

# .....Finding Fisheries Facts in Southeast Asia.....

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Tracking down references and retrieving them are often no simple matter in Southeast Asia. Here we present some of the pitfalls and solutions. The story is fictional, of course, but the events have all been experienced more than once.

I am asked for some information on fisheries in the Southeast Asian country of Saturnia during the early 1960s. Fortunately, we have our own **special library**, where my enquiries begin. However, it is not yet four years old. **Earlier issues of many journal titles are difficult or expensive to obtain.** We have nothing relevant that far back.

My next step is to **consult colleagues.** This approach is sometimes surprisingly fruitful and many treasures have been unearthed from our scientists' bottom drawers. These are captured for the library.

On this occasion, the **personal approach** is not quite so rewarding. There is rumor to the effect that in the national Saturnian fisheries office are raw data sheets a meter deep, hidden by a few additional centimeters of dust. With assistance from other colleagues, the data are unearthed. They turn out to be the un-analyzed results of a nationwide trawl and pelagic survey in the 1960s.

However, I need descriptions of the location and seasonality of the fisheries and some measure of effort to use in conjunction with the survey data. Back to the library.

Our astute librarian has already begun a search. She has located a **bibliography** which includes a relevant article on one of the major fisheries species. Please get me a copy of that one. We have it already and in the **reference list** I find a promising paper dated 1966. Let's get that one, I point enthusiastically.

From the **union catalog**, the librarian locates several libraries holding the volume we need. My office is next to the library so I hear the follow-up.

Source A was a local phone call away. The librarians have formed an **association** and one of their earliest projects was to compare and **exchange acquisition lists**

and **serial holdings.** But the volume we need has **not been returned** and declared a **lost copy.** Try Source B.

Source B is full of telephoned apologies, because their library is not air-conditioned and the older volumes have been irreparably **damaged by mildew.** Lack of funds, B adds unnecessarily.

Source C is a long-distance call. A triumphant squeal tells me we have **jack-potted.** It could be sent by surface mail, since **airmails** have become **exorbitant.** Faced, therefore, with a wait of several months, our librarian widens the search.

Source D is in the capital of nearby Tylasia. They have the volume, but they have a **no-lending policy** as well as **no copying facilities.** I ponder the dilemma between Sources A and D. At least A is **user-oriented.**



Source E has given away its holdings of the wanted serial, not just because of **political differences** with Saturnia, but because it has **no translation facility;** the language of the serial is unfamiliar to the majority of Source E researchers.

Finally, Source F's **collection was incomplete.** All incoming documents pass their Director's desk, and it seems that the title I want never reached F's institutional library but instead had become part of the previous **Director's private library.**

Having exhausted all regional sources, the librarian (not able to keep records of serial holdings for the whole world) makes enquiries at an American university



with which she has an exchange agreement. The university's library has **computerized holdings** and is **computer-linked** to most other **similar American libraries.**

Meanwhile, I am looking for other possible articles in view of the possible extinct status of our reference. We have a **teletype link** to the major **computer databases**, which include ASFA (Aquatic Science and Fisheries Abstracts). Before I can "log in," I recall that computerized ASFA citations only go back to 1978. Even the hard-copy journal goes back only to 1971.

Many student days of **manual searching** through copies of **Biological Abstracts** spring to mind. Their **physical size** would have filled our modest library space, had we been subscribing since pre-ASFA days. Unfortunately, the computerized version, BIOSIS, which we access via our teletype terminal, begins only with the year 1969.

Finally, exultation. The wanted article arrives from our American connection within a week. Alas! After all the trouble, the **title belies its contents.** It is of little use. **Availability of the abstract** could have saved all that effort.

I am airing this viewpoint to a Saturnian fisheries official visiting us. "Why didn't you ask me?" (translation) he replies. "We have a large, **unpublished report** on that. It was prepared for publication but we **ran out of money** due to budget cutbacks. I think I have the only undamaged copy, but I'll mail it when I get back."

Remembering a recent Asiaweek article on Asian mails, I caution him about the **long delays in surface mail.** And I add the observation by a nearby international agricultural research center that **30% of its surface mail is disappearing.**

He promises to send the precious document by airmail. Moving on to other work, I forget about this conversation, until I receive a telex demanding the document's return, and acknowledgement of his similar demand by letter several months earlier. Of course, we have received neither.

I send our usual form letter expressing regrets about the incident. In any case, the consultant who requested the information left long ago.