

inFIRE Conference 2006
Swedish Rescue Services Agency
Karlstad, Sweden
June 19-22, 2006

This year's theme: Lessons learned from incidents and accidents: the information network

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA) is comparable to FEMA. They respond to any disaster or emergency in Sweden and also any international events that involve Swedish citizens. They sent teams to the tsunami disaster, 9/11, Katrina, Madrid, London, etc. The teams provide rescue, medical and recovery assistance. They prepare reports including lessons learned for each event.

inFIRE conference speakers are divided into presenters from libraries to discuss library topics and presenters from fire and emergency response personnel to discuss topics that are relevant, current and of interest to librarians in fire related organizations. inFIRE feels that it helps librarians to provide assistance in their respective areas if kept informed of fire related research and information and emergency response events occurring around the world.

I arrived in Karlstad on Saturday afternoon after a long, excruciating flight into Oslo, Norway and then a trip to Karlstad. Sunday morning at 9:00 I chaired the inFIRE Executive Committee meeting. Among other items, we discussed the appointment of the next chairperson. inFIRE chairs are appointed for a three year term and this conference was my third year as chairperson. The person we had nominated declined the office for personal family reasons. I was asked to continue for a fourth year to give us time to identify another nominee, which I accepted.

Another item discussed was the location for next year's conference. Diana Robinson will contact Dan May with the New York City Fire Academy Library and I have already talked with the Justice Institute Library in British Columbia. We will have a decision by August 1.

In the afternoon the Executive Committee toured the Varmland Museum. The part of Sweden where Karlstad is located is called Varmland.

The Conference began on Monday with registration at 8:30. Sessions included

"Lessons Learned from the Madrid Accident, 2004" presented by Tore Eriksson, Head of Section, SRSA and Chairman of the Hazardous Materials Commission. On March 11, nine bombs exploded in a commuter train in a suburb of Madrid, later attributed to Al-Qaeda terrorists. SRSA sent a team the next morning to assist with the situation and provide a lessons learned report. The members of inFIRE were given a copy of the report which had just been translated into English and due to the sensitive issues involved, had

just been given clearance to distribution outside of Sweden and Spain. That was quite an honor for inFIRE members.

“How can we handle learning from accidents?” presented by Mattias Stromgren, Dept. of Public Health Sciences and Risk Management, Karlstad University and Swedish National Center for Learning from Incidents and Accidents and SRSA. Described a system for disseminating lessons learned from accidents following four steps: Knowledge creation by collection and analysis of experience data, knowledge storage and dissemination, knowledge use and process evaluation. Use of historical information, statistical records, narrative data from investigations, disseminate knowledge through libraries, databases, training etc.

“A proposal for an inFIRE networking activity aimed at consolidating fire and explosion accidents databases” presented by Isabelle Pradaud, librarian at the INERIS information knowledge center, France. INERIS is a public industrial and commercial establishment and one of their missions is risk assessment and management of fire, explosion, and toxic discharges, linked to industry, infrastructures and transport systems. Consolidating information, analysis and suggest collaborative action.

Tuesday’s sessions included

“Risk perception in Sweden” presented by Hakan Axelsson, Head of Department, SRSA. Presentation of a number of emergencies within Sweden and a review of SRSA’s responses, including forest fires, flooding, ice storms, warehouse fires.

“Oklahoma Burning, Winter 2005-2006”, which I presented. I reviewed the events of this past winter, the drought, high temperatures, etc that triggered the fires around Stillwater, especially during Christmas break. I included a historical overview of land use and how that affected the fires, statistics from the results of the fires and information about the various responders, in particular the tribal departments, volunteer departments and the US Forestry assistance. In particular I talked about the Command Center’s functions and emphasized how well they coordinated the response. My PowerPoint included photos of the fire and the aftermath of the fire on Western south of Stillwater and of the fire that threatened my own house.

“The simple complexity of digitization. How to plan a Digitization Project a Swedish Example” presented by Anne Scherman, Department of Special Collections, The Royal Library, Sweden. A presentation describing the two year project to digitize the Suecia antique et hodierna, a literary scientific and cultural document prepared between 1660 and 1715 and made it available via their website.

I chaired a business meeting and a roundtable discussion which provides all attendees to give a short overview of their libraries and activities for the year.

In the afternoon we toured the Karlstad Fire Brigade including a demonstration of fighting a LPG fire on their training grounds. Lars Wendel, Station officer provided the

tour and Patrik Hakansson, fire engineer gave a presentation on the fire service in Sweden, describing the municipalities, response times, and descriptions of the fire fighters. The Karlstad Fire Brigade is located in a complex of buildings housing fire, police, and medical personnel. The location is a former military base which reinforces that these groups previously were connected to the military, similar to the situation in the UK.

