

Message in a bottle? Communicating ocean science training and education at sea

Pauhla McGrane¹, Karen Wiltshire², Annette Wilson² and Eva-Maria Brodte²

¹ Strategic Marine Alliance for Research and Training, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Dublin Road, Galway, Ireland
E-mail: pauhla.mcgrane@gmit.ie

² Bioscience, Shelf Sea System Ecology and Coastal Ecology, Alfred-Wegener-Institut, Biologische Anstalt Helgoland und Wattenmeerstation (Sylt), Hafenstraße 43, 25992 List/Sylt, Germany

Training students of ocean science and technology at sea is essential in producing skilled, fully-rounded graduates who can address the problems affecting our oceans and who can operate at sea. Open ocean, research vessel-based training provides a perfect platform on which to build and deliver innovative outreach and ocean literacy programmes. Communicating from the middle of the Atlantic for example, captures the public imagination, drives media interest and ultimately creates awareness of our oceans. It also helps to inspire the next generation of marine scientists, policymakers and ocean professionals who will manage our future ocean. However, communicating from what can be a hostile environment also presents unique challenges, particularly in terms of the technology required and the logistical considerations involved.

The Strategic Marine Alliance for Research and Training (SMART) is an Irish marine education and training cluster that, since 2011, has provided multidisciplinary offshore training for over 1,500 students. SMART enhances and adds value to training by encouraging students to capture on-board activities in the form of videos, blogs and images and circulate through social media, to inspire and educate. Similar communication strategies have been applied to other International collaborative training surveys under the Ocean Training Partnership and the Eurofleets2 framework programme. Using a number of International case studies Pauhla will provide existing examples of successful offshore communication strategies and future activities to ensure communicating training at sea is more effective than a message in a bottle.