

What's New with CoML?  
March 2003

- **Scientific Steering Committee (SSC).** The next SSC meeting will take place 20-21 June in Southampton, England. Senior CoML consultant Alasdair McIntyre is working with the UK community to maximize the value of the June meetings in the UK, which may include visits to or with organizations such as the International Maritime Organization, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the Plymouth and Proudman marine labs, and UK government agencies.
- **Public Outreach Event.** The CoML outreach event (launch) will take place 23 October 2003 in Washington DC at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. An agenda of the day's events will be available soon. The International SSC, the U.S. National Committee, the OBIS International Committee, SCOR Working Group 118, and the HMAP Steering Group are all planning to meet in conjunction with the launch. It is important to have many members of our international community present in Washington, so we ask that all project committees consider organizing your meetings in conjunction with the launch if possible and if appropriate.

More information on the event program will be sent shortly.

- **All-Program Meeting.** On 24 October, following the launch event, we will hold a meeting of all CoML Component and Project scientific investigators and outreach coordinators. This will provide our rapidly growing community an unprecedented opportunity to meet at once and learn first-hand about all the goings-on within CoML. It will also provide you with an opportunity to discuss pertinent issues with your international, national and regional committee leaders. On the 25th, the component projects are urged to meet to advance the planning within each component. As you book your travel, please be aware of this activity and plan accordingly. More information will be available shortly. Ron O'Dor welcomes your suggestions for how best to organize the program for 24 October (<mailto:rodor@coreocean.org>)
- **Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS).** OBIS held a meeting 5-7 March at Rutgers in New Jersey for the Technical Working Group (TWG) and the International Committee (IC). Newly added databases included Duke University's OBIS-SEAMAP for large marine vertebrates, FAO catch data and the National Ocean Data Center. Maury Osborn and Geoff White of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission proposed addition of its databases. DiGIR (Digital Generic Information Retrieval) and the Darwin Core were implemented as search and metadata standards. Physical oceanographer, John Wilkins (Rutgers), joined the IC, while Karen Stocks (UC San Diego) and James Wood (U Tex) joined the TWG as OBIS Post-Doctoral Fellows. Plans for Eastern Mediterranean database and new data rescue projects were announced. The IC also tentatively agreed to seek to develop 4-5 OBIS regional nodes around the world, for example, in South

American and in the South Pacific. A more detailed report will be available soon.

The OBIS-SEAMAP database project (marine mammals/birds/turtles) will hold a meeting 1-2 May 2003 at Duke Marine Lab in North Carolina.

OBIS co-organized an international conference on biological oceanography entitled “The Colour of Ocean Data” in Brussels on the 25th -27th of November 2002. Mark Costello opened the symposium on behalf of its scientific committee. In this he emphasized the importance of marine biodiversity to society and how (a) information technology could make information more rapidly and easily available to everyone, and (b) how OBIS could contribute the biological component of ocean data management systems. During the conference, there were nine presentations from current OBIS projects:

- Branton R., J. Black, J. McRuer, and M. Fogarty. Using US and Canadian Atlantic research trawl surveys to lead development of a standards based ocean observing system.
- Tsonos V. M., and D.A. Kiefer. The Gulf of Maine Biogeographical Information System project: developing a spatial data management framework in support of OBIS.
- Zhang Y. and F. Grassle. Integrating heterogeneous databases in Ocean Biogeographic Information System.
- Martin A., L. Van Guelpen, G. Pohle, and M. Costello. Development of an Atlantic Canada Marine Biodiversity Information System based on a museum collection: a case study.
- Fautin D. and R. W. Buddemeier. Corals and sea anemones on line: a functioning biodiversity database.
- Boden G. and G.G. Teugels. Twelve years of FishBase: lessons learned.
- Ramirez-Llodra E.Z., P.A. Tyler, and C.R. German. ChEssBase: a database for deep-water hydrothermal vent and cold seep species.
- Stocks K. Seamounts Online: a biogeographic information system for Seamount biology.
- The keynote talk of the session on “biodiversity and biogeography” concerned species information systems and OBIS in general:
- Costello, M. J. Why marine species play a central role in biological oceanography data management.

