



## Editorial

Rather than simply discuss the contents of this issue, let me raise some contentious issues concerning our profession. Hydrographic surveyors were at one time the experts on positioning at sea but with the introduction of satellite systems this expertise seems to have moved into the hands of academics and other specialists. The institutes of navigation now provide the forum for discussions. Just recently we have finally seen the European interests make their point that the US funded Global Positioning System is unreliable in terms of it being totally controlled by the USA. They have persuaded the European Community to heavily invest in a new system called Gallileo. My own feeling, no doubt strongly disagreed by pro-Europeans, is that it is nice to have but a waste of taxpayers' money. Another matter of contention has been the need to keep Loran-C going, as a back up for the satellite systems. Certain individuals argue strongly for this position and at present Loran-C is actually being extended in some parts of the world, something that I quietly argue against. However recent developments using satellite time signals to provide precise time monitoring of Loran-C signals have further encouraged the continuation of that system on the grounds that it can provide a short period of high accuracy positioning even if GPS fails. Added to this, there are even requests that the Loran-C lattices be shown again on the charts. This is hardly necessary in these days of coordinate converters available in most receivers. However with the fateful date of 11 September not far behind us there is considerable concern that all satellite systems could go out of action and that a completely independent back-up is required.

Another contentious matter is how much should HOs permit Industry to invade their traditional markets? Traditionally most Hydrographic Offices have given first attention to commercial shipping, or SOLAS vessels as they are sometimes called, but several HOs are finding that the real revenue comes from recreational craft. This matter is compounded by the fact that charts for recreational craft are also produced by commercial companies and the truth of the matter is that these companies tend to be more innovative in their products than government offices. In the USA this becomes less of a problem because government policies support the virtually free distribution of government data. In many other HOs cost recovery is demanded and this encourages the HOs to be ruthlessly competitive in the market place, sometimes going to great lengths, via the courts, to stamp out competition. Does this lead to the greatest safety of navigation? Recreational craft owners in most countries, have all the discretion in the world to pick and choose their products. It is clearly best that the private sector design and build user friendly, useful and timely products on whatever media the client wants. Getting more boaters to use charts is better for everyone, information is provided by the HOs in return for royalties and Industry gets more business by providing the direct user service.

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