

Managing oceanographic data in the frame of large multidisciplinary programmes, a Belgian experience

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Since 1970, the Belgian Science Policy administration foster the marine research through large multidisciplinary scientific programmes. In this frame, data management has always be a concern but, most of the time, for the duration of the project only. In the nineties, the need to have a permanent structure for managing the data collected by means of public finance for the benefit of all and to ensure their perennality has become an evidence.

The "IDOD" project was launched in 1997 as part of the phase I of the "Scientific Support Plan for a Sustainable Development Policy" (SPSD). It soon transformed into the permanent "Belgian Marine Data Centre".

Through all these years, many and very diverse research were undertaken, most of them by groups of a few academic units. Since a few years "clustering projects" manage to provide an aggregated synthesis of several research. The same effort is done for data management by the BMDC.

Since its creation, its challenge has been to incorporate the various data types in a meaningful and useful way into one sole structure. Bird counts, salinity profiles, DNA chains, sediment granulometry, relations of post-mortem examinations of stranded marine mammals, ..., are no more to be considered as isolated data sets, but as interdependent views of the same ecosystem.

At the dawn of the third phase of the SPSP, the presentation will describe and illustrate the data flows from the field or the labs to the data centre, the relationships with the data providers and the users, the data policy and the structure and mechanisms of the integrated information system.