

Upcoming Special-Issue Topics

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THE IMPACT OF THE OCEAN DRILLING PROGRAM

Guest Editors: Bob Burger, Joint Oceanographic Institutions; and Kantaro Fujioka, Japanese Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology

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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN OCEAN RESEARCH

Guest Editor: Peter Ranelli, NATO Undersea Research Centre

The editorial staff also encourages unsolicited manuscripts on other oceanography themes for consideration and publication under the Regular Features banner.

Having spent three years recently as Director of the National Science Foundation's Division of Ocean Sciences, I can attest to the positive impact of having the ocean research community reach consensus on Grand Challenges for ocean research AND on a roadmap for meeting the challenges (see *Oceanography* 19[2]:14-17). With new federal structures now in place to help coordinate interagency ocean research and infrastructure initiatives, the latter is more possible today than in the past. Many will have comments on the content and phrasing of the challenges and their implementation strategies, but we should not let disagreement over details stand in the way. A National Academies report is one way to start the process.

Jim Yoder, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

In a section of his article "Grand Challenges for Ocean Sciences Research" (*Oceanography* 19[2]:14) Alan Brandt proposes a Quasi-Permanent Ocean Platform (QPOP) as one means to address future needs for "obtaining high-frequency, long-duration interdisciplinary data at sites of particular interest." He suggests that a QPOP could consist of "a semi-submersible platform... possibly purchased or donated to the research community, as 'retired' naval ships often are."

We note that about 20 years ago a broadly similar idea was advanced (Wiebe et al., 1987, 1993) and discussed at considerable length in the community (DSO Organizing Committee, 1990), indeed at a time when the cyclical economics of the oil industry seemed auspicious for obtaining just the kind of "free" (in fact, federally repossessed) semi-submersible platform envisioned by Brandt. In the end, the opportunity was not grasped and the idea was not implemented, but it remains worthy of consideration for many reasons, including those mentioned by Brandt. In particular, we note that a semi-submersible platform can:

a) Accommodate human scientists, technicians, and their laboratories continuously (via rotations) at sea, thereby carrying out unbroken series of complex measurements (especially biological and chemical ones) that are not amenable (at least not yet) to unmanned vehicles or moorings.

- b) Continue observing operations under severe storms.
- c) Serve as a central command and control hub for effective, adaptive deployment and control of other observing platforms, including unmanned systems in the surrounding region, to address issues of spatial coverage.
- d) Provide an unmatched venue for extensive testing of new instrumental methods against the backdrop of ongoing time series using established devices.

We commend Brandt for restarting discussion of these concepts in the context of his QPOP and hope that the broader community will give thought to them once again. In the intervening 20 years, practical experience with uses of semi-submersible platforms for sophisticated operations at sea unrelated to oil production has increased, as exemplified by commercial geostationary satellite launches on the equator (<http://www.boeing.com/special/sea-launch/information.htm>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_Launch). The basic scientific imperatives regarding multidisciplinary observations and sampling statistics remain as important as they were then.

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