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The Bridge Web Site: Growing and Sustaining Partnerships Between Ocean Science and Education

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Introduction

When physicist Tim Berners-Lee and a team of fellow scientists at the European Center for High Energy Physics (CERN) launched the first-ever Web site in 1989, their goal was to make it easier for scientists to access research documents and scientific data (CERN, 2008). In 1998, Virginia Sea Grant educators at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) had a similar goal: to make ocean science educational resources and current research data more accessible to classroom teachers. The Virginia Sea Grant education team took the first step toward accomplishing this goal by launching a Web site of its own, called "Bridge." The name was inspired by the idea of a ship's bridge with a teacher at the helm, navigating "an ocean of marine education data." It also represents a bridge spanning the divide between the education and the ocean research communities, which is the essence of the Bridge project's mission.

Ten years later, Bridge (<http://www.marine-ed.org/bridge>) is an established and widely known online resource for educators, and for scientists connecting with the education community. The Bridge project is committed to educational excellence. This commitment has been reflected in awards from the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) for excellence in partnering (2001), from the Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant Marine Advisory Programs for outreach (2003), and from the National Marine Educators Association (NMEA) for significant contributions to marine education (2004). Its growth and success are due in large part to the strength of the original partnerships that built the project, and which continue to support and expand its efforts. During its 10-year history, Bridge has continued to build partnerships that have broadened Bridge's reach and deepened its impact.

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