

## **EURASLIC: the first ten years. The origins and history of the European Association of Aquatic Sciences Libraries and Information Centres, 1988-1997**

by

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### **ABSTRACT**

*EURASLIC is a pan-European association and network linking individuals and institutions working in the field of marine and freshwater information provision. The origins and development of the Association are reviewed, and its activities and products are described.*

Cooperation, interdependence and interaction are recognised by librarians as vital for the efficient operation and provision of library and information services, and by long tradition librarians have formed themselves into working groups, associations and networks

The idea for the formation of an association of European aquatic libraries was first discussed and developed in the UK by the United Kingdom Marine and Freshwater Librarians' Group, and as a result, when preparing for their annual meeting in 1988, invitations were extended to a wide range of aquatic librarians and organisations throughout Europe to send representatives to the meeting. The UK group were very pleased by the encouraging response and the participation at that meeting of librarians from Belgium, Denmark, Eire, Finland, France, Monaco, Portugal and the United Kingdom, with an observer from the United States representing the International Association of Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSILIC).

Much of the discussion at this meeting centred around means and methods of cooperation in the fields of libraries and aquatic sciences on a pan-European basis. The main outcome of the meeting was unanimous agreement that efforts should continue in building this network of cooperation, and this meeting has generally come to be regarded as the inaugural meeting of EURASLIC.

Many of the participants attending the meeting were already cooperating in networks within their own countries; national groups in France and the Scandinavian countries, as well as the UK had cooperated for many years, and other participants were involved in the international Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Information System (ASFIS) and the international Agricultural Information System (AGRIS) programmes. At this time there was encouragement for cross-border cooperation by the European Commission, and many existing regional groups in other parts of the world were receiving support and encouragement from international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of Unesco, as part of the ASFIS programme.

Participants felt that the aims of a European association could be realised by building on existing national networks, by encouraging countries without networks to establish them, and to integrate these groups into a European network. The main functions of this pan-European association would be to develop and strengthen links between individuals and institutions, to exchange ideas, to provide mutual support and to collaborate in joint projects. The first task was to identify networks, institutions and individuals throughout Europe who might participate, and members present agreed to compile lists, which could be merged together by staff in the Plymouth laboratory to create the basis of a European directory and mailing list. It was agreed that during the next year, members would act as "missionaries" in order to identify and contact relevant organisations, institutions and individuals, and to generate and maintain interest in the idea of a European aquatic library and information network. Several participants offered to arrange and host the next "European meeting".

A report of the proceedings of this inaugural meeting (Varley and Moulder 1988) was produced and distributed to over 150 organisations with a letter asking recipients to register their interest in the work of the group, and the concept of a European aquatic information network was publicised and promoted to institutions, funding agencies, and regional and international bodies.

During the next two years details of over 200 European marine and freshwater sciences libraries were collected, and plans went ahead for the second meeting which was to be hosted by the Institut Océanographique in Paris in April 1990.

The first issue of the *EURASLIC Newsletter* appeared in September 1989. It was edited by David Moulder and produced and distributed by the PML/MBA library in Plymouth. The main objective of the first issue was to announce the date and place of the second meeting. At this stage the name "EURASLIC" was unofficial, and the *Newsletter* asked for suggestions for a suitable name and acronym.

The meeting in Paris, organised by Institut staff and Parisian aquatic sciences librarians, was attended by 75 participants from 15 European countries. The significant aspects of this highly successful meeting were the endorsement of the name of the association as the European Association of Aquatic Sciences Libraries and Information Centres, with the acronym "EURASLIC", and the resolution that the association should have a formal structure (Moulder 1990).

The possibilities of EURASLIC operating as a regional group within the framework of IAMSLIC (Simpson 1990), whilst retaining European autonomy, were debated at length at this meeting, and a working group was established to examine the feasibility and, if appropriate and agreed by members, to open up negotiations with IAMSLIC. The other main outcome of this meeting was the agreement that Nicole Momzikoff and David Moulder would develop the list of addresses and related material into a directory which would be published and distributed under the auspices of EURASLIC. Other topics discussed included inter-library loans, the costs of periodicals, and ASFA/ASFIS developments.

The proceedings of the meeting (Momzikoff and Varley 1990) were published as a special issue of *Océanis*, with papers translated into French and English. This was as a result of a grant from the French Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique.

This was another major developmental meeting for EURASLIC, and David Moulder's paper tabled many issues that had been raised during the preceding two years, issues which would continue to be debated in the twelve months leading up to the third meeting of EURASLIC, which was to be held in Lelystad, The Netherlands.

