

MEETING THE INFORMATION SEEKERS IN TRADE FAIR AND EXHIBITIONS: AN EXPERI- ENCE OF NICMAS*

GAJANAN H. SAINEKAR

Library Officer, NICMAS, National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula, Goa 403 004
E-mail: saine@csnio.ren.nic.in, saine@darya.nio.org

Abstract

Public Relations in any information centre are of vital importance. Information professionals require establishing good rapport with the public. Such a rapport with the inhouse clientele as well as other potential information-seeker community is equally important. It is not necessary that the Information professionals can while establishing public relations with the user visiting the library is one way, the other way is to reach the users at their doorstep. Emergence of electronic tools has reduced the time and space barriers between information centre and its users. These have acted as catalysts in public relations and enabled the information centres in their mission, fulfilling Late Dr. S.R. Ranganathan's Laws 'Every Reader his/her information' and 'Save the time of the Reader'. In an effort in this direction NICMAS at the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa joined hands with other commercial exhibitors and placed their products and services during the National Aquaculture Week - 1997. This unique experience of NICMAS Library in their effort of public relations opened a new dimension of reaching the potential users by participating in trade fairs, workshops, open houses and exhibitions organised by Aquaculture Foundation of India (AFI) from 24 January to 08 February 1997 along the east coast of India, is shared in this paper.

1. Introduction

National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) was established on 1st January 1966 as one of the National Laboratories of CSIR. The headquarters is at Dona Paula, Goa with three regional centres stationed at Mumbai, Cochin and Waltair. The institute is recognized for the multidisciplinary studies in ocean sciences.

In 1995 the library of the institute was recognized as one of the Sectoral Information Centres of NISSAT (National Information System for Science and Technology) in the field of marine sciences. as NICMAS (National In-

formation Centre for Marine Sciences). Apart from the responsibility of compiling bibliographic database on Indian Ocean and monitoring of Indian literature on marine and brackish water studies for an international database - Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA), the centre provides required information to the marine science users in India and abroad.

The main user of the centre is of course the S&T staff of the institute itself. Most of the services offered to the institute staff are of self-help nature. However, for specific requirements, the users are encouraged to contact the dealing staff and providing the required help satisfies them. In order to promote the activity, the centre, on a continual basis, contacts users outside the institution by sending information brochures and handouts. It also looks for opportunities to meet users at various meetings, symposia, seminars etc. In an effort in this direction NICMAS at the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa, joined hands with other commercial exhibitors and placed their products and services during the National Aquaculture Week - 1997, organised by Aquaculture Foundation of India (AFI) from 24 January to 08 February 1997 along the east coast of India at Vijayawada, Chennai, Mandapam Camp and Tuticorin. This unique experience of NICMAS Library in their effort of public relations opened a new dimension of reaching the potential users by participating in trade fairs, workshops, open houses and exhibitions is shared in this paper.

2. The NICMAS

2.1 Objectives of NICMAS

- To promote and provide oceanographic information to the S&T community, students, teachers in India.
- To build-up network of marine science libraries in India
- NICMAS is primarily involved in the building-up of Indian Ocean bibliographic database for the use of potential users.
- To act as the document delivery centre for Indian Ocean literature.

2.2 Resources

Resources include rich collection of literature on marine sciences in Print and Electronic media. The Print: media include:

- Books on oceanographic and other related disciplines including subject and general encyclopedias, handbooks, conference proceedings, atlases and bound volumes of back issues of journals. Core serials in marine sciences are procured against subscriptions and gift/exchange.
- Various patents on mineral exploration and polymetallic nodules.

- Standards in various subjects.
- Topographic sheets, hydrographic charts and aerial photographs.
- Technical Reports and Annual Reports of various national and international institutions form the basis of our resources.
- Collected Reprints of various oceanographic institutions of the world.

The Electronic media include: in-house and international databases.

