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Diving Down in Partnership - Technology assists science outreach

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Advances in underwater technology are revealing a world hitherto unseen - the deep ocean. Advances in web technology are enabling scientists to share their discoveries with the world. Underwater robot cameras are allowing scientists to observe animal behaviour and study habitats at depths of 6000 metres. And the Internet is providing a window on this exotic world for everyone with access to the web.

The UK's National Oceanography Centre, Southampton operates Isis, a scientific deep-diving remotely-operated vehicle (ROV). The results are phenomenal, producing footage of life in the abyss and the ability to take samples and conduct experiments on the ocean floor. The Centre also hosts a novel project making use of the robot cameras used in the oil and gas industry for maintenance and exploration. Scientists are using this equipment during stand-by time to study animals in their own habitat. The SERPENT project - Scientific and Environmental ROV Partnership using Existing industrial Technology - is an international collaboration with industry, academia and museums. The SERPENT website is updated with the latest information and images attracting some 2000 visitors a month, which is set to rise with recent web developments.

A vital part of the Centre's role is communication with the public to increase awareness of the marine environment. Images are essential for outreach especially as audiences continue to seek pictures from remote and inaccessible locations. This talk will explore how TV and the Internet are changing science outreach and the new challenges that it brings.