

Core Business

The buzz is all about those other purposes, apart from safe navigation, for which hydrography is used nowadays. The blue economy is upon us and we'll have to prepare the field of hydrography for the future, seizing opportunities in oil & gas, renewables, coastal and marine planning, fish farming, etc. This is not only good for the hydrography sector as a whole, but branching out might also be the key to companies' survival in the years ahead. Funds are drying up and surveying vessels are being phased out. As a result, everybody is talking about new ways of acquiring data, such as crowdsourcing or airborne and satellite bathymetry. Among all this, however, it can be easy to lose sight of the core business of hydrography: providing up-to-date charts for the maritime world to ensure safe navigation at sea. A task not to be taken lightly, and a task that is also not easy to fulfil. Governments are not always willing, keen or able to allocate money to a service that is invisible to many, often deeply hidden in the navy or other defence departments, performed by hard-working people who have less well-developed lobbying skills. If a (re)survey of a part of a region is not foreseeable in the short term, hydrographic offices should take up their responsibility and point out the dangers of waters which are uncharted or were last surveyed a long time ago. In this edition of Hydro International, Ian Russell's very readable article, 'Casualties of the Nautical Chart' on page 18, outlines the need for crews – for instance, those on cruise ships who are sailing in unfamiliar waters – to better appreciate the limitations of charts when regions have not been fully surveyed to modern standards. The article on pages 15-21 of the previous issue of Hydro International on ['The Rocknes Casualty – A Chartmaker's Retrospect'](#) by Kvamme, Langvik and Breivik, touches on the same subject. It underlines the responsibility that rests with Hydrographic Offices around the world to share their knowledge about possible flaws and their task to increase the appreciation of charts, instead of covering up the fact that charted data is often very old and little more than an indication. If Hydrographic Offices and other professionals in the chart business were to shoulder this responsibility, in addition to the most significant outcome – fewer shipping accidents stemming from the incorrect use or interpretation of navigational charts – there could also be another worthwhile side effect: demonstrating to the users of the charts, the policymakers and the general public that (re)survey for the sole purpose of safe navigation is still a very necessary goal that deserves funding, and even more importantly that it is downright dangerous to skimp on surveying expenditure. No lobbying skill is required to convey this message that could bring funds back, because it is simply a matter of reemphasising the business that still very much forms the core of Hydrographic Offices and is close to the hearts of many professionals working within them.