The Working Group examined IAMSLIC's constitution and prepared proposals for IAMSLIC to extend its scope to cover freshwater aspects, and to amend its procedures to allow a regional structure. These were agreed and submitted to IAMSLIC's conference in Seattle, Washington, in October 1990. Pauline Simpson and Allen Varley were among the participants and, acting as EURASLIC emissaries succeeded, after detailed discussion and argument, in persuading IAMSLIC

firstly to consider formally extending the scope to include freshwater aspects and changing the name of the association to include the word "Aquatic", i.e. the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (although it would retain the acronym "IAMSILIC"), and secondly to recognise that regional groups, networks and associations such as EURASILIC could operate and be recognised as regional sections of IAMSILIC. A ballot of IAMSILIC members in early 1991 accepted these changes.

A EURASILIC Bulletin Board was established on Omnet's SCIENCEnet electronic mail system in September 1990. At this time Omnet was used for communication between marine scientists, ASFIS members, IAMSILIC, and international agencies; however with the increasing availability of the Internet the Bulletin Board was closed in November 1992.

The third EURASILIC meeting was held at the Rijksinstituut voor Integraal Zoetwaterbeheer en Afvalwaterbehandeling (RIZA), Lelystad, The Netherlands, 25-26 April 1991. Forty-three participants from 14 countries attended the meeting.

At the meeting the Working Group on IAMSILIC/EURASILIC relations reported their findings and the results of negotiations with IAMSILIC. Members voted for EURASILIC to become a regional group of IAMSILIC, and a EURASILIC Interim Committee was appointed to formulate options and proposals for the formal structure of EURASILIC. Much of the discussion over the two days of this meeting was concerned with enhancing national and international cooperation. Two workshops were held, one on improving the inter-library loan network, and RIZA subsequently developed a EURASILIC interlibrary request form. Details of institutes willing to participate in the EURASILIC inter-library loan network were to be included in the *EURASILIC Directory*, a draft of which (containing over 300 entries) was presented at this meeting. In a parallel session a second workshop was held to discuss how EURASILIC could help to improve the coverage of *Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts* (ASFA). The purpose was to encourage EURASILIC member institutes to consider the benefits of contributing to the ASFIS/ASFA system by becoming National Input Centres or additional collaborating centres within their own countries, and to enlist their assistance in identifying gaps in ASFA's coverage.

These early years in the development of EURASILIC coincided with largely unexpected changes in Europe. These included the removal of political and social barriers between East and West Europe, German reunification in 1990, and the advent of "Perestroika" and "Glasnost" in the USSR. During the same period the Commission of the European Communities was actively promoting cross-border cooperation within Europe in many areas of scientific research, information technology, and library development, providing both the infrastructure and financial opportunities for collaboration.

We have been fortunate since the second meeting in Paris to have been joined by an ever-increasing number of colleagues from eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union, some assisted with travel costs by sponsors enlisted by EURASILIC. From the very first meeting, participants have been encouraged to present institutional and country reports and these reports, subsequently published in proceedings of meetings, serve as a unique ongoing record of developments in the provision of aquatic science information in Europe; this rich picture has expanded and continues to grow.

In November 1991 the first edition of the *Directory of European aquatic sciences libraries and information centres*, edited by David Moulder and Nicole Momzikoff, was distributed free of charge to all of the 335 organisations and institutions listed in the *Directory*, as well as to a range of additional recipients. Produced from the database maintained in Plymouth, and published by the Institut Océanographique, who funded the production, the *Directory* was a tangible and useful product, demonstrating the value of cooperation within Europe.

Since these inaugural meetings a further three meetings and conferences have been held, and a pattern has been established of organising conferences at two-yearly intervals, hosted at marine or

freshwater research institutes in various European countries. There has been no shortage of members volunteering to organise and host meetings. Subsequent meetings have been held in Bremerhaven, Germany (October 1992); Gdynia, Poland (April 1994); and Malta (April 1996).

The Bremerhaven meeting (Fuseler and Wiist 1993) was in conjunction with IAMSLIC, on the occasion of IAMSLIC's first venture outside North America. The meeting in Gdynia, hosted by Henryk Ganowiak, a loyal and supportive member who was to become a Vice President, was EURASLIC's first meeting in the former Eastern Europe (Moulder and Varley 1995), whilst the Malta meeting (Moulder, Djørup, and Heath 1996) was the first to be held in the Mediterranean.

From its inauguration, EURASLIC has received support and funding for its activities from a range of organisations, including national, regional and international bodies. This funding has taken the form of providing venues for meetings, sponsorship for participants, support for the preparation, publication and distribution of the *EURASLIC Directory* and *Newsletter*, and the commissioning of reports and papers. The most important support however has come from individual members in many countries who have devoted substantial amounts of time, effort and resources to ensure the continued progress of the association and network. The thanks of the Association are due to those who have served as officers, committee members and Board members, and particular mention should be made of David Moulder who from the inaugural meeting in Plymouth nurtured EURASLIC through its formative years, and served as President until 1996.