(i) Inhouse databases

- OCEANLINE: The database consists of about 21,000 records of the documents available in the NIO Library, including special issues of the serials.
- NIOPUB: The database holds approx. 3627 bibliographic records of the scientific contributions of NIO staff.
- INDOCEAN: The development of this database is in progress. So far 24,000 bibliographic records have been added. The significance of this database is, (i) the record is added only on the receipt of the hard copy of the document, this precaution is taken to ensure document delivery, and (ii) there is no chronological barrier as compared to some other databases.
- CPGOA: Catalogue of scientific serials holdings in twenty libraries in Goa is compiled at the request of NISSAT. This catalogue has been a useful tool for the resource sharing

(ii) International databases

- ASFA: Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts is a unique database in aquatic sciences. It is available on CD from 1978 onwards. The database is sponsored by UN agencies like FAO, IOC, UNEP in collaboration with National and International partners. The network of ASFA in addition to UN agencies is composed of co-ordinating and collaborating centres from various Nations. The database monitors 7500 sources including 5000 serials in 58 subject categories. On an average 40,000 records are annually added to this database.
NICMAS library is one of the designated co-ordinating centre for ASFA and has the responsibility of monitoring Indian aquatic sciences literature since 1990.
- JASA: Journal of Acoustical Society of America on CD, from vol. 1-27.
- National Geographic: The popular magazine is available on CD from 1888 to 1996.

2.3 Services

Services include traditional library services like lending-borrowing, inter-library lending and reference. The services like retrospective literature search,

document delivery are also provided on specific queries, to the users on onetime basis as well as the members of the centre. NICMAS also compiles bibliographies and state-of-the art reports on specific occasions on demand.

The databases are made available to institute staff on Local Area Network (LAN).

The services to users outside the institution are at cost.

3. Trade fair participation

3.1 Opportunity

In order to meet the first objective, NICMAS took an opportunity to contact their users at the trade fairs and workshops organised by the Aquaculture Foundation of India (AFI). The event was organised as National Aquaculture Week during 24 Jan - 08 February at different places on the east coast of India like Vijaywada, Chennai, Mandapam Camp and Tuticorin, where farmers in aquaculture gathered in large numbers. This was a unique opportunity to meet and render services to the aquaculture community.

3.2 Participation

- To create awareness among the potential users of the information services offered by NICMAS.
- To understand information needs of industry in aquaculture sector.
- To market information services
- To gain experience in information marketing

NICMAS availed of this opportunity to meet users at their place and market the services and products by way of participation in National Aquaculture Week. Programmes included participation in fair. These were the places where large aquaculture units are in operation. Participation included series of demonstrations, lectures to participants at various places. A micro-computer along with all databases was taken at the site. Literature search on databases was of great interest to the participants. Over 1000 potential users visited the stall at different places.

3.3 Preparation

A microcomputer (with UPS) with inhouse and international databases was kept ready with insurance cover. A number of information brochures for free distribution and posters highlighting the various resources and services were prepared for display. Number of letters were addressed to various institutions informing about our participation.

A stall was hired at all the places of the workshops. Posters were displayed to attract the visitors. Live demonstrations of all databases one after another were in progress at the stall. Presentations at the workshops and open houses continued at all places of fair. Every opportunity was utilised at optimum. Discussions with the user community at the stall were a continued process till we left. All the services were at nominal cost. Four persons of the institute were involved in this mission in various activities.

Information brochures were kept at the stall for distributed in the workshops and open houses. 10,000 information brochures were distributed. Besides all the publications of the library were displayed to catch the attention of the visitors and user community. This idea reflected and there was a good response from the audience, during the rest of the seminar.

The stall of information resources of NICMAS library not only caught the attention of the visitors, but also the media like newspapers and TV. Newspapers were ahead of all giving wide coverage of our participation news in Aquaculture fair in a very lucid and effective style with photographs. This made a high impact on the aquaculturists, fisheries scientists and technicians and the aquaculture industry.

