Multidisciplinary Ocean Studies

Increasing global environmental awareness means that endeavours impacting any geographical area are subject to cumbersome processes in order to get clearance from government and, often, non-government agencies caring for preservation of natural resources, wildlife, human aborigine settlements and other factors involved in project development today. The coastal zone is not free from this reality, and projects like port construction, pipe-lay, bridges, dredging and many others are subject to environmental evaluation.

This new reality demands a wide variety of hydrographic and oceanographic studies directed at assessing the baseline and foreseeing the future impact of the project in hand upon the coastal zone. Hydrographers face a whole new scenario wherein a wide variety of disciplines has to be integrated to get the environmental â€˜instant pictureâ€™ of an area and, based on it, foresee both positive and negative consequences of any project. The situation demands hydrographers integrate with other disciplines and achieve the necessary synergy to get specialists from different fields involved in looking towards a common objective.

Never before have hydrographers been so intensely confronted with this spectre of multidisciplinary studies. The response must include not only integration of efforts but also enhancement of the scope of specialist knowledge and simultaneous demands for review of course plans to incorporate environmental regulations (which differ from country to country) and specific subjects adequate to understanding this interesting and challenging new scenario.

This is particularly true in countries where environmental regulations are under development, implying that hydrographers could face situations that both differ from one country to another and are subject to continual change. This is an impetus towards even more demanding specialised areas of hydrographic study applicable to maritime engineering, which means new opportunities to enhance the scope of this science beyond what we understand as hydrography today.