Discover Oceanography – bringing the classroom to sea

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What is Discover Oceanography?

Discover Oceanography is a 3-hour hands on interactive learning activity, based on the University of Southampton's research vessel *Callista* (Fig. 1) and delivered by staff and students from the university. The aim of the sessions is to promote marine education and awareness in a fun and engaging manner. The truly unique feature is that of the floating classroom. Having our sessions on a mobile platform allows us to travel to new areas and interact with new audiences, many of whom would normally have limited access to the sea.

The sessions are comprised of 5 different activities which give insights into the fields of marine biology, physical oceanography, geology and environmental science. During the sessions we utilise a variety of modern and historic sampling techniques (Fig.2) to showcase marine science. The session has an accompanying booklet which is used by the participants to record their own data.

Fig 1. R.V. *Callista* our 'floating classroom'

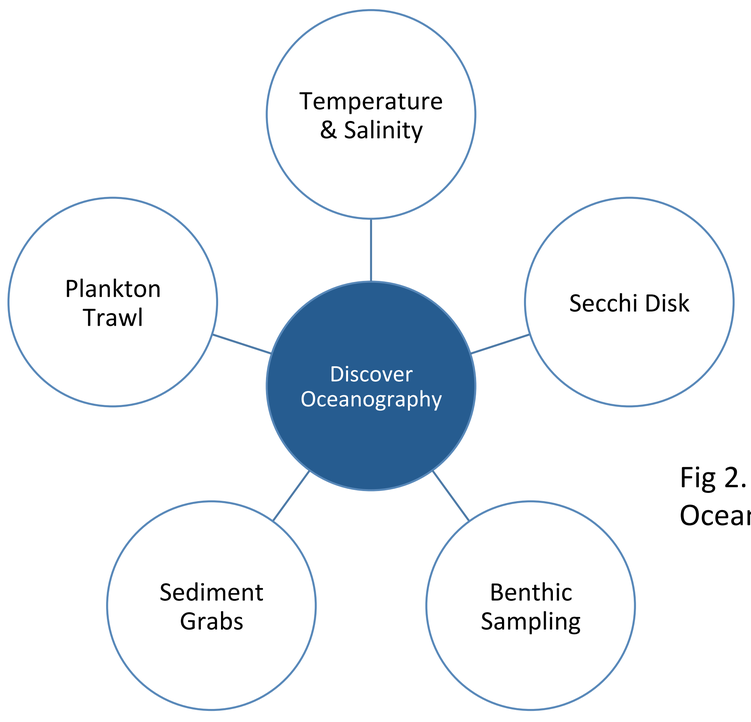

Fig 2. Typical Discover Oceanography activities.

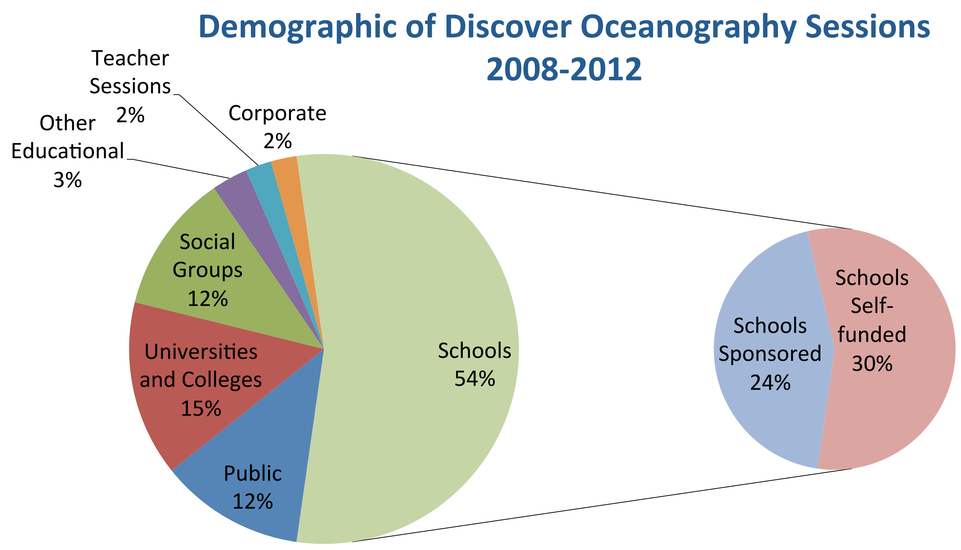

Fig 3. Discover Oceanography sessions to date. The majority of sessions are delivered to School children 54%, with 24% of schools utilising government funding.