- In addition, OBIS partner programs gave presentations on species information systems:
  - Gomon J.. The Integrated Taxonomic Information System.
  - Bisby F. Species 2000 Europa and the Catalogue of Life.
  - and on software tools:
  - Rees T. C-squares – a new method for representing, querying, displaying and exchanging dataset spatial extents.
- Other presentations concerned taxa, software applications, and physical and chemical oceanographic data management which may contribute to OBIS in the future. One afternoon dealt with the new XML (extra mark-up language) which is already in use by OBIS to link databases. Some of the databases may directly contribute to OBIS in future years, such as the Continuous Plankton Recorder, AlgaeBase, NemasLan, MysidLan, TaxonLan, TISBE (Taxonomic Information System for the Belgian Continental Shelf), WOD (World Ocean Database), ANT'PHIPODA (Antarctic amphipods), Antarctic echinoids, UK MARLIN (Marine Life Information Network, United Kingdom), MASDEA (Marine Species Database for Eastern Africa), BALTCOM (data warehouse), ODINAFRICA (Ocean Data and Information Network for Africa) and internet-based data on invasive species ENTAX (Encyclopedia Taxonomica).

## Field Projects

- **Mid-Atlantic Ridge: MAR-ECO.** In February MAR-ECO was featured in a 2-page article in Verdens Gang (VG), a major Norwegian newspaper. This led to an NRK P1 radio interview with PI Odd Aksel Bergstad during the prime-time evening program Kveldsaapentj on 20 February. On 21 February, Odd Askel appeared on popular NRK1 TV evening talk show Foerst og Sistj, watched by a quarter of Norway's population.

MAR-ECO will also be linking with parts of OASIS, an EU 5th Framework funded project on Sedlo Seamount north of the Azores. OASIS will study the ecosystem of the Sedlo Seamount by integrating physical, biogeochemical and biological research and will produce comprehensive and science-based management guidelines for seamounts in deep-sea areas. Parts of OASIS will become one element of the MAR-ECO component: Interactions of mesopelagic and bathypelagic fauna with the benthopelagic community associated with MAR seamounts/slopes. The first OASIS pilot cruise to Seine seamount on R/V Poseidon is in progress (March 19 – April 1). For more information, see the OASIS homepage: <http://www.rz.uni-hamburg.de/OASIS/Pages/page1.html>

If all now goes according to hopes and expectations, members of the MAR-ECO team will be diving in the MIR submersibles from the research vessel

Academician Keldysh to two sites in the Charlie-Gibbs fracture zone of the Ridge around 10 June.

- **Vents & Seeps: ChEss.** In March, the ChEss team was in the Bahamas for the sea-trials of ISIS, the UK's new ROV. During the cruise, the ChEss website ran a virtual cruise for the public over the internet. Photos from the ROV cruise can be viewed at [http://www.soc.soton.ac.uk/chess/isis\\_seatrials.html](http://www.soc.soton.ac.uk/chess/isis_seatrials.html). The ChEss team will co-host a workshop with Ridge2000, Ocean Exploration and InterRidge on the Biogeography and Biodiversity of Chemosynthetic Ecosystems. This workshop will be held 16-18 June 2003 at Southampton Oceanography Centre, prior to the SSC meeting. For workshop information and registration, go to (<http://ridge2000.bio.psu.edu/devel/WorkshopInfo.php?workshop=england03>).
- **Gulf of Maine.** The Gulf of Maine project announced the members of its scientific steering committee and scientific and policy advisory panels. Names and additional project information can be found at [www.usm.maine.edu/gulfofmaine-census](http://www.usm.maine.edu/gulfofmaine-census).
- **Salmon/Coastal Tracking: POST.** The POST project media event is tentatively scheduled for 10 April 2003. Journalists in the Vancouver and Oregon regions will meet the POST PIs and get a first hand look at the technology they are using to track salmon. For the event, the Vancouver Aquarium will outfit some of their salmon with acoustic tags and show how a receiver registers the IDs of the individual fish. On the other side of the world, George Jackson of the University of Tasmania met with the SSC in Hobart and discussed how his team is using POST technology to track squid, lobsters, sharks and octopus in Tasmania.
- **Large Pelagics: TOPP.** The squid-tagging component of TOPP is featured in the April issue of Discover magazine. Team leader Barb Block has recently completed trips to both Australia and Japan, and reports keen interest to develop TOPP-like projects in several parts of the world in addition to the North Pacific.
- **Abyssal Sediments: CeDAMar.** The CeDAMar group will hold a meeting 5-6 June 2003 in Wilhelmshaven, Germany to discuss strategy and future studies. Other CoML deep-sea projects are invited to attend. Contact Pedro Martinez ([pmartinez@senckenberg.de](mailto:pmartinez@senckenberg.de)) for more information.

