

Report on the ad hoc meeting
on the Future Role of the Council's Service Hydrographique

(The Council's Headquarters, 26-27 March 1982)

1. The Council decided by resolution C.Res.1981/2:4 that
"an ad hoc Group on the future role of the Service Hydrographique should be set up by the President in order to consider the role of the Service Hydrographique for the next decade, based upon
 - (a) the outcome of the Questionnaire on the Service Hydrographique
 - (b) the discussions in the relevant Committees, and bearing in mind cost/benefit considerations. This ad hoc Group should meet in Copenhagen for 2 days before the ACMP meeting, at the Council's expense".

At the same time the Council agreed that the group should consist of the President (Professor G. Hempel), the Chairman of the Working Group on Marine Data Management (Dr. M.T. Jones), the Chairman of the Hydrography Committee (Dr. L.Otto), the previous (autumn 1981) and the new Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Marine Pollution (Professor G. Kullenberg and Dr. A.D. McIntyre), the Chairman of the Pelagic Fish Committee (Mr. O.-J. Østvedt), the Chairman of the Working Group on Oceanic Hydrography (Dr. J. Meincke), and the Council's General Secretary and Hydrographer.

The Group met, with all members present, on 26 and 27 March 1982 at the Council's headquarters. The President chaired the meeting.

2. Among the documents available to the meeting were:

Notes, by the Chairman of the Hydrography Committee
C.M.1981/C:38: Synthesis of responses to the 1980 Questionnaire on the ICES Service Hydrographique, brought up-to-date by a supplement.
"Comments on proposals for new services and products", by the Hydrographer.
"Some remarks on the ICES Service Hydrographique - its past, its present and its future", by the Hydrographer.
3. It was noted that the Service Hydrographique had until now been concerned with the "classical" oceanographic data, mainly temperature and salinity, but to some extent also chemical data (mainly nutrients). The meeting agreed that priority should continue to be given to this type of data, but that in the future there would be a need to add new parameters, e.g. data on primary production. The Service Hydrographique should continue to be

selective in the data it banks, not only in forms of data type, but also in the geographic area covered (i.e. the ICES area) and the sampling interval of the data in space and time (e.g. filtered data).

The meeting considered that the tasks of the ICES Secretariat as a data centre would expand in the future. In addition to the Service Hydrographique, the Secretariat had throughout the time of existence of the Council operated as a data centre for fisheries data of the North-East Atlantic, and this task has expanded rapidly in later years. At the same time there is a need for collection of environmental data in a broad sense, including pollution data. Some such data originated from monitoring initiated by ICES and carried out under its auspices. They should undoubtedly be stored in an ICES data bank. In this connection attention was drawn to the ongoing discussions with the Oslo and Paris Commissions which most likely would lead to an official request to the Council to establish a joint data bank for pollution monitoring data, and to produce from it certain products (tables) for use by the Commissions. Some further types of data, such as data from young fish surveys and food-chain data would also most likely soon be added. Such types of data were already or would soon be handled by computer. It would then be most important that this development should be steered so that integration of the various types of data would be possible as the research and advisory needs would require.

The possibility of including some additional types of data was also discussed, f.i. data from remote sensing. It was agreed, however, that it would not be advisable to include these in an ICES data bank. On the other hand, it would be useful if ICES could keep and possibly issue regularly inventories of remotely sensed data. CTD data could only be accepted by the Council when filtered by National Data Centres.

4. In this connection the relation between the Service Hydrographique on one hand and the National Oceanographic Data Centres and the World Data Centres on the other was discussed. It was agreed that there is no real overlapping in tasks and responsibilities. There will be some overlapping in data holdings, which is necessary and beneficial. The National Oceanographic Data Centres are not geared towards the regional tasks undertaken by the Service Hydrographique and are unable to take them on on a continuing basis. The World Data Centres on the other hand are primarily data archiving and copying centres; the data are often in different formats and are not always quality controlled. They do not provide data products, summaries or analyses and

cannot give to the Council's members the type of service provided by the Service Hydrographique.

In earlier years the Service Hydrographique had to act as "temporary national data centre" for those of the Council's member countries which did not have their own center. This task is now fading out and will be terminated in the near future.

5. With respect to the cooperation between the National Data Centres and the Service Hydrographique it was stated that the national centres should be prepared to take on tasks which rightly would belong to them, but which as a result of the historical development had so far partly been handled by the Service Hydrographique. This concerns such tasks as quality control of data before they are submitted and editing of ROSCOP forms for publication in inventories.

The Service Hydrographique will still have to carry out its own quality control in addition to the national control. With proper national checking this task will however, be less time consuming than at present and will require much less correspondence.

It was noted that the development of the cooperation between the Service Hydrographique and the National Oceanographic Data Centres is one of the main tasks of the Working Group on Marine Data Management.

6. In this connection it was also noted that the Service Hydrographique had recently taken on the responsibility as Responsible Data Centre for Formats within the world-wide data exchange system. Since ICES has during the last 25 years (at least) played a leading and pioneering role in developing such formats, this will be a welcome continuation of these activities. It was noted that it would not mean any major workload in addition to what the Service Hydrographique would in any case undertake as a service to the Council's own member countries.
7. There was a consideration of the long-time series products so far issued by the Service Hydrographique (the so-called 100-year series, the inventories of oceanographic work at Ocean Weather Stations, and others). It was agreed that the value of such series increases more than linearly with their length. There has recently, i.a. with the establishment of the SCOR/IOC Committee on Climatic Changes and the Ocean (CCCCO), with which the Council cooperates, been an increase in the interest in such series in the oceanographic community. Some of the longest series in existence are related to the ICES area, and are deposited in the Service Hydrographique. It is therefore important that this part of the work should be continued and extended.

