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IUFRO's "SYLVA"-Project

Helmut Feichter

IUFRO Secretariat, Seckendorff-Gudent-Weg 8, A-1131 Wien, Austria
E-mail: feichter@forvie.ac.at

1 New Information Technologies Change the Structure of Organisations

The new information technologies will change the ways of communicating and exchanging information decisively.

It will be due to the new technologies that the structure of IUFRO, of its network of organisations and scientists will most likely have changed fundamentally by the time the International Council assembles next.

2 IUFRO Working Units as Focal Points of Interdisciplinary Research

Today several IUFRO Working Units are already carrying out most of their activities via Internet. We may expect that next year a considerable number of Working Units will follow their example. They will have their own homepages on the Internet, and use the Internet for contacts, discussion groups, meetings and publication of results from meetings. Thus, scientists from outside IUFRO are also invited to join the activities. In the course of this development new people with different backgrounds will contribute with their experience, and, consequently, IUFRO will grow as an organisation and be strengthened in its competence. IUFRO could become a focal point for those scientists who do not have any special forestry qualification, but who also deal with forests.

3 New Ways of Cooperation among IUFRO Members

Some IUFRO member organisations already offer their most important public data and their chief information on the Internet. It is to be expected that this practice will soon become very common. If some of our members do not have the technical or financial means to follow this example, there will be a possibility to save data on the computers of other organisations.

4 The IUFRO Secretariat's Role

In an initial phase, the IUFRO Secretariat could support both the IUFRO Working Units and the Member Organisations: The Secretariat could offer the Working Units with no full Internet connection to place their data on the IUFRO server under a particular homepage. Thus, a scientist could use search tools and, with only one command, search worldwide for IUFRO colleagues who work in the corresponding subject area.

The IUFRO Secretariat also offers an electronic archive. Each IUFRO Working Unit can file an electronic copy of their proceedings in this archive. A full text search and a structured search of all or only a defined number of proceedings could then be carried out.

Those Member Organisations that are not connected to the Internet can store their data on the IUFRO server on a temporary basis. Thus, scientists could search research projects of member organisations worldwide, for example, if they are involved in a particular research project themselves or plan to start a project. Duplication could thus be avoided, and valuable experience gained in existing projects could be taken into account when planning a project.

5 Advantages for Members without Internet Connection

Those member organisations that do not have an Internet connection so far would not only be able to offer information about their work and projects, but also apply or call for cooperation. This would allow cooperation between organisations in both disadvantaged and industrialized countries that have not heard from each other before.

6 Application for Support

New tasks have always brought about new technical developments. The modern electronic technologies will modify our lives and our work. We must learn to master them so that they will not master us.

The IUFRO Secretariat is prepared for this. If IUFRO is to act in support of its members and Working Units in this sense, then I would like to ask you for your support.

This text refers to the poster No. 330 "Support of peer-to-peer communication of forest scientists through the IUFRO Secretariat", documented in the Abstracts volume of the IUFRO XX World Congress in Tampere. It takes into account developments occurred in August 1995.

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