

We're Just Getting Going

As oceanographic research has matured our community has developed and utilized tools that have enabled us to observe, analyze, simulate, and predict elements of the behaviour of the ocean. These tools are revolutionizing the field. Our community is converting existing understanding into the creation of new information and knowledge that addresses broader societal needs.

Our community's local and regional focused research programs, and larger globally focused programs have documented the impact and importance of understanding the ocean. This understanding is being utilized in policy considerations at international, national, and down to local levels. The community has successfully used this knowledge to produce skillful ocean forecasts that are being run operationally day in and day out by the U.S. Navy for purposes of national security, ship routing, search and rescue, etc. These advances are critically important for our community. They demonstrate to society that over the long term the investment in ocean science and technology is valuable to our society's future. It is good to be wanted, and we continue to prove our worth to society while earning its respect and maintaining our intellectual integrity and curiosity.

As our science has matured, revealing a hundred new questions for each one we have answered, it has necessarily become more curiosity-driven. As modern day ocean explorers we have a clearer view as to what we seek, what we wish to explore, why we believe it is important, and what new insight we believe will be revealed by this exploration. This intent makes clearer to both science and society what knowledge and insight will be gained through research on ocean processes, phenomena and interactions.

Ocean research also seeks answers to fundamental human longings such as how did life begin on earth, how did it evolve, how do interactions between the various physical, chemical and biological components (including human) of our planet create what existed before, what exists now, and what may exist in the future. There is no clear way to know where the next miracle drug may be found, where the next fundamental discovery will be made, where the next "Oh my God" may be uttered for having been able to reveal or understand a biological, chemical, physical, geological or other complexity occurring unlike anything else in the world. Therefore, our community must continue to pursue curiosity-driven ocean research to address not only society's fundamental longings, but also to address directly society's needs in national security, environment, industrial development, etc.

This is a good time to be in the ocean community. Right now our community is addressing exciting research and technology ideas that are relevant to society and policy makers (national security, global change, energy, etc.) and we probably have about a decade or so to ensure and cement our value to society. This puts us on a strong footing for reaching out for new incoming talent, ideas and resources.

What's next? I think it will be even better for the next generation of oceanographers. We will have proven our value. We will have global observational capabilities from both space and *in situ* sensors. We will routinely generate local to global ocean forecasts used by industry, government and the public. Policy makers will rely on our understanding of the ocean and the skill of our predictions to make important policy decisions. We will have exposed a hundred new questions for each question we have answered. With so much to explore, oceanography will remain a curiosity-driven research field attracting the best and the brightest to join in the excitement of discovery. And while doing this, oceanography will address mankind's fundamental and innate need and longing to explore the unknown.

Your Society (TOS) will play a key role in this future by the dissemination of knowledge and information useful to our community and society through our meetings and conferences, the magazine, recognition and awards for our community members, involvement with agencies and other societies, and through special attention to items that affect our community. As a non-profit organization whose activities are determined solely by your elected officials and volunteers from the community, your Society's only vested interest is to benefit its members. Two specific actions by you as TOS members are important for our future. First, your active participation in TOS meetings, conferences, and other activities; and second, your reaching out to those students, scientists, policy makers, educators and ocean industry people who are not members of TOS and making them aware of the Society and its benefits and encouraging them to become members. Share your copy of the TOS magazine, *Oceanography*, with others who are not members as an encouragement for them to become members.

As we grow, our impact and influence will also grow. We are just getting going and we will all benefit from a healthy Society that becomes increasingly inclusive of all in our community.

(The views expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Naval Research Laboratory.)

