

CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

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What is the role of modelling in fisheries management? For many people the answer is automatic: high quality analysis of fisheries data so that managers have strong stock assessments on which to base management decisions. It is my contention that our concept of the role of modelling in fisheries management is too limited. It is restrained in many cases by inappropriate conceptualization of what modelling is and can do. For example; many people inextricably link modelling and computing; thinking that if one is not good at computing then modelling is out of the question. But fisheries modelling pre-dated computers by many decades. Restrictive conceptualization of modelling includes the idea that modelling is just for the analysis of complex data sets. As a collective group we need to broaden our definition of modelling and look to the wide variety of ways in which the role of modelling in fisheries management can be extended. This is the approach that I have pursued in asking this Session's panellists to participate.

I am leaving the main topic: what is the role of modelling in fisheries management?, for the floor of the workshop to debate after the panellists have spoken. The panellists have, to some extent, been asked to speak tangentially to the central topic. It is my intention that the panellists' presentations should provide alternative perspectives, or counterpoints, to the main topic. Counterpoints that I hope will be picked up and discussed when it is the floor's turn.

Kay Radway Allen is the first panellist and he will provide a retrospective view of fisheries modelling, partially based on his own recollection. His paper provides the context and culture within which fisheries modelling has developed as a discipline in its own right. Kay's paper reinforces the fact that modelling is an exercise of the mind, a logical discipline that for most of its history has existed independently of computers.

In their papers Warwick Fletcher and Phillip Sluczanski discuss some of the uses modelling can be put to when not being used to simply analyse data. Warwick's paper shows that real data are just a distraction to modelling, and that the modelling process can be used to frame a research program before research is initiated and data gathered. I have asked Warwick to present his paper because I want to emphasise that modelling is not just a tool of final analysis. Phillip will address the broader more diffuse use of the modelling process as a vehicle for developing scientific, industry and managerial understanding and consensus about key research and management issues. This idea moves modelling far beyond mere analysis, giving it a role in the processes of communication, translation and consensus building which are so essential to the good management of fish stocks.