The scientific and technical community in the nearby area witnessed the live demonstrations at NIO Regional Centre, Waltair (Andhra Pradesh, India), followed by the invitation from the different faculties from Andhra University. Students, faculty members appreciated our information products and availed of the services.

3.4 Services to the users

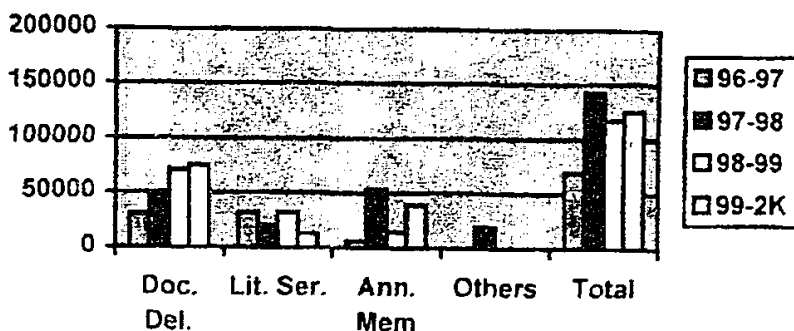
Many users from aquaculture enterprises approached for live demonstrations of our information products and users had satisfaction with the information. Most of them also expressed with us, that they were not aware of such type of services. Then the person-to-person publicity started from the visitors. This helped in automatic creation of the environment. Users were given the required information on a floppy against nominal charges. Some of them also expressed that the information is of high value and importance compared to its price. Every user was given the list of NICMAS serials holdings on floppy as gratis. As a result, there was a demand for the photocopies of the articles, and we could not say 'no' to them. They paid for the document delivery services in advance and threw the ball in our court. This was really a test for us and efforts were made to send the list with two of our colleagues who were to return to Goa. Before we could get the feedback from our staff, we were surprised to hear from the users at next workshop that, they have already received the photocopies of the requested articles. What else is needed? This was really a feather in our cap.

3.5 External Cash flow

Prior to 1997, annual earnings of the library from the document delivery, retrospective literature search and other services were to the tune of about Rs. 50,000 to 60,000. Following table is self-explanatory depicting pre-fair earnings and post-fair earnings in rupees as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Table showing the External Cash Flow of the NICMAS

Year	Document delivery	Literature Search	Annual Membership	Others	Total
1996-97	31148	32210	6000	—	69,358
1997-98	49549	20500	53353	19456	1,42,858
1998-99	71029	32100	14250	—	1,17,379
1999-00	74812	12900	39000	—	1,25,692



4. Observations

- User community is very much interested in computerized information. 900 Individual users, institutions, scientists and corporate sector personnel visited the NICMAS Stall. Potential beneficiaries were Academic institutions, Research Institutions, Private and Public Sector, Government Departments, Non-Government Organizations
- 6 corporate sectors availed of the facility.
- Aquaculture industry needs value-added products on a specific topic like white-spot diseases in shrimp.

5. Results

- The activities of the NICMAS have increased due the increase in Memberships. Created awareness among the information contributors, that NICMAS library is very much interested in their contributions to monitor for ASFA and Indian Ocean database.
- External cash flow table clearly shows that, after the participation in the Aquaculture fair, the earnings of the NICMAS library increased. Memberships have been renewed regularly. This shows that users need our services.
- Gained experience in information marketing.
- Contacts with the information seeker community in aquaculture sector increased.

6. Conclusion

Participation in aquaculture fair has brought the NICMAS Library on the horizon of information providers in India. Large number of marine Information seekers is now aware about the potentialities and capabilities of NICMAS. Public relations over the counter at the trade fair and stalls helped to demonstrate the services and products of NICMAS, thereby enhancing the usage of the available resources.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dr. M.P. Tapaswi for suggesting the topic, grateful to Dr. M. Dileep Kumar for his comments on the manuscript. Thanks are also due to the Director, National Institute of Oceanography for providing facilities.

8. References

1. National Aquaculture Week- 1997. Souvenir

* NIO Contributon Number: 3572