

Foreword

This is the first volume in a new series called '**MIM Publication Series**'. The production of this series was agreed upon by the IODE Group of Experts in Marine Information Management (GE-MIM) during its Fourth Session (Washington DC, USA, 6-9 October 1993). There, it was observed that documents currently published as part of the IOC publications series do not reach all members of the target groups of MIM. It was also noted that documents prepared as working documents for the Group's sessions were not fully put to use as they were never distributed beyond the Group members. It was agreed that some working papers merit general distribution. The MIM Publication Series will provide MIM related papers with their proper identity within the IOC publications as separate volumes of IOC Manuals and Guides No. 30. The series may include manuals, selected working papers, strategy papers, working group reports, standards, directories, etc.

Report on Diagnostic Procedures and a Definition of Minimum Requirements for Providing Information Services on a National and/or Regional Level

by

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Summary

It is suggested that the diagnostic procedures should include: an assessment of the needs of the state/region; the completion of a survey by the potential centre(s); and a site visit to the potential centre(s). Minimum requirements are set out for the required infrastructure, organizational needs, accommodation, mail and telecommunications, equipment, expertise and library and information collection.

INTRODUCTION

At the third session of the IODE Group of Experts on Marine Information Management, Wormley, UK, 27-30 April 1992 there was an extensive discussion of policy development in meeting the needs of developing countries in Marine Information Management. It was agreed that, while existing regional networks and centres had much to offer as models for the establishment of new networks and centres, the models could not be applicable in all regions. Flexibility would be necessary, adapting policies in the light of the needs of particular areas or regions, and taking particular note of the requirements of small libraries and information units.

The meeting recommended that standard diagnostic criteria for the identification of minimum requirements for successful development of Marine Information Management operational services be developed.

DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES

It was felt that a series of diagnostic procedures should be defined, so that potential national and/or regional centres could be assessed, and on the basis of the minimum requirements, an objective judgement could be made as to whether the potential centres should be supported.

There was a feeling in some quarters that those outside a region or country should not impose their own views and values, and that only those in the region or country could take a view on which information services should be supported and developed. It was also suggested that all information services were worthy of support.

The following diagnostic procedures have been proposed:

1. Assessment of the Needs of the State/Region

At some point, and it is argued that this step should come first, an assessment will need to be made of the needs of the state/region. This will involve looking at the national and regional marine science networks already in existence, the state of marine science in the area, and the potential sites/candidates for a Marine Information Management centre. If this step is taken first, it might be felt desirable to send out surveys to a number of potential centres. The following questions will need to be asked about the present situation in the state/region:

- Has a national/regional information policy been developed, and does it already provide information products to the state/region?
- Does this policy adequately support the development of indigenous marine information? Does it support management of this information?
- Are there already existing networks of collaborating centres?
- Are there regional UN bodies, for example under the auspices of IOC, FAO, or UNEP?
- Are there elements of an international system, e.g. ASFIS centres?
- Is there access to international sources of marine information?
- Is reliable telecommunications support available?
- Are computers reliably available?
- Is a reliable, uninterruptible power supply available?
- Is a common software being used, e.g. CDS/ISIS?
- What outside funding is already going into the area?

2. The Completion of a Survey by the Potential Centre(s).

This would enable those making the assessment to make a preliminary judgement on whether minimum requirements would be likely to be met, and if not, what additional steps would need to be taken to assist the potential centre(s) to meet the minimum requirements. Failure to meet the minimum requirements would not necessarily be a permanent obstacle to acceptance of a potential centre(s), provided funds and resources could be found to improve standards to the levels required.

3. Site Visit to the Potential Centre(s)

If the completed questionnaire shows that the potential centre(s) has reached, or can be assisted to reach, the minimum requirements, then the next step is for a trained evaluator (see "**General comments**" below) to visit the centre(s), to assess the situation further, and to meet with both the administration of the organization(s), and the staff of the potential centre(s). It is most important that the administration are in full support, and that they are willing both to make the necessary resources available to the centre, and to accept that the centre will be providing services to the national and/or regional organizations interested in and having a requirement for information services related to Marine Information Management. It is important that a site visit is made, to corroborate the information in the questionnaire, to ask supplementary questions, and to meet with those who will be involved in the establishment and running of the centre.

4. Final Assessment

Once the above steps have been carried out, a final decision can be taken as to which centre should be supported, taking into account the needs of the area, the resources available in the area, and the resources which can be provided from outside the area. This final process should be undertaken by a panel of appropriately qualified people.

GENERAL COMMENTS

It is assumed that there will only be funds for one person to make site visits. It is essential that this person is fully familiar with library/information procedures. It will not be adequate to send someone without this background knowledge, and it is therefore essential that the person should have appropriate library/information qualifications, together with many years of practical library/information experience. Appropriate language (speaking and reading) skills are also highly desirable.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The minimum requirements can be divided into two parts, the infrastructure requirements, and the centre requirements.

1. Infrastructure

It is clear from past experience in a number of different parts of the world that one of the key components in any potential new centre is the infrastructure that is available. Even if suitable staff and other resources are present, without the necessary infrastructure the project is likely to be unsuccessful.

1.1 ORGANIZATION

The centre needs to be sited within an organization active in marine science research, so that it can call on the scientists of that organization to assist in dealing with information requests, so that there is a critical mass of scientific expertise, and so that the centre has some standing in the region. It is important that the organization has a stable funding mechanism, so that there can be a guarantee of continuity. In addition, the organization and its management should have some stability in the wider national framework.

1.2 ACCOMMODATION

Suitable accommodation needs to be available, with the necessary furniture, utilities etc. A consistently reliable [steady] supply of electricity, or means to be self-sufficient, will be essential to make use of computers and other electrical equipment.

1.3 MAIL/TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Good postal services (for document acquisition, for receipt of enquiries by mail, and for document delivery) and reliable telecommunications (for telephone, fax and E-mail) are most important.

2. Centre Requirements

The Centre will need to meet the following requirements:

2.1 EQUIPMENT (AND SUSTAINED MAINTENANCE)

Equipment which will be required includes:

- photocopier
- fax machine
- telephone(s)
- computer(s)
- compact disc reader
- modem for E-mail

2.2 EXPERTISE

The staff of the centre will need to have the following expertise:

- computing knowledge, and in particular of library/information software
- library/information knowledge (professional qualifications)
- knowledge of training techniques
- ability to provide (or at least to gain access to) technical support for computers and other technology
- appropriate language capabilities where more than one language is spoken in an area or region

2.3 LIBRARY/INFORMATION COLLECTION

The centre will need to have:

- a core collection of key periodicals, books and reports
- a national and/or regional collection of books, reports and grey literature
- relevant secondary sources, such as abstract journals, bibliographic databases, bibliographies, current awareness publications and services
- document delivery mechanisms
- directories/registers of national and/or regional institutions, their facilities, scientific staff, research interests, libraries etc.

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