



The Ocean in Depth - Ideas for Using Marine Technology in Science Communication

A. Gerdes

MARUM - Center of Marine Environmental Research, University of Bremen, Germany; Email: agerdes@marum.de

By deploying camera and video systems on remotely operated diving vehicles (ROVs), new and fascinating insights concerning the functioning of deep ocean ecosystems like cold-water coral reef communities can be gained. Moreover, mapping hot vents at mid-ocean ridge locations, and exploring asphalt and mud volcanoes in the Gulf of Mexico and the Mediterranean Sea with the aid of video camera systems have illustrated the scientific value of state-of-the-art diving tools.

In principle, the deployment of sophisticated marine technology on seagoing expeditions and their results – video tapes and photographs of fascinating submarine environments, publication of new scientific findings – offer unique opportunities for communicating marine sciences. Experience shows that an interest in marine technology can easily be stirred in laypersons if the deployment of underwater vehicles such as ROVs during seagoing expeditions can be presented using catchwords like “discovery”, “new frontier”, “groundbreaking mission”, etc.

On the other hand, however, a number of restrictions and challenges have to be kept in mind. Communicating marine science in general, and the achievements of marine technology in particular, can only be successful with the application of a well-defined target-audience concept.

While national and international TV stations and production companies are very much interested in using high quality underwater video footage, the involvement of journalists and camera teams in seagoing expeditions entails a number of challenges: berths onboard research vessels are limited; safety aspects have to be considered; copyright and utilisation questions of digitalized video and photo material has to be handled with special care. To cite one example: on-board video material produced by professional TV teams cannot be used by the research institute that operated the expedition.

This presentation aims at (1)informing members of the scientific community about new opportunities related to marine technology, (2)discussing challenges and limitations in cooperative projects with media,(3) presenting new ways of marketing scientific findings, (4) promoting the interest of the media present at the EGU09 conference in cooperating with research institutes.