

Nordic Nautical Publication WG report

Introduction

On December 13-14, 2011, the NHCPWG arranged a workshop for members of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission, the Baltic Sea Hydrographic Commission and the Nordic Hydrographic Commission. Hosted by the German Hydrographic Office BSH, the purpose of the workshop was to investigate the current state of nautical publication management, updating and distribution among the three regional commissions' member states. As the distance grows between, on the one hand, fully spatially referenced information in ECDIS and, on the other hand, analogue information in nautical publications, navigators are meeting growing challenges in ensuring they include all relevant information in their route planning.

This workshop report reviews the group's findings and the planned next steps in the three commissions' cooperation on the future of nautical publications.

Questionnaire results

As a precursor to the joint workshop, all invitees were requested to complete a questionnaire regarding their national practice and procedures in maintaining, updating and distributing nautical publications.

The collated results of the questionnaire revealed a wide spread in current practice among the members states, from fully digital publishing with weekly online publications to fully analogue publications that are strictly updated through Notices to Mariners. The majority of participants expressed interest in closer collaboration in the future, as hydrographic offices move towards meeting the requirements of the NP1, NP2 and NP3 standards.

The questionnaire results contributed to a better shared understanding of the variedness of current practice – a topic that arose several times over the course of the workshop itself.

Workshop proceedings

During the workshop, the participants reviewed a series of interviews with professional navigators regarding their use of nautical publications. With few exceptions, the interviews revealed that the use of printed nautical publications is declining among younger navigators, who view digital information sources as the most "reliable" and "accessible".

The progress made by the IHO's Standardisation of Nautical Publications Working Group (SNPWG) was presented, specifically regarding recent trials of implementing the working group's data model in conjunction with the EU project BLAST. Both successes and challenges related to the georeferencing of prose from nautical publications were addressed.

Conclusions

Through additional presentations and group work, the workshop participants agreed to focus on three specific areas of development in the future.

1. Better, more modern maintenance of the information in nautical publications requires that it is structured in a platform or database system. It also requires adequate staff for maintaining, updating and producing high quality publications.

In the short term, the workshop participants agreed to consider:

- examining crowd-sourcing and other resource-savings approaches,
- sharing best practice surrounding updating techniques,
- revising existing publications – “new” editions with “old” data and removed conflicts
- sharing knowledge and experience with open source approaches – as a possible pilot project; and
- following SNPWG.

In the longer term, the workshop participants agreed that it would be important to consider:

- well-defined conceptual model,
- harmonised across regions or internationally; and
- updates on a rolling basis.

2. To make nautical publications more accessible to the wide array of users, they need to be presented in a format that is applicable and accessible for multiple user groups.

In the short term, the workshop participants agreed to consider:

- conducting a survey of mariners’ requirements,
- linking to private sector data distribution initiatives (ie. aviation sector’s use of iPads),
- addressing future developments of platforms for information display; and
- making existing publications available through a shared web platform.

In the longer term, the workshop participants agreed that it would be important to consider:

- making multiple platforms available for accessing information in “preferred” and “modern” use environments;
- developing formalised collaboration with private sector solutions; and
- publishing nautical publications in national language and in English.

3. Given the importance of existing standards, agreement and regional cooperative efforts, the workshop participants agreed that in the short term, they will consider:

- reporting to NHC with proposals for a workshop in 2012 under the aegis of NHC with invites to ARHC and BSHC,
- conducting individual and shared cost-benefit analyses of continued joint work; and
- beginning to address the shortcomings of the NP1/2/3 approach with IHO.

In the longer term, the workshop participants agreed that it would be important to consider the potential value of:

- new standards; and
- codification in formal platforms.

Next steps

The workshop participants agreed on the high value of the workshop and presentations, and will seek to meet again jointly in late 2012. In the meantime, the participating regional hydrographic commissions will continue to discuss these issues as the involved Member States continue to address the development of their nautical publications.

As the 2012 joint workshop approaches, the participating Member States will be requested to prepare a brief regarding achievements and developments in this area.

Actions required from the NHC 56th Conference:

The NHC 56th Conference is requested to consider this proposal and to take appropriate actions.