

ASSOCIATE EDITORS (Continued)

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LETTERS

"If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it," writes our new editorial staff (*Oceanography*, Vol. 6, No. 2), who describe the magazine as being "the publication that allows oceanographers to communicate with each other across the discipline boundaries." Clearly, there are several ways of interpreting this statement, but I don't think that reading jargon-free review articles was the reason many of us joined TOS. Actually, we are rather well-served in this respect already by the review journals and *Nature*.

If my criticisms of the magazine, and of TOS—which I have already made to our President and past-Presidents without visible result—are valid, some of the remedies could come easily to our hands. I have no doubt at all that organizations like SCOR and IOC would be willing to provide copy for regular columns on their program activities. Similarly, the WOCE, JGOFS, TOGA, and other similar offices would provide reports on their current and planned activities. The editorial staff could profitably perform regular abstracting from the plethora of reports on the activities of other bodies and international working groups already available to the in-crowd, which I presume includes our officers. The SCOR national correspondents might be recruited to produce reports on events (and non-events) in their various nations. An informative roster of meetings could be maintained, not just those few whose organizers happen to volunteer information for inclusion. Somebody could be found to report on international funding activities, such as the new ISF-Washington funds for the support of science in the eastern and Baltic countries. We could be told whether an awaited satellite had succeeded in getting into orbit, or had failed and if so why, without having to glean that information from the daily press. And not only US satellites, too.

The trouble is, in my view and contrary to what our editors think, TOS as a society is very nearly broke intellectually, and somebody had better fix it quick. Otherwise, its international membership will start to evaporate and those lucky enough to have access to the OMNET boards depend increasingly on them to know what's happening out there. Personally, I give it one more year from now, and then that's that.

Alan Longhurst, Biological Oceanography Division,
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Comments

In response to your questions about the need for an international editor and an international page, I have reviewed the past issues of *Oceanography*, and I believe I can see the concern of non-U.S. members. There seems to be a slow but steady drift to a U.S. perspective in the articles and discussions. However, I am not certain the solution to that problem is an international page with an international editor. TOS is supposed to represent the international ocean community; I would argue that the concept of an international editor to represent the non-U.S. membership and interests is egocentric at best and demeaning at worse. You don't want the magazine to be an "us" versus "them" forum. Oceanography is an international science, and it should be edited for the international community of ocean scientists.

I believe there should be an opportunity in *Oceanography* to discuss national issues as long as they are of broad interest. Because of the vitality and size of the U.S. ocean science community, I expect there will be more U.S. material than others, but *Oceanography* should not be focused exclusively on U.S. issues. The magazine has a number of non-U.S. associate editors. Push them hard for more contributions and add more non-U.S. editors as necessary. For example, I expect I am not alone in wanting to learn more about the state of oceanography in the former Soviet Union.

If there were room in the magazine, you might consider an "international" section to consider news of international programs and organizations of importance to the TOS community. There are a number of official international organizations in which ocean scientists have vary-

ing degrees of interest. They range from SCOR, which most directly reflects the interests of ocean scientists, to the United Nations Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, where ocean science interests are mostly ignored by both the science community and those in the UN office, perhaps to the detriment of both. A non-exhaustive list of those of most relevance to the TOS community includes the Intergovernmental Organization of UNESCO (IOC), the Scientific Committee for Ocean Research of the IUGG (SCOR), the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the Pacific International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (PICES), and the International Meteorological Organization (IMO).

In addition there are the various international science programs such as WOCE, TOGA, JGOFS, and JOIDES, organized around a specific science agenda. It used to be that these programs had a time constant of two to three years (JOIDES being a major exception), but more recently the life span of many of these international, big science programs are the order of a decade.

Oceanography could perhaps have a section devoted to these organizations. For example a) it could systematically cover (or ask someone to cover) the meetings and publications of these organizations and report on them, and b) it could do an in-depth look at these organizations, perhaps one or two an issue. The easy way would be to ask the executive director or some key member to do the report. An alternative would be to have someone from the outside do a more critical review. For example the chair of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was so upset at the rejection by the IWC of some recommendations that have been long in developing that he up and resigned. Maybe TOS members would like to know what is going on.

If the goal is to generate a little controversy within the pages of *Oceanography*, one might consider an international page that would address such issues as the following.

a. Why most U.S. scientists would prefer to keep their international programs out of the grip of the IOC insofar as possible. Is that a uniquely U.S. position or is it shared by others including those TOS members from developing countries?

b. The new law of the sea convention enter into force in late 1994. The science provisions are not great, but it can be argued that they are marginally better than what we have had to live with since the 1958 convention went into effect. Is the U.S., a nonsignatory, and France, UK, Germany, and others (who have not yet ratified the convention) prepared to take advantage of the opportunities under the new convention? Can we hear from the foreign offices on this?

c. The very ambitious WOCE time line and plans for simultaneous observations have slipped considerably. How effective is the present WOCE in meeting its original goals?

d. Are we ready for a formal, dedicated global ocean observing system (GOOS) analogous to the World Weather Watch? If so how should the responsibility be divided among the international community, since unlike the weather observations, most of GOOS will be in international waters? Is there a clear distinction between GOOS and the traditional observational programs with which TOS members are familiar? If not, who makes the decision as to what is GOOS and what is not, and how is that decision made?

If you go with an international page, my sense is that you want some of both approaches. One role of *Oceanography* is to provide factual information in a timely manner, but it cannot compete with EOS which comes out weekly, so it will have to pick and choose. Most readers enjoy a bit of controversy, as long as they are not on the receiving end. Thus picking one or more subjects each issue should liven things up a bit.

John A. Knauss, Research Associate, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California.

Comments

A comparison of early and recent issues of our magazine might lead one to conclude that TOS had progressively withdrawn to a comfortable, nonreactive status of doing little more than holding scientific glee sessions, and publishing a few easy-to-read review articles. I think this is not what we were originally promised, nor what our profession requires. It would be more relevant to what I thought was the original role of TOS if our magazine had, on the contrary, progressively dropped review articles in favor of reporting news of oceanographic people, programs, and policies on an international basis. But that would mean somebody actually getting out there on behalf of the society and reporting to the rest of us—more challenging than simply soliciting review papers and publishing whatever else is sent in.

While few will argue that oceanography in the United States is the engine driving much of our science internationally, I see little or no evidence in our magazine that anybody in the society is concerned with fueling the information network which nourishes the international whole. Are oceanographers in the USA unconcerned about decisions taken in Britain (or Australia, Germany, Canada, France, or wherever) concerning oceanographic ships or program funding? Isn't it extraordinary that (so far as I recollect) not a word has been reported about the near extinction of Soviet oceanography, once one of the major players in the game? Should the rest of us be completely unconcerned about the status of their research vessels and the future of their research institutes?

Unless actually involved in them, how are oceanographers to know what is happening in SCOR working groups, or in IOC and other international and intergovernmental bodies? What happened to the original intention of our editors of providing a source of such information and their first hesitant steps in the right direction?