

Job opportunities at OBIS (Ocean Biogeographic Information System)

The global ocean, and the life within it, is under threat – biodiversity loss caused by global warming, ocean acidification, sea-level rise, overfishing, and other human-induced changes, occurs at an unprecedented rate. While numerous scientific studies are under way to document this biodiversity loss, most are focused on a local or regional level, when a global approach is warranted.

The Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS, www.iobis.org) is the world's largest online, free access, repository of spatially referenced marine life data, designed to provide the global biodiversity data needed to inform management of the global ocean. By pooling the results of many individual studies, OBIS is creating an information base commensurate with the problems facing humankind. OBIS aims to stimulate research and generate new hypotheses on evolutionary processes and species distributions by making data accessible over the Internet and interoperable with other data systems, and serves as a source for information-based governance of ocean biological resources. OBIS actively works with global initiatives such as the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative and the Convention on Biological Diversity to integrate scientific information into the international decision making process of management of the marine environment.

At present, the international secretariat is hosted by Rutgers University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences in New Jersey, USA. A global network of Regional and Thematic OBIS Nodes assures the worldwide scientific support needed to fulfill its global mandate. Created as the data integration component of the Census of Marine Life (CoML), OBIS has grown beyond its original scope and now integrates data from many sources, over a wide range of marine themes, from poles to the equator, from microbes to whales. In April 2010, OBIS held over 25,000,000 species distribution records, from over 100,000 different species and 750 datasets.

The first Census of Marine Life will conclude at the end of 2010. In order to prepare for this milestone, the OBIS Secretariat is looking to hire several collaborators, on a temporary basis, on hourly wages. Several tasks have to be completed, so candidates with any of the three profiles listed below are welcome to apply:

Web page development/Education: OBIS is redesigning its web pages; the existing educational and outreach pages, available on www.iobis.org/edu/ should be updated, and expanded with a set of instructional pages on how to use the new web site. One of the 'lesson plans' should be a demonstration of how OBIS data can be used to inform management in case of catastrophes like the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. We are looking for a **biologist or environmental scientist (MSc or EdM preferred, or equivalent experience) with good writing and educational skills**. A good understanding of the internet and educational web pages is essential. For technical issues, the candidate will be able to rely on others.

Data management: At the end of this project phase, OBIS wishes to enhance the flow of data into the database, and to step up the quality control efforts. Data from existing sources should be abstracted (sometimes digitized) and integrated

with existing OBIS content. Harmonising the taxonomy used in different sources, and standardizing the spelling of taxonomic names, is one of the many challenges in this venture. We are looking for a **biologist (MSc preferred, or equivalent experience), preferable with a background in marine sciences, and an understanding of the taxonomic literature**. Proficiency with computers, including spreadsheets is a must. Experience with databases is an added advantage.

Data analysis and tool development: In order to turn data into information, OBIS is embarking on a series of analyses of the present database. The very nature of the process by which data are made available to OBIS creates strong geographic and taxonomic bias in the content; finding analytical techniques that remove this bias is one of the main challenges. We are looking for a **biologist, environmental scientist or computer scientist (MSc or PhD) with analytical skills**. Previous experience with GIS applications and/or statistical packages is essential. Experience with large databases and SQL is an advantage.

All three positions will be based at the Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, Rutgers University. Remuneration will be on an hourly basis; the level will depend on previous experience. Candidates for a part-time position are welcome to apply; however, a minimum of 20 hours per week is expected. If interested please contact

Edward Vanden Berghe
OBIS Executive Director
Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, Rutgers University
71 Dudley Road, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Tel 732 932 6555 ext 565
Email evberghe@iobis.org