## National and Regional Activities

- **Australia.** The National Oceans Office has received funding to serve as the program office responsible for developing the Australian component of CoML. Veronica Sakell, director of NOO, will chair the Australian National Committee ([veronica.sakell@oceans.gov.au](mailto:veronica.sakell@oceans.gov.au)).
- **Europe.** Ulf Lie of the University of Bergen and former chairperson of the IOC has agreed to chair the CoML's ad-hoc European Committee. Committee member

Henn Ojaveer (Estonia) will present the CoML at the upcoming Baltic Sea Science Congress.

- **Russia.** The next SCOR Executive Committee meeting will be held 15-19 September 2003 in Moscow. There will be a CoML session on the 19th, which will involve CoML project participants in Russia and focus on engaging the greater Russian community in CoML activities. The Shirshov Institute of Oceanology will host the meetings.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa.** The Sub-Saharan African regional workshop will be held 24-26 September 2003 in Cape Town, South Africa. Organizers include Charles Griffiths (U. Capetown, [clgriff@mail.egs.uct.ac.za](mailto:clgriff@mail.egs.uct.ac.za)), Kim Prochazka (U. Western Cape and (International Ocean Institute of Southern Africa), Carmen Ras (International Ocean Institute of Southern Africa), Alan Whitfield (Rhodes University), Paul Skelton (Rhodes University & South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity), and Cynthia Decker (on behalf of the CoML program). Delegates from about 17 African countries will be invited to participate.
- **South Pacific.** CoML will be a major sponsor of the Deep-Sea 2003 Conference, 1-4 December in Queenstown, New Zealand (<http://www.deepsea.govt.nz/>). In conjunction with this conference, the NZ Ministry of Fisheries will help to organize some South Pacific regional meetings on behalf of the Census of Marine Life.
- **USA.** The Committee will hold its next meeting on 21-22 April in Washington, DC. A major workshop is being planned for 23-25 July 2003.

## Related Activities

- **Arctic/Bering Workshop.** An Arctic and Bering Sea workshop will take place 11-14 April in Fairbanks, Alaska. For more information, contact organizers Katrin Iken ([iken@ims.uaf.edu](mailto:iken@ims.uaf.edu)) and Brenda Konar ([bkonar@ims.uaf.edu](mailto:bkonar@ims.uaf.edu)) of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
- **Deep-Sea Sediments.** David Billet of SOC is organizing a global workshop on “The Biodiversity of Deep-Sea Sediments: The Known, Unknown and Unknowable.” This workshop will be held at Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport, Oregon on 21-24 August in conjunction with the 10th Deep Sea Symposium. More information can be found at <http://www.soc.soton.ac.uk/GDD/DEEPSEAS/workshop/index.html>.
- **Seamounts & Canyons.** Running parallel to the Deep-Sea Sediments workshop will be a global workshop on the Biogeography of Seamounts and Submarine Canyons, organized by Karen Stocks of San Diego Supercomputer Center ([kstocks@sdsc.edu](mailto:kstocks@sdsc.edu)) and George Boehlert of Hatfield Marine Science Center. This workshop will also be held in Newport, Oregon in conjunction with the 10th

Deep-Sea Biology Symposium in Coos Bay.

- **DNA Protocol for CoML: “Barcode of Life”.** CoML experts Fred Grassle, Anne Bucklin, and Nancy Knowlton attended a 9-12 March Banbury Conference at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory near New York about “DNA and taxonomy” and more specifically about the possibility for very rapidly implementing a system of DNA sequences that identify species. This idea of barcoding systems from recent work of Canadian geneticist and CoML protagonist Paul Hebert (<http://www.barcodinglife.com/>), co-chair of the meeting. The DNA mariners are enthusiastic about developing the genetic dimension of CoML, and shepherded by Mark Stoeckle ([MarkStoeckle@nyc.rr.com](mailto:MarkStoeckle@nyc.rr.com)), are preparing a draft DNA protocol for CoML.
- **Specimens collected during CoML.** The Academy of Natural Sciences (ANS) in Philadelphia has been funded to hold an international workshop on behalf of several museums and other institutions likely to become involved in housing specimens collected under the auspices of CoML. The workshop will consider the challenges of CoML specimens and ways to assure best practices and access. D. James Baker, former Administrator of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and a strong supporter of CoML since its inception, now directs ANS, which is also the main mollusk node for OBIS. For more information, contact Gary Rosenberg at [rosenberg@acnatsci.org](mailto:rosenberg@acnatsci.org).

## **Calls for Proposals**

- **NSF RFP.** The U.S. National Science Foundation has released an RFP for “Assembling the Tree of Life”. Deadline for proposals is 5 May 2003. More information can be found at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2003/nsf03536/nsf03536.htm>