It was noted that the Service Hydrographique, at the request of the biologists, has for a number of years issued monthly charts of temperature and salinity in some areas, and some doubt was expressed concerning their usefulness. It was recognized that they, when bound in annual volumes, give a possibility for rapid orientation. It was believed, however, that they are not much used. On the other hand it was noted that there had been requests for extending their coverage to include f.i. the Baltic and the area west of the British Isles.

There was a consensus, however, that it would be of more value to extend the present series of anomalies, which so far cover only limited areas, and that this task should have a higher priority than continuation of the present chart series.

More emphasis should be placed on building up a comprehensive data bank from which charts can be produced more or less automatically as and when requested, rather than on the manual preparation of specific charts and their publication in hard copy form. This would require a more complete and timely submission of data to the Service Hydrographique and would give it greater flexibility in the type of service it could provide and, together with an increased automation, should ensure that charts could be produced on request. This would also avoid the need for having to decide from time to time whether or not a particular chart series is worth continuing.

8. As a conclusion of this part of the discussion it was agreed that the ICES Service Hydrographique is fulfilling a role which is not fulfilled by any other centre, and that it can not be replaced. It should therefore continue, both as a data depository and as an information and services center. Among its tasks data banking and issuing of inventories should still have high priority.
9. It was also agreed that another high priority item would be to continue to serve as an operational data centre for specific joint exercises (such as Overflow, JONSDAP, CINECA and BOSEX with such tasks as will be defined in each case. It was also noted that the Service was and would be involved in projects (such as the so-called Barents Sea model) where classical oceanographic data are integrated with information from f.i. biology.
10. Some participants said that they felt there is a problem of communication, in that the Service Hydrographique is operating to some extent "in isolation" with almost its only contacts to the ICES community being through the Hydrography Committee. The Council should endeavour to advertise it.

also in other Committees. The question was raised, if the name should be changed to cover all data center activities of the Council's Secretariat. The discussion lead to a consensus that this would not be advisable. The service rendered from the different ICES data banks will also in the future continue to a large extent to be different and directed towards different "customers". It was re-emphasized, however, that there must be a close cooperation and when needed, an integration between the different data banks (see para. 3).

11. While the "classical" oceanographic data have to be closely linked to the research based upon physical oceanography, the fisheries data will be equally closely linked to the advisory tasks related to fishery management, and the pollution data will be needed for advisory work by ACMP. It is therefore necessary that these different groups of data will continue to be supervised by the three professional officers of the Secretariat. Close cooperation is obvious where pollution data and oceanographic data are concerned, but may also soon be needed for instance in cases of combination of young fish survey data with oceanographic data, and possibly fish pathology data with pollution data. This coordination task will be an important objective for the Secretariat as a whole.
12. This lead to a discussion about staff and facilities. The meeting noted with satisfaction that the Council had last year agreed to upgrade to Systems Analyst a post of senior assistant attached to the Service Hydrographique, with the intention that he should primarily be occupied with handling the computerized bank of oceanographic data. It was agreed that one would for this post need a person with some oceanographic background, able to handle the computer tasks, and that ICES would not be well served by employing a person who primarily was a computer specialist.

In this connection the Hydrographer said that it was his view that with the rationalization that had been possible in recent years, and with the fading out of punching work, the present number of posts would at least for some years to come be sufficient for handling the tasks of the oceanographic data center (Service Hydrographique).

13. The meeting then considered in some detail the present tasks of the Service Hydrographique as well as those new tasks proposed in connection with the questionnaire. It was recognized that it is impossible now to oversee the development in about a 10-years period, and that requirements may change rather rapidly. It was also agreed that it is important not to loose continuity.

Most of the present and proposed future tasks have been commented upon above. The meeting's response to the additional tasks that were suggested is given below:

- (i) Establishment of long time series. These would be of great interest to oceanographers, biologists and meteorologists.
 - (ii) Collection of the salinity observations from water samples taken during the 70s for calibration of CTDs. The CTD observations during the 70s are of poor quality; so there is a need for collecting the supplementary data.
 - (iii) If a North Atlantic ships-of-opportunity programme is set up, the Service Hydrographique should act as a centre for the data. It should derive environmental products from the (pre-screened) data received.
 - (iv) When SCOR Working Group 51 have established criteria for CTDs the Service Hydrographique should be involved in the task of seeing that these criteria are met, as far as data from the ICES member countries are concerned.
 - (v) The suggestion that the Hydrographer should produce annual oceanographic overviews, based on all available data was welcomed. These would, if they can be made, not replace the brief summaries in Annales Biologiques, but would extend and supplement them.
 - (vi) The suggestion to store current meter data was not supported, except when especially decided in relation to defined cooperative exercises. Also, it was agreed that geological data would not be included in any of the data banks (except possibly future data on pollution in relation to sediments).
 - (vii) One task which was supported, was the need to "advertise" the services of the data center. This could be done through the ICES/CIEM Information, but a small brochure that could be periodically updated would also be useful.
14. On the basis of the preceding discussions on the future role of the Service, and the tasks it should fulfil, the requirements to a new Hydrographer was also discussed as the post would become vacant in two years time. He should be a physical or chemical oceanographer with several years experience, including some experience as a sea-going oceanographer. He should first and foremost have an interest in regional oceanography, but should preferably also have some experience in the use of computers.

15. Before closing the meeting at 1115 on 27 March, the President thanked the participants for their attendance and for a very constructive discussion. He particularly thanked the Hydrographer, Mr. J. Smed, for having prepared the documentation for the meeting, thereby very much facilitating the discussions.

