

Canadian Hydrographic Conference 2006

The Canadian Hydrographic Conference 2006 was held at the Westin Nova Scotia Hotel in Halifax, Canada, from 6th to 9th June. Conference was preceded by a number of Technical Workshops held on 5th June. As we have come to expect from these Canadian conferences, there was ample fare, both in terms of technical discussions and warm hospitality, all arranged in meticulous detail qua timing and venue by the hardworking Organising Committee. A total of approximately 440 persons and 43 exhibitors attended. Canadian hydrographic vessels, both old and new, in the form of the CSS Acadia and the CCGS Matthew were berthed close to the hotel and open to all attendees. Both vessels have contributed in their own way to Canada's maritime heritage; the CSS Acadia being the first hydrographic vessel specially built to work in the Arctic, and CCGS Matthew having installed the most recent multi-beam acoustic system.

An ongoing feature of one of the workshops provided discussion on Uncertainty Measurement, while other workshops dealt with Data Management Structures. Canada, as the originator of the CARIS system, is well placed to host such discussions. Technical papers were given and discussions took place in the following sessions:

- Sovereignty: Law of the Sea
- Ocean Management of Seafloor Mapping
- Products and Services: 21st Century Products and Data
- Security: Marine, Ports and Harbour
- Transportation: Modern Charting Requirements
- Hazards: Emergency Response to Environmental Events
- Oceanography: Water Levels and Ocean Modelling
- Fisheries: Seabed Classification and Habitat Mapping using Multi-beam methodologies
- Marine Archaeology: The application of hydrographic techniques to historical and paleo-research
- Technology: Selected advances in Hardware and Software

Several trends could be noted in papers and discussions. These included the continual broadening of hydrography to provide data for many kinds of marine research. Although fisheries research may appear the most obvious of these, the use of data in such academic areas as marine archaeology demonstrates its wider value. Multi-beam system development continues to show progress as a tool not only for measuring seafloor morphology but also oceanographic structure within the water column. Earlier conference papers dealt with the ever-present subject of data management and the creation of electronic-chart data. The pressing need to issue national claims to areas beyond 200 nautical miles offshore was addressed by several Canadian authors, who focused considerable attention on the Arctic. Last but not least came the matter of tides, several papers discussing water-level measurement for both navigation and disaster prediction and management. It is interesting to note that tides were raised as an important issue in uncertainty management and a subject requiring further research.

Exhibition stands were arranged in close proximity to the lecture theatre and individual exhibitors contributed to various forms of refreshment. This resulted in a useful and casual flow of participants through the exhibition area. In terms of subject matter, exhibits covered the waterfront from new hydrographic products shown by the UK Hydrographic Office to interesting new developments from Canada, including a new free-fall penetrometer. Added to these there was the usual array of data-management software, data-collection hardware and institutional awareness, such as the stand staffed by NOAA Office of Coast Survey.

Altogether this was a most comprehensive conference, well organised and well attended, and we must now train our sights on the next North American Conference, planned south of the border at Norfolk from 14th to 17th May 2007.