

Russian Oceanography is Still Alive

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Despite the difficult economic situation in science in Russia, which makes official participation of the country in the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP) impossible, Russian scientists have never stopped their efforts in oceanic studies. These efforts have continued during the last decade in two important directions:

First, Russian oceanographic expeditions have continued, although at a lower scale, into different parts of the Ocean. Recently, such cruises were performed in the Sea of Okhotsk, Barents Sea, and Laptev Sea. These cruises were conducted in partnership with other countries.

Secondly, Russian scientists have been involved in Ocean Drilling Program planning to study the Arctic Ocean. This basin, which many believe has played an important role in climatic changes at least in the northern hemisphere, remains a peculiar "white spot" of our planet. The geological history of this basin is virtually unknown so far.

Taking this fact into consideration, geologists from the Institute of the Lithosphere of Marginal Seas, Russian Academy of Sciences, compiled and issued several tectonic maps for different Arctic and North Pacific marginal sea basins during the last decade. They include separate bilingual (Russian and English) maps of the Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, Barents Sea, and Kara and Laptev Seas, accompanied by extensive (similarly bilingual) explanatory notes. These maps are widely acknowledged by the scientific community in Russia and abroad as works summarizing a great scope of the factual material on bottom morphology, tectonic structure, sedimentation, and geological history of these basins, as well as relevant data on geology and evolution of their adjacent continental margins.

Temporal isolation of Russian scientists from the world community is not as harmful for them as it could be, due to communication channels provided by the international aspect of the ODP. One such channel is provided by the Russian Micropaleontological Reference Center, that was established by the Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP) administration at the Institute of the Lithosphere of Marginal Seas long ago. Since that time, it has been a source of information for Russian scientists who use reference collections of microfossils to familiarize themselves with the latest scientific achievements in the oceanic studies. In addition to the microfossil collection, the center is now the only scientific body in Russia that keeps the complete set of Initial and Scientific Reports issued by both DSDP and ODP. It also feeds an optimism of Russian scientists and their hope to take part in future drilling ventures such as the Multi Platform Drilling Program and Nansen Arctic Drilling Program.