

Upcoming Special-Issue Topics

Vol. 22, No. 4, December 2009

The Future of Ocean Biogeochemistry in a High CO₂ World

Guest Editors: Richard Feely (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Victoria Fabry (California State University, San Marcos), Barney Balch (Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences), and Scott Doney (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

Vol. 23, No. 1, March 2010

Mountains in the Sea

Guest Editors: Hubert Staudigel (Scripps Institution of Oceanography), Anthony Koppers (Oregon State University), William Lavelle (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory), Tony Pitcher (University of British Columbia), and Tim Shank (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

Vol. 23, No. 2, June 2010

Marine Renewable Energy

Guest Editors: Kerry Kehoe (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA]), Ralph Lopez (NOAA), Ellen Ternes (NOAA), Lisa Chae (NOAA), Carleigh Trappe (NOAA), Benjamin Baron-Taltré (NOAA), MaryLee Haughwout (NOAA), Innette von Jouanne (Oregon State University), and Ted Brekken (Oregon State University)

Vol. 23, No. 3, September 2010

Celebrating 50 Years of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

Guest Editors: Phil Taylor (National Science Foundation), Kathy Tedesco (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Deborah Bronk (The College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science)

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The Future of Satellite Oceanography

Guest Editors: Eric Lindstrom (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and Nikolai Maximenko (University of Hawaii)

Regular Issue Features

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

I WAS DEEPLY MOVED by reading Susan Kubany's article in the September 2008 issue of *Oceanography* on the history of Omnet. The good that was achieved for the oceanographic community by the existence of Omnet through the 1980s and 1990s was enormous, and one feels that it should have been rewarded in a better way. It is an unfortunate fact of technological history that Omnet was overtaken and destroyed by e-mail, basically because e-mail was free and Omnet was not. Yet, as the author says, Omnet was not just a precursor of e-mail but offered far more—for a start, a chance to communicate with your fellow scientists throughout the world without that channel of communication being poisoned by Nigerian con artists, fake messages from banks, and offers of services and products that one neither needs nor wants. A channel in which 94% of messages are scams designed to separate gullible people from their money is not exactly what one hoped for from electronic communications. Omnet was much closer to our needs as scientists, yet it is no more, and Kubany, without rancor, has chronicled its sad decline.

I should declare that I was probably the first UK user of Omnet. Kubany describes how in 1989 John Woods came to Omnet to recommend setting up a European presence for Omnet, which later materialized as an operation out of a cottage in Ireland. Yet, in 1981 I was already an Omnet user thanks to the US Office of Naval Research (ONR). The ONR Arctic Program set up an international Arctic research project called MIZEX (Marginal Ice Zone Experiment), a study of ice edge processes in the Greenland and Bering

seas, which lasted until 1989. From the very start, the principal investigators on MIZEX were linked through Omnet membership, paid for by ONR. It was a revelation to be able to communicate with one's fellow Arctic scientists to plan meetings and cruises, to exchange ideas, to write up joint reports and papers, and to do all the things that one now does through e-mail, but long before the e-mail concept was born. And the advantage, now lost, was that one's fellow subscribers to Omnet were scientific colleagues. Not a single presidential widow from the Ivory Coast in search of a safe home for 16 million dollars.

Throughout the 1980s, Omnet was the civilized vehicle through which, as a UK scientist, I could keep in daily touch with my fellow scientists at the core of Arctic marine science research. Initially, these colleagues were mostly US scientists, but Omnet, via ONR, soon extended its service to German and Norwegian scientists involved in ONR projects. This international communication system was very important later when there was a renaissance of Arctic marine science in European institutions involving researchers who initially got to know one another through Omnet.

It was perhaps inevitable that Omnet would die once a "free" e-mail system began. But we have lost so much. If a "premium" electronic mail service along the lines of Omnet were offered again today, I am sure that many marine scientists would be pleased to be part of it.

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