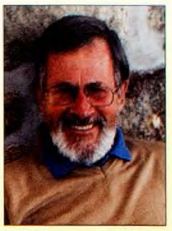

Editorial

This issue includes something for everyone, from tidal matters to Law of the Sea. Following an idea raised previously, two papers have been kindly offered for translation and reproduction from the French language "Annales Hydrographiques" that is published by the Service Hydrographique et Océanographique de la Marine.
This approach encourages the availability of papers written for a primarily national readership in French to an international audience. The two papers in question discuss matters of tidal reduction and vertical datums. The latter topic is becoming increasingly important as the community seeks greater precision in its offshore surveys.
A paper from Nigeria discusses straightforward hydrographic operations but work that is of great importance to secure the safety of shipping by the clearance of wrecks. The matter of delimitation in very particular geological conditions addresses the circumstances to be found in the sediment thickness regime in the Bay of Bengal and provides an exception to the general case covered by Article 76 in a special statement of understanding. As the ten year deadline approaches that States have after their ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty, interest and work to define national claims is heightening. Moving then to a paper describing particular technology discusses mechanical engineering approaches to permit rapid sampling of seafloor characteristics from a vessel using a penetrometer that can be deployed while a vessel is undserway. The small Canadian company producing the equipment is finding an international market for its product.
Finally developments of electronic charting systems are not forgotten. The increasing realisation is recognised in this paper that digital charts systems can provide more than just a facsimile of the paper chart but a complete information system. Although there is some reluctance to change the hard won standards such as S-57, there is a growing feeling that the navigator must have other tactical information readily available. In this case it is information on sea ice and the paper describes a method of providing such information to the system and displaying it in conjunction with chart information.
The very diverse nature of this issue tends to emphasise the similarly diverse nature of modern hydrography. Data management, as opposed to data collection, is a clear cut trend in recent years. Collection systems whether they be in the transporting vehicles or the electronic or mechanical measuring systems, have become exceedingly expensive but also much more productive. This has raised the need for much greater efficiency in the processing and management of the data. In turn, a far greater diversity of users has surfaced. No longer is hydrographic data just used to make navigational products but it is the basis for many other users of the sea, which include the hydrocarbon industry, fisheries and those who are involved in defining the boundaries that delimit the ownership of these resources.

Adam J. Kerr, Editor