

Streams of Data

The acronym ECDIS (Electronic Chart Display and Information System) has been in use for a good 15 years. The chart display part is getting more and more content (i.e. ENC coverage) and can be considered operational, but what I consider to be the information part (i.e. some form of integrated pilot, tidal atlases, list of lights and radio signals, etc.) is lacking. While sailing in the Caribbean (oh, poor me!), I had to consult various hydrographic publications to plan cruises, including guides for yachtsmen. I have to admit, it is not too bad to go through the books to find the best bays – but it could be far more efficient. There are a few 'isolated' projects of digital hydrographic publications, which combine pilots, currents atlases, etc., for example, the Digipilot, which the Netherlands Hydrographic Office demonstrated at the last Extraordinary IHO Conference (Monaco, May 2007). I wonder what the recent co-operation between Jeppesen (who are just entering the hydrographic charting arena) and the German BSH will bring to standardisation of digital nautical information.

There are various definitions of data fusion (the theme of this issue of Hydro International), and it may not be strictly correct to see ECDIS (or an ECS+) as a data fusion process, given that data from different sources are combined to improve information or even to give intelligence to systems without human intervention.

However, I do have some comments on going digital.

As a general remark: we should not do it because it is technically possible, but because it is what we want and what we need. Regarding the security of having information available: ships are audited for almost everything? whether certificates for fire extinguishers, shackles, life rafts, etc. are still valid; whether the hydrographic publications are up to date, etc. However, is the same attention paid to the proper working of the supply chain of digital hydrographic data?

To mention just a few examples: ?. The license administration of a chart supplier. The license for your ship expires either in a normal way or it is caused by omissions in the administration at the chart supplier – giving you problems with your ship-shore communication, and you stand a fair chance your screen will turn black after a certain period. ?. What if the server/computer of a chart agent breaks down? How will ships get the data and updates they need for safe navigation (for example, when they are about to depart for sea, will they have to delay their departure?).

I recommend paying attention to these aspects and suggest that mariners will be happy if they keep some essential books and charts at hand in case any of these circumstances arise.

We would like to announce a change to the Hydro International team.

We warmly welcome Giuseppe Angrisano as a new member of our Editorial Board. Rear Admiral of the Italian Navy (ITN) retired, Giuseppe Angrisano was commissioned in 1957 and specialised in Hydrography in 1965. He commanded various ITN vessels including the oceanographic ship Magnaghi. He was Hydrographer of the Navy from 1987 to 1991. From 1992 to 2002, he was Director and then President of the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB). From 2002 to 2005, he acted as Deputy Representative of Monaco at the IMD. He lives in Barcelona (Spain) and co-operates with the EL FAR Consortium for activities of Sail Training International.

Enjoy your read!