Training in progress in marine laboratory.

New MarBEF scientific publications

By Ward Appelaton

Since the last newsletter, two new peer-reviewed papers have been added to the MarBEF Publication Series (MPS). The MPS holds scientific articles and reports that have been or will be published under the MarBEF banner. The MarBEF scientific steering committee has developed guidelines to acknowledge MarBEF as outlined in Appendix of the guidelines and rules document (http://www.marbef.org/documents/networkrulesandguidelines.doc). Congratulations to all and please inform us of your papers before they are printed by emailing info@marbef.org.

List of new MPS papers


MarBEF scientific progress

Publish wisely or perish? – an Open Archive for MarBEF

By Ward Appelton, Jan Haspeldag & Edward Vanden Berghe

WHILE SCIENTISTS are publishing around two million papers annually (Odlyzko, 1998), it is surprising to notice that this growing resource of information is seldom easily accessible, even to those scientists. Basically, it is the community at large that funds almost all research, so all information resulting from this research should in principle be publicly available. However, in reality, too many barriers (mostly installed by the publisher) are blocking free and open access to scientific information.

To support a fundamental change in this utterly self-destructive way of publishing, the MarBEF community – like many other scientific communities before – has the option to join the Open Archives Initiative.

The Open Archives Initiative is not a new concept. In 1991, Los Alamos was the first to embark on such an initiative, and created ArXiv (http://arxiv.org). Many new and successful archives emerged since (for a list, see http://openarchives.org/openarchives/archives). Some of these are already more than five million records from about 500 institutions.

The benefits of open access open archives are countless. The researcher gets a central archive for all his/her publications, for all to see. As a consequence, articles that are stored in open access archives are cited at least three times more than articles that are not freely available (Odlyzko, 2001). The quality of a paper is often measured according to the number of citations, so direct access of the results to potential users and readers is important for the scientists to get the recognition they deserve. As Appelton et al (2005) showed that in an average of 32 years, 20% of the articles on coastal biogeochemistry have never been cited, it is stated that this is actually a general situation. We claim that lack of open access is a considerable impediment for the dissemination of knowledge and can partly explain the lack of citations. This is strengthened by the fact that top leading journals in their research field prosecute open access. In contrast, more and more publishers are joining the initiative and, through more citations, experience an increase of their journal’s impact factor.

Other than costs related to the internet, the cost to get access to an open archive article drops to zero. Today, there is not a single institution or library that can purchase access to all the information of all its researchers or users require, and only the wealthiest and most powerful institutions can still pay for a reasonable bit of the literature pie. Additionally, the cost to access peer-reviewed publications mainly depends on subscription/license, online access/subscriptions, online access/subscription, online access, etc. and thus serve as a long-term storage of any scientific output in a legal and freely accessible way. The internet and ICT technology allow us to make scientific literature more accessible than ever before. Web-based open-access archives based on open source tools and systems allow everyone, each other through the Open Archives Information System, have become a powerful tool to search for literature and full text in different places, through a single search interface. OAIster (http://oaister.umdl.umich.edu/oaister/) is a good example and captures already more than five million records from about 500 institutions.

For further information and definition of terms relating to open access issues, please see the following sources:

http://www.columbia.edu/~peterl/oai guide.htm
http://www.sherpajep.org/romeo.html

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References


MarBEF training

By Jens Harder

SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE requires lifelong training. The MarBEF joint training programme for marine biodiversity aims at an efficient and effective use of the experience within the MarBEF network to foster biodiversity research in Europe.

Training and knowledge exchange is supported by MarBEF on several levels:

Short-term Sabbaticals - Researchers from one MarBEF partner institute can work for up to three months at a second MarBEF partner institute. Although it is hoped that mainly students and postdoctoral researchers will use this tool to exchange active knowledge, the short-term sabbatical is also a means to facilitate the writing of international grants applications.

Training courses - MarBEF has initially supported training courses in taxonomy (phytoplankton, porider, cephalopod) and molecular techniques (Flow cytometry, software for the taxonomy of microorganisms) to meet the network’s immediate training requirements. Some future training courses have been scheduled within MarBEF themes and RMPs. Early in 2005, the MarBEF scientific steering committee defined the MarBEF long-term strategy for training. A call for training courses was opened on www.marbef.org. The training courses offered by MarBEF partners will be reviewed by the MarBEF scientific steering committee in the light of relevant current and evolving priorities of the MarBEF research programme. This long-term strategy of training will evolve,...