the work of reaching out to smaller libraries in developing countries (Cuerden, 1988).

FAO Fisheries Library was established in 1967 and is one of the Branches of FAO's David Lubin Memorial Library, one of the world's large agricultural libraries. A good insight into

its history and of David Lubin himself was given at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual IAMSLIC Conference by the Chief Librarian of FAO (Wu, 2006). The collections of FAO Library have grown to 1 million volumes and one of the strengths of the Fisheries Library is having access to this large multidisciplinary collection, which is essential to fisheries and aquaculture.

### WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The need to provide access to global information resources has not diminished despite the growth of our own collection. Indeed, making decisions and policy in response to a more rapidly changing world makes our dependence on reliable and timely information even more critical. The importance for FAO and its Members of a world-class library was identified as a priority area by the FAO Committee on Fisheries at its 25<sup>th</sup> session (FAO, 2003).

Modern information and telecommunication infrastructures have revolutionized the speed and efficiency with which we can provide access and they enable improved sharing of information resources between libraries in all parts of the world. Library networks aim to strengthen the capacity of individual libraries to satisfy their own user community. In recent years we have worked with a small group of fisheries libraries in Africa to assess information needs and to test mechanisms for library networking. A Workshop organized by FAO in collaboration with the South African Institute for Biological Diversity (SAIAB) in 2003 provided the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the resources available and the information needs of fisheries institutions in several African countries (FAO, 2004). It also highlighted the need for improved dissemination and preservation of African fisheries and aquaculture publications, better coverage in international databases and their integration in both print and full text repositories being developed at regional and international level.

### AN INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY NETWORK

In the aquatic and marine sciences, including fisheries and aquaculture, the IAMSLIC international network provides an excellent forum for the exchange of information and expertise as well as an increasing number of technical services to facilitate these. IAMSLIC (<http://www.iamslic.org>) has a worldwide membership of almost 400 libraries which communicate and share resources via an electronic bulletin board, a web site, newsletter

and annual and regional conferences. The IAMSLIC Z39.50 Distributed Library is a web based system that facilitates international resource sharing. More than 50 libraries have entered their serials into the IAMSLIC Union List of Marine and Aquatic Serials, which provides access to several thousand titles. The FAO Fisheries Library collection of over 600 fisheries and aquaculture serials from developing countries is included, making this unique collection more readily available to aquatic science libraries worldwide. The most recent project being undertaken by IAMSLIC is to investigate the feasibility of an aquatic commons digital repository, metadata harvester, search engine and Z39.50 server. This would be of particular benefit to those smaller institutions which do not have the resources to establish an institutional repository and it would provide easier access to full text documents for all.

A priority area for the FAO Fisheries Department is the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. In biennial surveys of FAO Members it is regularly stated that the lack of information continues to constrain the full and effective implementation of the Code. An FAO study was carried out during 2004 to assess what information is needed and what resources are available, in particular in developing countries (Webster and Collins, 2004). The theme of *Information for Responsible Fisheries: Libraries as Mediators* was chosen for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of IAMSLIC, which was hosted by FAO in 2005. This provided a forum in which to further discuss the issues and to propose activities where FAO and IAMSLIC can work together to address them. A summary from a session of the Conference is provided by Janet Webster below.

### 31ST ANNUAL IAMSLIC CONFERENCE REPORT: FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE DAY, 13 OCTOBER 2005. JANET WEBSTER (HATFIELD MARINE SCIENCE CENTER, PORTLAND, OREGON)

The following is a brief overview of the IAMSLIC Conference session devoted to fisheries and aquaculture information. Sidney Holt started the conversation with a brilliant address on the role of information in his life as a scientist. He noted that "science is rooted in conversation" and went on to identify three important connections for successful fisheries science: connections with people, connections through time, and connections through disciplines. John Kurien followed with thoughtful comments on the economics of fisheries, focusing on the three



*José Garnica (left) and Armand Gribling (right) at the FAO's Fisheries Library*

A's of food security: accessibility, affordability and absorbability. These same concepts apply to fisheries information and its successful use. Rachele Oriente and Anton Immink both discussed the challenges of information outreach and education from very different perspectives. Joan Parker reviewed the efficacy of ASFA as the finding tool of choice. David Doulman and Eric Reynolds, both of the FAO Fisheries Department, reviewed the importance of the Code of Conduct to worldwide fisheries management and the role of information in its successful implementation. Many in the audience were challenged to think differently about the role of the librarian to advocate for changing policies and to assume a more active role in outreach to new audiences.

The afternoon session focused on specific case studies of libraries and fisheries information. Simon Wilkinson presented an innovative strategy for sharing aquaculture information across 16 countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific using low-tech digital publishing. Moses Ibeun succinctly described fisheries information issues in Nigeria while Geoffrey Salanje did the same for Malawi. These provided background for Margaret Shaw's presentation on resource sharing strategies for fisheries libraries in Africa. Concepts articulated by Holt and Kurien were repeated throughout the day providing a

framework for the final discussion on how to develop the joint activities of FAO Fisheries Department and IAMSLIC. The Conference Proceedings will be published in 2006 and ordering details can be found at <http://www.iamslic.org/index.php?section=36>

#### **FAO PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS ON INLAND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

FAO Fisheries Department is gradually digitizing its older publications in order to make them available to a wider audience, in particular the titles that are no longer available in print and are still frequently requested. New publications are automatically made available in full-text in the FAO Document Repository <<http://www.fao.org/documents>>. In addition to access via the Internet, the publications are also disseminated selectively on CD ROM.

We hope to finalize in 2006 a CD ROM that includes the publications of the following FAO inland fishery bodies:

Committee for Inland Fisheries of Africa (CIFA)

Commission for Inland Fisheries of Latin America (COPESCAL)

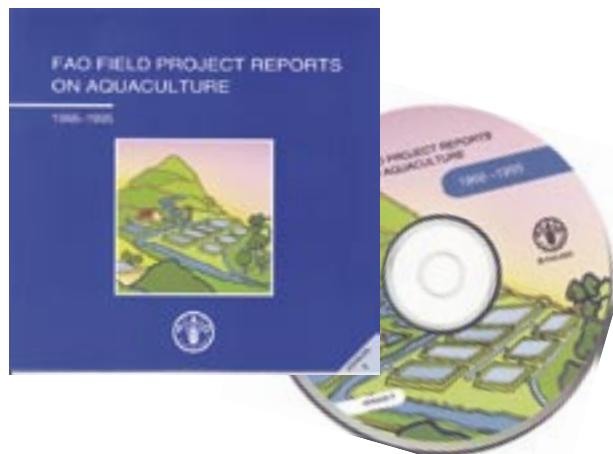
European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC)

It will also include selected FAO Fisheries Reports on aquaculture and inland fisheries.

We are also hoping to finalize an updated version of the FAO Field Project Reports on Aquaculture CD ROM during 2006.

Further information on FAO Fisheries publications may be requested from: [fi-library@fao.org](mailto:fi-library@fao.org)

<sup>1</sup>Jean Collins  
FAO Fisheries Library  
Fisheries Department, Rome  
e-mail: [jean.collins@fao.org](mailto:jean.collins@fao.org)



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