On Wednesday we had a guided bus tour of the University Library of Karlstad, home of the first woman to win the Nobel Prize and prominent Swedish author, Selma Lagerlof and an art museum in Munkfors.

The final day, Thursday, the presenters included:

“Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program”, presented by Chris Neal. An overview and description of the national Firefighter Life Safety Summit sponsored by the NFFF and USFA including the 16 initiatives and the mini-summits held around the US with a review of the progress.

“Textbooks for fire fighters must bridge the gap between practioners and theorists”, presented by Anna-Lena Goransson, SRSA. Based on Ms. Goranssons doctoral thesis describing a group of firefighter’s relation to various forms of language based knowledge versus practical training based knowledge. I encouraged Ms. Goransson to submit this to our Journal.

“Technology to the Rescue – Public Service Improved”, presented by Sue Marsh, Librarian, NFPA. A description of the technological improvements made to the NFPA Library by providing selected materials from the Library in an electronic format. Materials include historical NFPA codes, ROPs and ROCs.

“Lessons Learned and other Knowledge Bases available through the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism”, presented by Brad Robison, Library Director, MIPT. A description of the knowledge bases for information related to international terrorist events being provided on the MIPT website and Lessons Learning Information Sharing System sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security. Historical background of the bombing of the Murrah building was included. Also included on the MIPT website is information regarding personal protective equipment, terrorist incidents, terrorist groups, e-books, articles and more.

“Lessons learned by 90 Sekunder”, presented by Birger Markusson, SRSA. The SRSA produces training and information video called 90 Sekunder (90 Seconds) which refers to the time fire brigades in Sweden have to leave the station. The videos aim is to convey knowledge, lessons learned, experiences, news and tops from real operations for use in training. They also film international events and are proud that they have always been made welcome. We viewed two videos, one from 9/11 and one from the tsunami.

“International Fire Service Journal of Leadership and Management”, Bob England’s presentation that I presented in his absence.

“Robot Cataloger – Using Macro Express to transfer records from MS ACCESS to MARC format”, presented by Martha Gunnarsson, WPI Library. A presentation on a web interface providing access to an existing database in the library and transferring the information into MARC records for WPI’s Voyager online catalog.

The Conference ended around 4:00 on Thursday and I traveled back to Oslo to spend the night and catch my flight back to the US early Friday morning.

We were fortunate to have SRSA sponsor this conference and provide a wide variety of speakers with a wealth of knowledge in emergency preparedness and response. I think this is the largest organization we have visited and the first that was able to provide so many presenters. We usually have to locate speakers willing to travel to our Conference which can present difficulties as we do not have a budget for speaker expenses.

The staff of SRSA were very generous and provided me with a number of publications including:

Enclosure fires, Fire ventilation, The Municipality and its Fire and Rescue Service in Transition, The 11th March 2004 Madrid Terrorist Attacks, Sulphuric Acid Discharge – After the Tsunami (DVD) and The Handbook of Tunnel Fire Safety.

Attendees include:

Susan Walker, FPP

Isabelle Pradaud, INERIS, France

Nora Jason, retired from NIST

Martha Gunnarson, Dept. of Fire Protection Engineering Subject Specialist, WPI

Diana Robinson, New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control, Academy of Fire Science

Gwen Schagrin, Fire/EMS/Safety Center Library, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Brad Robison, National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism

Sue Marsh, NFPA

Roger Dyroy, Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning

Lise Wolden, Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning

Laura Logan, Safety Engineering Laboratories, Detroit

Tora Kristiansen, Brandteknik

Chris Dahms, Nuclear Service Organization

Amanda Collicutt, Fire Service College, UK

Mats Bornstrom, SRSA - Host

Marie Wilhelmsson, SRSA – Host

Tore Eriksson SRSA

Hakan Axelsson, SRSA

Anne Scherman, The Royal Library of Sweden
Chris Neal, FPP
Anna-Lena Goransson, SRSA
Birger Markusson, SRSA
Bob England, FPP – unable to attend
Kjell Nilsson, SRSA
Mathias Kjellberg, SRSA
Birgitta Persson, SRSA
Bo Edstrom, SRSA
James Butler, SRSA
Helen Persson, SRSA
Elisabeth Lipcsey, SRSA
Alexandra Johansson, SRSA
Ingvar Hansson, SRSA
Marie Reaelius, SRSA - Skovde
Britt Viktorsson, SRSA - Skovde
Stegan Jonsson, SRSA