

Our New Vision?

ONCE AGAIN, just as in the last issue of *Oceanography*, I find myself bidding more former leaders of The Oceanography Society (TOS) farewell; this, notably and ironically at a time that seems particularly propitious. Since we last published, Larry Clark and Eric Hartwig (both former Presidents of TOS) have each retired from many years (I won't say how many) of public service. Larry left the US National Science Foundation, and Eric the US Navy, most recently at the Naval Research Laboratory.

I am fortunate to have known both Eric and Larry for most of their professional careers, having met each of them about a quarter century ago. What strikes me as notable in this regard is that the early 1980s (when we first met) were the years during which much of the thinking about TOS evolved. I would argue that during that time the “awakening” of our community invoked new thinking about interdisciplinary research and about new approaches to observations, including a whole new set of tools (remote sensing), platforms (autonomous underwater vehicles), and models. We were learning about chemosynthesis and teleconnections, and we were on the verge of realizing the benefit from the information explosion of the Internet. Visionary leaders like Eric and Larry served as good guides for encouraging public investment in oceanography in the United States. We will surely miss their day-to-day engagement, but perhaps they taught us how to think as we approach a new horizon.

In fact, now is the time to think about where our previous leaders have brought us and where we will steer now. TOS approaches its twentieth anniversary next year. There will be good celebrations, and a number of memorable events, including activities at the Ocean Sciences meeting in Orlando next March. A lot of time will be spent in retrospective discussion. But, what of the future?

Are we positioned for TOS to lead the oceanographic community in the next 20 years? Perhaps these are some of the challenges we might expect:

- Changing career paths for the next generation
- New sources of funding for research
- International initiatives playing a stronger role
- More visibility for our research in political circles

- Strengthened role for ocean sciences in K–12 and higher education in all geographic areas
- Growing interest in “green business” practices and better connection to industry as funders of ocean science

So, perhaps just as Eric and Larry and their colleagues two decades ago asked whether we should have a TOS, now it's time for us to ask where TOS should go. I propose we start a debate addressing issues such as whether the Society should:

- Serve as a pure “ocean” society, but include all aspects as above—not just the pure “old” and very exclusive definition of oceanography
- Focus on research, education, and outreach
- Focus on what it takes for ocean science to become a more respected area of study
- Become a vehicle for first choice to learn about ocean science
 - The place where ocean biologists go to learn about ocean physics, for example, and vice versa
 - The place where an intelligent curious mind goes to learn about the state of the science across ocean sciences
- Become the first point of distribution of new findings
 - Where scientists can publish the initial, unpolished, but exciting findings about the ocean

In a nutshell, we're at a wonderful time to ask some important questions. What are our community's major challenges? Are we educating the next generation of oceanographers adequately? What opportunities are emerging for us to exploit? I'm encouraged that Larry and Eric will stay active in this debate, and that both our President-Elect, Carolyn Thoroughgood, and I have committed to leading this important debate for the Society in the months to come. I hope we can count on the full membership of TOS to engage in this important dialogue. It's our Society, let's take it where it serves our needs best.



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