EURASLIC is officially registered in France as a Europe-wide association, with its own bank account and various categories of membership. Members are involved in a number of cooperative projects, including:

- The *EURASLIC Newsletter*, now in its tenth year, has been the result of a collaboration between many members, and edited by David Moulder (1989-1994); Barbara Schmidt (1994- ), with Joan Baron and Sarah Heath (1997- ).
- The second edition of the *EURASLIC Directory of European Aquatic Sciences Libraries and Information Centres*, edited by David Moulder, and produced from the Plymouth database was published by the Instituto Español de Oceanografía in 1994. Listing 515 organisations, this directory serves not only as a valuable information source, but also to enhance the profile of EURASLIC, its aims and its members.
- The EURASLIC Bulletin Board, on Omnet's SCIENCEnet was in operation from September 1990 to November 1992. EURASLIC's World Wide Web Page on the Internet was set up in Plymouth by David Moulder in 1996.
- The proposed compilation and production of a *European Directory of Marine and Freshwater Institutions, Scientists and Research Engineers* in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of Unesco, with EU Marine Science and Technology Programme (MAST) support.
- EURASLIC libraries in a number of countries are cooperating in the UNiverse Project. Funded by the EU, this project is based on the development of a virtual union catalogue, linking catalogues of major holdings of environmental sciences literature in over 50 libraries across Europe.
- Surplus and duplicate books and journals are distributed through listing in *EURASLIC Newsletter*, or by direct contacts.

The purpose of this paper has been to record EURASLIC's origins and development. Over the past thirty years information services, information systems and libraries have achieved long-deserved recognition as vital elements in the scientific research process. EURASLIC is the only pan-European association representing the interests and views of individuals and organisations involved

in the field of aquatic information provision. This has been a reflective look at the early and formative years of what is still a relatively young association. We hope that it will have served to refresh the memories of members who have been involved since the beginning and before, and to inform those who are relatively new members, or those who have perhaps yet to join, of the origins and development of EURASLIC.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We are grateful to our friend and colleague Marie-Thérèse Panouse, former EURASLIC Treasurer, for helpful comments and advice.

## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX 1

### List of participants at the first Meeting, Plymouth, April 1988

Sheila Adair, Scotland, UK.  
Derek Bate, England, UK  
Andrew Beavis, Belgium.  
Geoffrey Bothamley, England, UK.  
Susan Boxall, England, UK.  
John Burne, Scotland, UK.  
Jacqueline Carpine-Lancré, Monaco.  
Alison Charles, Wales, UK.  
Jean Collins, Denmark.  
Mary Delahaye, France  
Norma Ellis, England, UK.  
William Goff, USA.  
Harianne Harvey, England, UK.  
Marjatta Heinanen, Finland.  
Denise-Hélène Hugol, France.  
Helen Johnson, England, UK.  
Katherine Jones, England, UK.  
Anne McConville, Scotland, UK.  
Nicole Momzikoff, France.  
Mary Moore, Ireland.  
David Moulder, England, UK.  
Linda Noble, England, UK.  
Lidia de Paiva Nunes, Portugal.  
Ian Pettman, England, UK.  
Sandra Robinson, England, UK.  
Michael Rolfe, England, UK.  
Paul Rolfe, Wales, UK.  
Sylvia Russell, England, UK.  
Roy Selwyn, England, UK.  
Pauline Simpson, England, UK.  
Maria Helena Tavares, Portugal.  
Cecile Thiery, Monaco.  
Claude Uguen, France.  
Allen Varley, England, UK. (Chairman)  
Susan Wharton, England, UK.  
Doreen Willis, England, UK.

## APPENDIX 2

### List of EURASLIC Officers, Committee and Board members

#### EURASLIC Interim Committee, 1991:

David Moulder (Plymouth Marine Laboratory, UK) (Coordinator)  
Marie-Thérèse Panouse (Observatoire océanologique, Banyuls, France)  
Sandra Rientjes (Rijksinstituut voor Integraal Zoetwaterbeheer en  
Afvalwaterbehandeling (RIZA), Lelystad, The Netherlands)  
Pauline Simpson (Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, UK)  
Barbara Schmidt, (GEOMAR, Forschungszentrum für Marine Geowissenschaften,  
Kiel, Germany FR)

#### EURASLIC Officers and Board members:

President:	David Moulder	1992-1996
	Bent Gaardestrup	1996-1997
	Ian Pettman	1997-
Vice President	Henryk Ganowiak	1993-1996
	Ian Pettman	1996-1997
Treasurer	Marie-Thérèse Panouse	1992-1996
	Monique Margout	1996-
Secretary	Brit Skotheim	1992-1996
	Kirsten Djørup	1996-
Representatives	Nicole Momzikoff	1992-1996
	Ian Pettman	1992-1996
	Joan Baron	1996-
	Barbara Schmidt	1996-
<i>Newsletter</i> Editors	David Moulder	1989-1994
	Barbara Schmidt	1994-
	Joan Baron and Sarah Heath	1997-