News

A global Deep-Sea biodiversity data-sharing platform

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In the 4th issue of Deep-Sea Life, Appeltans & Webb (2014) reported on the deep-sea biodiversity data in the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) and the fact that there is a general decrease in the availability of biodiversity data from the deep sea since the 1990s.

The urgent need for a global deep-ocean data repository to provide baseline information for impact assessments and area-based management and decision-making in the deep sea has been expressed by Mengerink et al. (2014) and was called for in a statement from Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI) to the International Seabed Authority in May 2014. Both suggested building upon the already existing OBIS.

Tim O'Hara and Derek Tittensor (leads of INDEEP (International network for Scientific investigation of deep-sea ecosystems) working group 2 on global biodiversity & biogeography) together with Maria Baker (INDEEP Secretariat), Karen Stocks (Scripps, Census of Marine Life deep sea synthesis project) and Ward Appeltans (project manager OBIS) have brainstormed on what could be done to develop a deep-sea biodiversity data repository or data-sharing platform.

We propose that institutions holding deep-sea biodiversity data could provide data through the OBIS nodes in their country or region. Data in these nodes are regularly added to the global OBIS database. In case there is no national or regional OBIS node, data holders will be able to use the data-sharing platform hosted at the OBIS secretariat. OBIS can develop a customized, online deep-sea view on the global database providing open data access, mapping, data download and web services in a format appropriate to the deep-sea community.

We also propose to organize a data training workshop in 2016 at the OBIS secretariat co-organized by INDEEP and use this opportunity to start the development of standardized, controlled vocabularies to describe deep-sea datasets (e.g. specific habitat terms, station names, sampling protocols).

We would like to invite an expert from the deep-sea scientific community to volunteer as the manager of a new global thematic OBIS deep sea node, which means he or she would coordinate this effort through networking, communicating and steering this important activity. We invite you to get in touch with us if you are interested in helping shape a global deep-sea biodiversity database. Contact Ward and Maria in the first instance: w.appletans@unesco.org and mb11@noc.soton.ac.uk

References

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