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In Search Of: Well-established oceanographic society is seeking long-term relationship with new members and/or a merger with an existing society with mutual interests. Must be willing to explore options for new programs and services to membership. Inquire within.

The Oceanography Society (TOS) is approaching its 20th birthday. It is good practice for every organization, public or private, to periodically re-examine its founding principles and make sure it is still responsive to its members, clients, and stakeholders. One thing is for sure, for those of us working in the field day in and day out, the discipline of oceanography has changed since TOS's inaugural meeting in 1988. Great progress has been made in understanding the oceans through advances in technology, through the application of new techniques, and through the use of interdisciplinary approaches. Twenty years ago, oceanography was still disciplinary focused on its geological, biological, chemical, and physical aspects. Much of the research was exploratory and aimed at discovery and better understanding fundamental ocean processes. And much ocean research then was focused on national defense. The International Decade of Ocean Exploration (IDOE) during the 1970s started to couple relationships between oceanographic disciplines, but even so, each of the five IDOE programs were fairly discipline-specific.

Twenty years ago when Jim Baker, Tom Spence, Stan Wilson, and the other founders of TOS were working to organize and establish a new professional society, they were responding to a need in the community to build bridges and communication among oceanographic disciplines. In the first issue of *Oceanography*, Jim Baker wrote: "The Oceanogra-

phy Society (TOS) was established to be an integrating factor for the field of oceanography and to advance oceanography as a true scientific discipline. A further objective was to promote and publicize the importance of the ocean sciences."

The origins of TOS are rooted in bringing together and recognizing individuals from all fields of oceanography, representing the broad interests of members in research, engineering, industry, policy, and education, and the diversity and international nature of the field. Since then, TOS has published the award-winning *Oceanography* magazine to promote and chronicle all aspects of ocean science and its applications. And TOS has held a series of conferences with defining interdisciplinary plenary talks and broad poster sessions. Many long-time TOS members likened the most recent 2005 International Ocean Research Conference in Paris to the inaugural TOS meeting in Monterey, California. Both covered a wide spectrum of topics and were small enough for attendees to be able to meet and communicate with everyone there, if they so wished. TOS has also held and is planning to hold joint meetings with other societies to even further promote interdisciplinary communication and exchange of knowledge.

If one were to acknowledge that the major role of TOS was to foster interdisciplinary research, and if one were to look at the titles of some of the current and recent major ocean research projects (e.g., Oceans and Human Health, Coupled Biogeochemical Cycles), two conclusions are suggested. The first is that the conduct of ocean science has changed such that TOS's primary mission is no longer relevant. The second conclusion is that TOS has been

completely successful in its mission of fostering interdisciplinary collaborations. In either case, it has been suggested that after 20 years, TOS should declare success and either transform or dissolve itself.

There appears to be at least two interesting options for a transformation. Both build on a transformative revolution in oceanography—the need for a system to provide reliable and sustained ocean observations. A vision for this system that is held by both government and academia is similar to the National Weather Service. A grid of ocean-observing platforms and observatories will feed into a data network to produce an array of synopses and forecasts that will address the needs of a variety of users and stakeholders. Components of such a system are at very different stages of development and there are myriad technical, managerial, governance, and scientific issues yet to be worked out. At present, there is no singular forum for those working in this area to communicate and exchange information. It is a highly interdisciplinary issue and one where a transformed TOS could provide a valuable service to an expanded membership.

Another suggestion for a transformed TOS deals with an Oceanographer Certification Program. Not only is the conduct of oceanography becoming more and more reliant on highly trained technicians and programmers, but the projected implementation of the Integrated Ocean Observing System and its related systems will require a whole new employment force that is not presently trained or recognized. With increased emphasis on coastal and ocean issues in the U.S. Congress and within the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, the time is ripe to develop a certification program for oceanographers and

ocean engineers. There is a need to focus on education and training in a forward-thinking manner that recognizes and aims to meet current and future challenges regarding coastal and ocean issues. A certification program for oceanographers would meet that need, and would benefit individuals, employers, the oceanographic community, and the overall oceanographic enterprise. Professional certification programs currently exist in ecology, meteorology, wetland science, fisheries science, and most engineering disciplines, among others. All of the certification programs have education and experience requirements and professional societies play a major role in managing and overseeing these certification programs. A transformed TOS could be a leader and key player in a professional certification program for oceanographers.

The issues currently facing TOS and its future are illustrated by a conversation that I recently overheard. A long-time TOS member and senior ocean scientist was asked by a graduate student, “which societies should I join?” Given the student’s tight financial resources and limited time to read journals, the student’s advisor found it difficult to make a strong case for joining TOS. The TOS Council will be working on this challenge of providing value to its membership as the Society approaches its 20th Birthday. We welcome your thoughts and input.

ISO: Good ideas and suggestions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. A long, thin horizontal line extends from the bottom right of the signature across the page.

LARRY CLARK, TOS PRESIDENT