

# INFORMATION SHARING VIA THE AQUATIC COMMONS

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Networks of libraries and information centres have for centuries shared the information and expertise of the individual units in order to provide better information services to their users. Developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) are providing many new opportunities to share information online and to make it available globally to end users. One such new development is the **Aquatic Commons**, an **Open Access** digital repository for the aquatic sciences, including fisheries and aquaculture.

One of the characteristics of the literature of fisheries and aquaculture – in particular the practical and management rather than the scientific aspects – is that it does not easily find its way into commercial journals. The results of research and the development lessons learned are often lost because of inadequate opportunities to publish, especially but not only in developing countries. It is precisely this unique, locally produced and difficult to locate 'grey literature' which the **Aquatic Commons** intends to capture.

The lack of access to timely and accurate information has been identified by many countries as one of the constraints to the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The **Aquatic Commons** is seen as an opportunity to achieve the improved capture, dissemination and preservation of fisheries and aquaculture information, based on the principles of equal ownership and resource sharing. Its specific aims include:

To:

- ↘ improve sharing of information on fisheries and aquaculture management;
- ↘ facilitate the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned;
- ↘ ensure equal participation and coverage of the literature from developing and developed countries;
- ↘ empower managers and resource users to publish their findings;
- ↘ provide free and **Open Access** to information for all;
- ↘ enable the use and validation of research results and avoid costly and wasteful duplication of effort; and
- ↘ ensure the preservation of information and its availability for future generations.



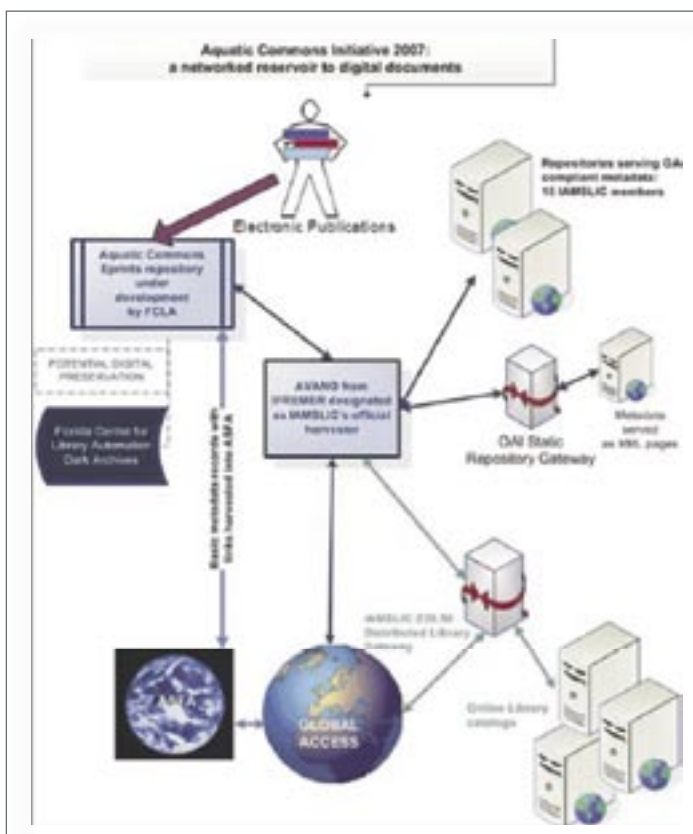
<http://aquacomm.fcla.edu/>

## THE BASICS

The **Aquatic Commons** repository of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSLIC) is in the final stage of tailoring before release. It is intended to facilitate the exchange of scientific research related to the marine/aquatic environments by providing a searchable, internet-accessible repository for digital documents. Initially, it will seek to build content based on born digital and legacy documents in PDF format. It is specifically mandated to offer repository services where local, stable ICT support is lacking. Future development will explore the serving of additional formats and alphabets. The **Aquatic Commons** is intended to complement institutional repositories and to collaborate with related subject repositories particularly in developing countries, such as the OceanDocs program of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

A long-term goal will be to assist in providing access to legacy collections that have never been easily accessible to researchers and to provide access to the grey literature produced as the technical series of smaller research units in universities, governmental, and non-governmental agencies. The repository runs on the EPrints open access software created at the University of Southampton (UK) and is managed by contract with the Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA) (USA). The repository is managed for IAMSLIC by an Aquatic Commons Board, which includes two FAO representatives.

The **Aquatic Commons** repository is part of a larger initiative intended to serve as an IAMSLIC infrastructure for resource sharing.



More information may be obtained by writing to Ms Jean Collins.

The Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) and FAO Fisheries Library have collaborated on development of the **Aquatic Commons** and to produce guidelines specifically to assist institutions with limited ICT resources and expertise.

Copies may be requested from [fi-library@fao.org](mailto:fi-library@fao.org)



### The 12th Biennial Conference of the European Regional Group of IASLIC

Fifty participants from fourteen countries, attended this Conference in Crimea (Ukraine) from May 2 to 4, 2007, to discuss areas as diverse as digital repositories, consortia for access to e-journals and rare, historical library collections on the aquatic sciences. Armand Gribling from FAO Fisheries Library presented a poster to show how FAO is promoting the **Aquatic Commons** via FAO related bodies and networks. Of particular interest to this meeting were the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC) and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Central and Eastern Europe (NACEE). National, regional and international partnerships are needed to facilitate the sharing of information and other FAO bodies such as the Committee for Inland Fisheries of Africa (CIFA) and the Commission for Inland Fisheries of Latin America (COPESCAL) will also provide useful fora in which to promote the **Aquatic Commons**.

#### Related web sites:

Aquatic Commons: <http://aquacomm.fcla.edu/>  
 EIFAC: <http://www.fao.org/fi/body/eifac/eifac.asp>  
 EURASLIC: <http://www.euraslic.org/>  
 IASLIC: <http://www.iaslic.org/>  
 NACEE: <http://www.agrowebcee.net/subnetwork/nacee/>

Copies of the CD ROM "FAO publications and reports on inland fisheries and aquaculture, version 1 (English/French/Spanish)" now available from [fi-library@fao.org](mailto:fi-library@fao.org)



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