

Bridging the Gap between Ocean Science and Education: creating effective Partnerships through informal educational Institutions

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Abstract-A gap exists between scientific research and science education. This gap is both spatial (oceanographic research is generally far-removed from educational institutions such as schools, museums, and science centers) and temporal (textbooks and exhibitry are difficult and costly to keep updated). Sea Floor Science is a new initiative of the Ocean Institute in Dana Point, California and funded by the National Science Foundation. This three-year project seeks to develop a new, innovative model for bridging the gap between scientific research and education. This model incorporates new approaches to the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of exhibits and programs. Fundamental to the model is the development of mutually beneficial partnerships with members of the research and technology communities. The results are exhibits that translate and interpret ongoing, cutting edge oceanographic research and the associated technology, and programs that create a direct connection between scientists and educators, students, and visitors. The importance and relevance of the work is thus communicated to a wide-ranging audience of teachers, students, and the general public. Current partners include Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Texas A & M's Institute of Nautical Archaeology, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, UCLA's Virtual Cultural Reality Lab, and the MIT DeepArch Research Group.