

**Non-traditional Education Panel  
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**Innovative Outreach and Education Projects**

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Our ability to educate the planet's citizens about the oceans, whether they are politicians, fishermen, housewives, children, or environmental managers, will play an important role in determining the future of the sea and ourselves. Success in public outreach and education about the oceans requires the use both traditional and non-traditional methods, and the development of innovative ways to reach the ocean's constituency – all of us.

Personally and at the Rosenstiel School where I am currently the Assistant Dean, I have sought effective means to promote ocean understanding and stewardship. I'd like to tell you about several innovative projects completed, currently underway or in the planning stages.

Through a unique partnership between Royal Caribbean International, the University of Miami Rosenstiel School, the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Office of Naval Research the cruise ship, *Explorer of the Seas*, has been outfitted with a suite of sophisticated atmospheric and oceanographic instrumentation, two modern laboratories and an educational program. Each week, as the ship cruises, instruments placed strategically throughout the vessel collect data and send information to the labs. Some of the data is then sent via satellite to scientists on shore, while other information is processed aboard the ship. The Explorer's repetitive cruise track allows scientists to obtain, for the first time, a continuing series of high-resolution, regional ocean and atmospheric measurements. In conjunction with the ongoing research, an educational program has been established onboard the ship. Hundreds of passengers are availed tours of the laboratories and public-oriented presentations about marine or atmospheric science. We have also helped to create hands-on displays aboard the *Explorer* in two eco-learning areas and a website where real-time data can be viewed or a virtual tour of the labs taken. An unexpected benefit of the program has been that scientists and graduate students are given an opportunity to interact with the public and they come away inspired by the interest and support encountered. The participation of qualified researchers, graduate students and educators from other institutions or agencies is strongly encouraged. For more information on the program and how to participate please visit [www.rsmas.miami.edu/rcel/](http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/rcel/).

For approximately one year we were the editorial partners for the daily radio spot, *Our Ocean World*, produced by Finger Lakes Production and run on over 200 NPR stations nationwide ([www.ouroceanworld.com](http://www.ouroceanworld.com)). This 90-second radio spot incorporated the latest in ocean research and interviews with respected scientists with lively sound effects, witty writing, and easy to understand explanations. We were very proud to be a part of this effective outreach project. Unfortunately, after the economic downturn of late 2001, the sponsor for the show could not renew and they are currently looking for new sources of support. This is a continuing challenge in ocean outreach efforts. Funding is difficult to obtain and most efforts do not fit within the traditional funding mechanisms for ocean science.

Locally, we have been afforded an excellent opportunity for outreach due to the extraordinary vision and support at Miami's NBC affiliate, WTVJ/NBC 6. Their EcoWatch project runs a news story about the environment once or sometimes several times a week. They have also set up a website, are working on educational collaborations, and in partnership with the Miami Herald produced an EcoGuide. Some 500,000 copies of the EcoGuide were printed and distributed as an insert in a Sunday Miami Herald. The EcoGuide included several pieces about the oceans. I also write a bi-weekly column on the oceans for the EcoWatch website ([www.nbc6.net/ecowatch/](http://www.nbc6.net/ecowatch/)), act as a consultant on ocean issues, recommend experts and story ideas for news pieces and frequently appear as an on-air expert. This has been an extremely fruitful collaboration for ocean outreach and education.

During the University of Miami's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, The Rosenstiel School held a mural contest for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms entitled, "People and the Sea". The mural contest was a fun way for students and their teachers to explore through art how people are connected to the ocean. A list of key words, such as beaches, ships, conservation, fishing, coral reefs, and recreation were provided to the contest participants to be incorporated into the mural. The murals submitted were fabulous and teachers reported that it was both an enjoyable and effective learning experience for their students. We held an award ceremony at which educational resources were awarded to the teachers from the winning classrooms. In addition, an interactive presentation event entitled, "*Cool Creatures of the Sea*" was created to provide the students and their families with a fun learning experience about the oceans. It was such a hit, that we have taken it on the road to several places and are currently seeking funding to make it a traveling event. *Cool Creatures of the Sea* combines incredible graphics with audience participation and fun, educational information. It is specifically targeted for kids and their family, provides a fun venue for learning about the ocean, and students get to interact directly with the speaker, a scientist, who then becomes a role model.

I have also personally taken on the challenge of communicating ocean science to the public. In 2000 I published a popular science book, *The Oceans*, which was also published in Spanish and as a paperback. My goal with the book was to pass on to the public a general understanding of what we know and do not know about the oceans and much of the knowledge I have gained from my experience working with a wide variety of experts, technicians, divers, explorers, and programs. While I am extremely proud of the response to the book by scientists, I am even more gratified by the positive comments of the non-scientist audience. The book has also lead to other outreach opportunities with the media and some unexpected surprises. I have been acting as the technical advisor for a Hollywood scriptwriter on an ocean-based movie and am now working on several fronts to bring earth and oceans news through television to the public.

Now, more than ever, ocean outreach and education needs the support of our nation's political, financial, and media leaders. For without their help, we cannot sustain excellent programs already in place, whether they are formal and informal methods of education, nor can we develop and implement, on a long-term basis, innovative and effective ideas.