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LESSONS LEARNED FROM DATA MANAGEMENT OF LARGE SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS

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Large scientific projects dispose of data management plans which mostly do not work satisfactorily, though technology now allows to archive and distribute data from observational programs with nearly no quantity limitations. This paper describes the lessons learned from the IGBP JGOFS Project (Joint Global Ocean Flux Study). The operators of the ICSU World Data Center for Marine Environmental Sciences (WDC-MARE) took over the responsibility to collate all distributed published data of JGOFS into the PANGAEA system after the termination of JGOFS following its WDC mission to serve “the whole scientific community by assembling, scrutinizing, organizing and disseminating data and information”. WDC-MARE agreed at a meeting of the JGOFS Data Management Team (DMTT) in 2002 to convert, harmonize and archive all available data sets, make them accessible through its online search engine and publish them as “International Collection of JGOFS” on CD in 2005. This resulted in a coherent, organized compilation of existing data sets produced by member countries having participated in JGOFS. The fact that a “data rescue” action had to be conducted despite of an existing data management plan in a big international project clearly shows deficiencies of those plans. To avoid similar troubles in future projects in particular in IPY new approaches have to be implemented. Citable publication of data in electronic journals will provide a promising way of future data management.