Temperature & Salinity

Plankton Sampling

Benthic Sampling

Sediment Sampling

Secchi Disk

Educational scope

In very simple terms, the reason Discover Oceanography succeeds is that it is fully adaptable to any age and comprehension level. To date over 70% of the sessions have been delivered to educational groups, ranging from school children to undergraduates (Fig 3.) We have also delivered sessions to a variety of interest groups and members of the public.

Sessions run throughout the year. We typically deliver more than 45 sessions per year (Fig 4.). These sessions were created and are delivered with marine education at their core. We have had children come on board, who have in later years, appeared in our undergraduate cohort. Our main aim is to promote marine science and make people, especially young children aware of the impact human activity can have on the marine environment.

In order to reach a mass audience, in a short space of time, we also use R.V. *Callista* as a static platform at major public events such as boat shows and science festivals. This has allowed us to bring marine education to the wider public, such as at the 2010 Southampton boat show, when 8765 people came aboard over a 10 day period.

www.discoveroceanography.co.uk

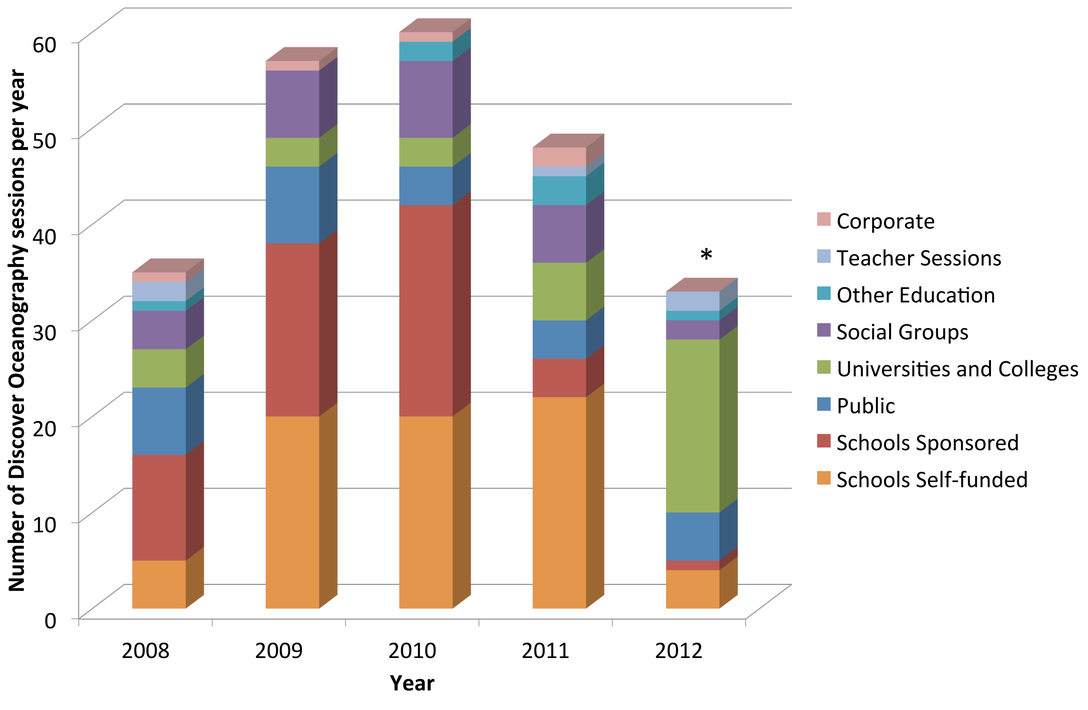

Fig. 4. Number and audience type of Discover Oceanography sessions per year, 2008-2012, * partial data for 2012.