The Global Oceanographic Data Archaeology and Rescue Project (GODAR): Sea Level Data Proposal

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At its meeting in May 1999, the IOC Group of Experts on the Global Sea Level Observing System (GE-GLOSS) discussed the need for data archaeology of historic sea level records in order to possibly extend existing time series and/or gain access to observations which are not in digital form. Following on from this, a member of the GE-GLOSS attended the GODAR Review Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland in July 1999, and suggested that sea-level data also be included in the GODAR project.

The GODAR sea level proposal is this. In many countries there are considerable amounts of historical sea level data in paper form such as charts or tabulations. These need to be computerised (a) as a backup for data security, and (b) so that they can be subject to modern quality control and data analysis. The data can then be used for the various GLOSS-related activities described in the GLOSS Implementation Plan (e.g. GLOSS--altimetry (ALT), GLOSS-long term trends (LTT) etc.).

Of course, the originals records (charts, manuscript tabulations, etc.) would not be destroyed. There are two main reasons for this: (i) general common sense (and sometimes they are historic documents), and (ii) they may contain further information which is not captured by the computerised version (an example might be that charts might be digitised to hourly values, but that might miss seiche or tsunami information).

The formalities of this situation include:
(1) such an activity having been discussed at GLOSS Experts meetings, and recognised as being vital. Clearly, GLOSS and other important sites (e.g. those with long records) should regarded as priority sites.
(2) such an activity has been started in a couple of regions already e.g. in Europe (EOSS, MedGLOSS), USA (Gary Mitchum/NOAA Atlantic programme) and Canada (MEDS).
(3) it was raised at the GODAR meeting last year (following the GE-GLOSS-6 meeting) as noted above.

At the very least the GE-GLOSS would encourage all countries to:
(A) Assess their holdings of historical tided gauge data which can potentially be rescued.
(B) Convey that information to the Permanent Service for Mean Sea Level (PSMSL) which can act as a contact point.

Following on from this, we would propose that IOC/GLOSS would:
(C) Undertake an action to put countries in touch with each other and with sea level organisations with regard to collaborative data rescue.

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