



## Editorial

In our determined effort to inform our readers on the broad spread of hydrography, this issue places some emphasis on Law of the Sea matters. This followed the ABLOS (Advisory Board on Law of the Sea) Conference, which was held at the International Hydrographic Bureau, Monaco, in October 2005. This conference, unlike its predecessors had moved attention away from the technical problems of Article 76, defining the Continental Shelf, to Part XIII of the UN Convention on Law of the Sea, which deals with Marine Scientific Research (MSR). We have selected to reproduce in this issue, two papers that particularly address the legal background and the problems that may be faced by marine scientists and hydrographers. The demarcation between research that is carried out purely in the interests of scientific investigation and research or data gathering that is carried out in pursuit of some military or strategic industrial interest, has long been a matter of contention. Not directly relevant to MSR but one that has taxed the IHO through its publication, *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, is a paper on the UN approach to geographical names.

On the matter of technical interests the subject of LIDAR comes once again to the pages of this review. On the one hand there is a paper describing the significance of this tool to quickly upgrade charts in a complex area that would have taken a considerable time to survey from marine platforms. On the other hand is some cautionary research discussing the matter of object detection by LIDAR. The ability to reliably detect objects is critical to not only the validity of surveys used for chart production and maintenance but also for purposes such as mine detection. Manufacturers of sonar systems are only too well aware of the difficulties of object detection and now it follows that this must also be the concern of the LIDAR manufacturers and users.

The Australasian Hydrographic Services have long been known for their interest in providing explicit information on the quality of their surveys. It is many years ago that Australia advocated the inclusion of source or reliability diagrams on its paper charts. It was a natural follow up that that country should draw up the rules how this information should be shown on digital charts. The procedure was to develop zones of confidence, so that the navigator would have explicit information on just how he/she might trust the information provided. The Australian views have been explained fully in an earlier issue of this review. It is now the New Zealanders to discuss the approach taken in their country. Unfortunately this determined approach has not been adopted universally and many hydrographic offices remain reluctant to inform the users of their ENC's (Electronic Navigational Charts) on the quality of the information provided. Presumably this is either from a lack of information or from concern that it leads to explicit liability for their products.

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