

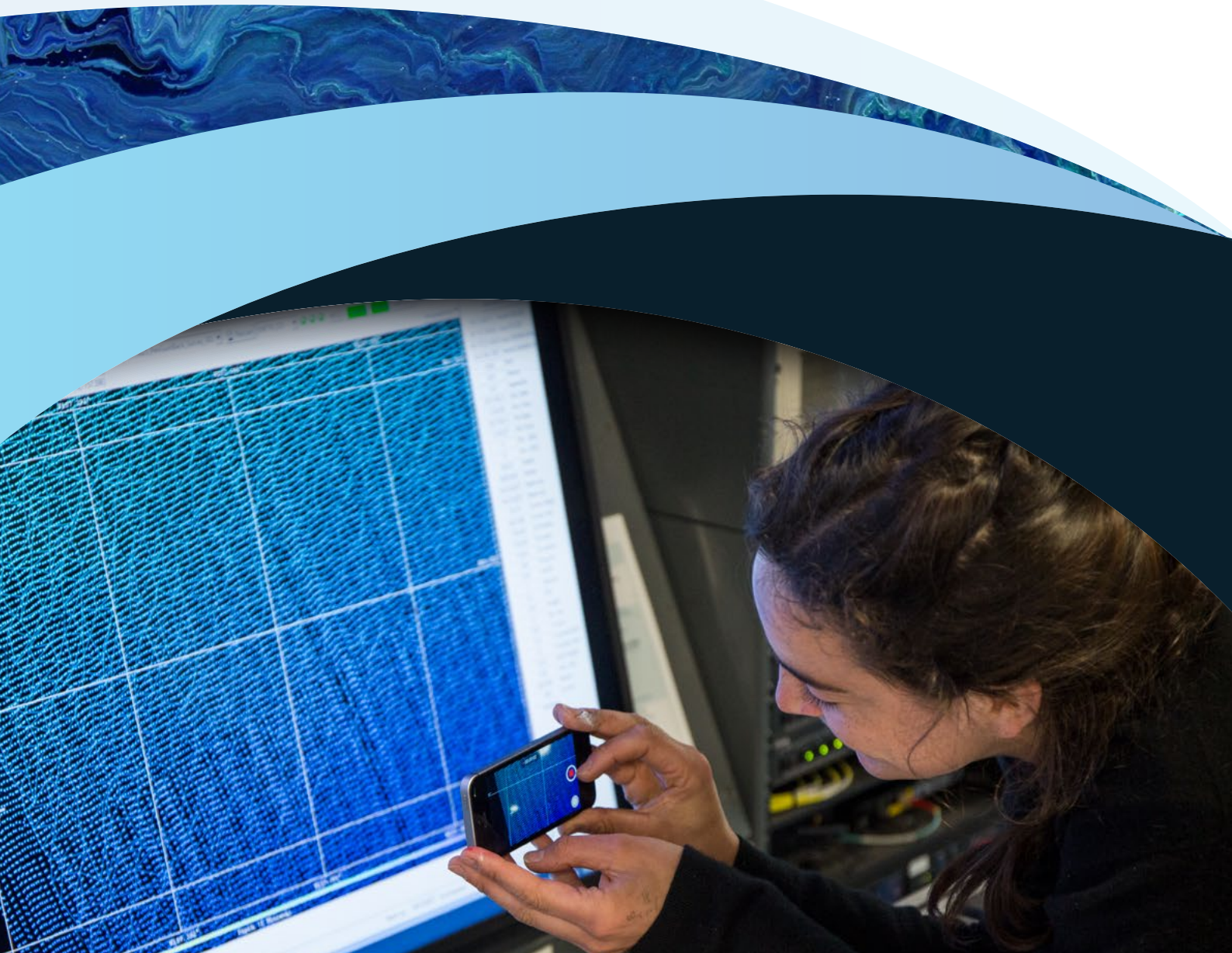


Ocean Rising

THE QUEST TO INSPIRE THE PUBLIC



SOCIAL MEDIA



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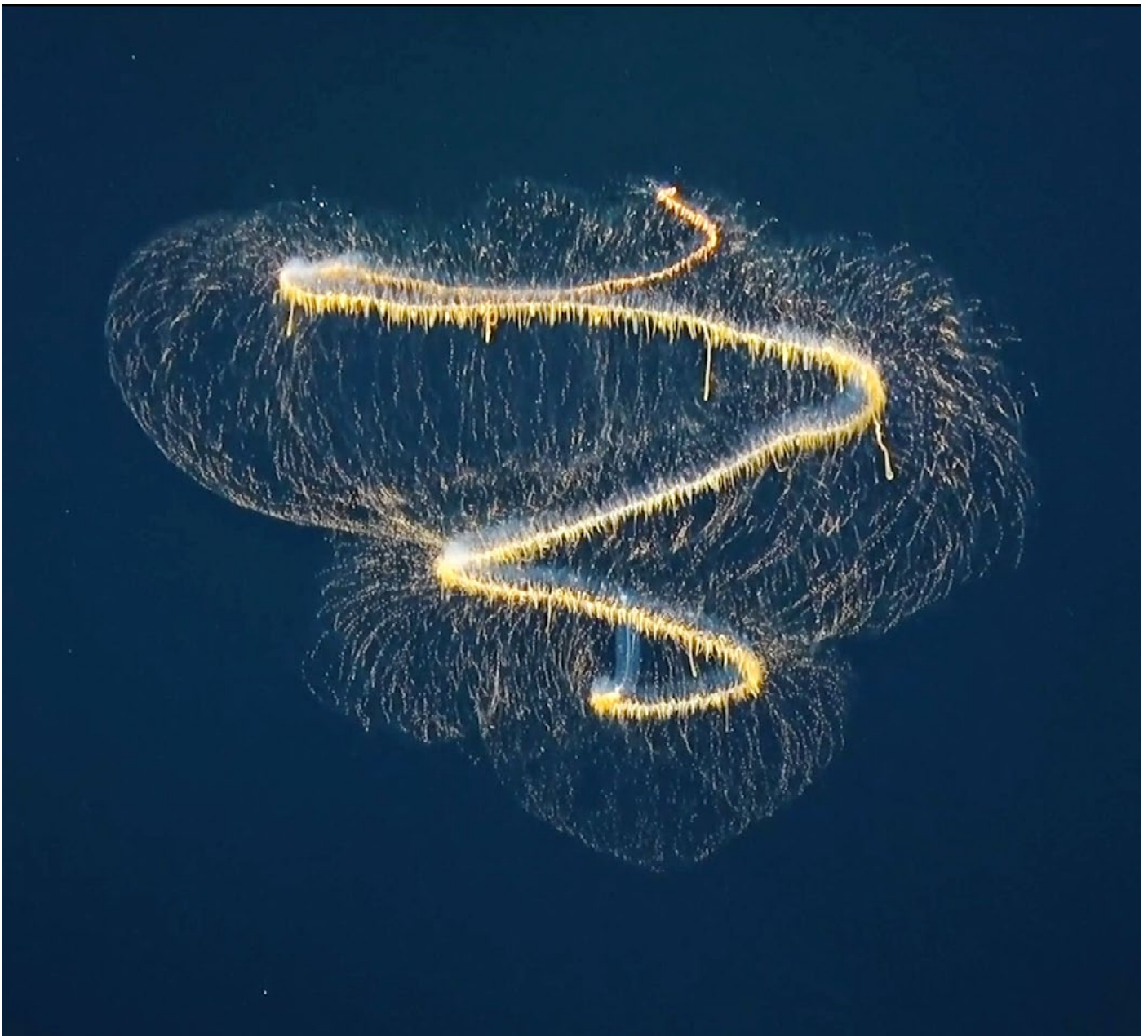
THE QUEST TO INSPIRE THE PUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

Our modern world came to a standstill in 2020, with the global COVID-19 pandemic pausing the fast-paced existence many of us led and proving unequivocally that existential threats are not just the stuff of Hollywood disaster movies. What steps would humanity have taken if we had known years in advance the turmoil that 2020 would unleash? We can't change our past, but we can, with global knowledge and awareness, act to create a harmonious and healthy future.

While often not at the forefront of conversation on the global stage, our ocean is the backbone of climate and life on this planet. Every day we see signs of its impact - in our weather, in nature, along our coasts. It is used to transport goods across our globe, feed more than half the population, and keep humans breathing. The ocean is a magnificent resource that quietly gives to all, but is taken for granted and rarely recognized for the role it plays in planetary and human health. In order to change this status quo, we need to inspire the public about the ocean as they are inspired by space.

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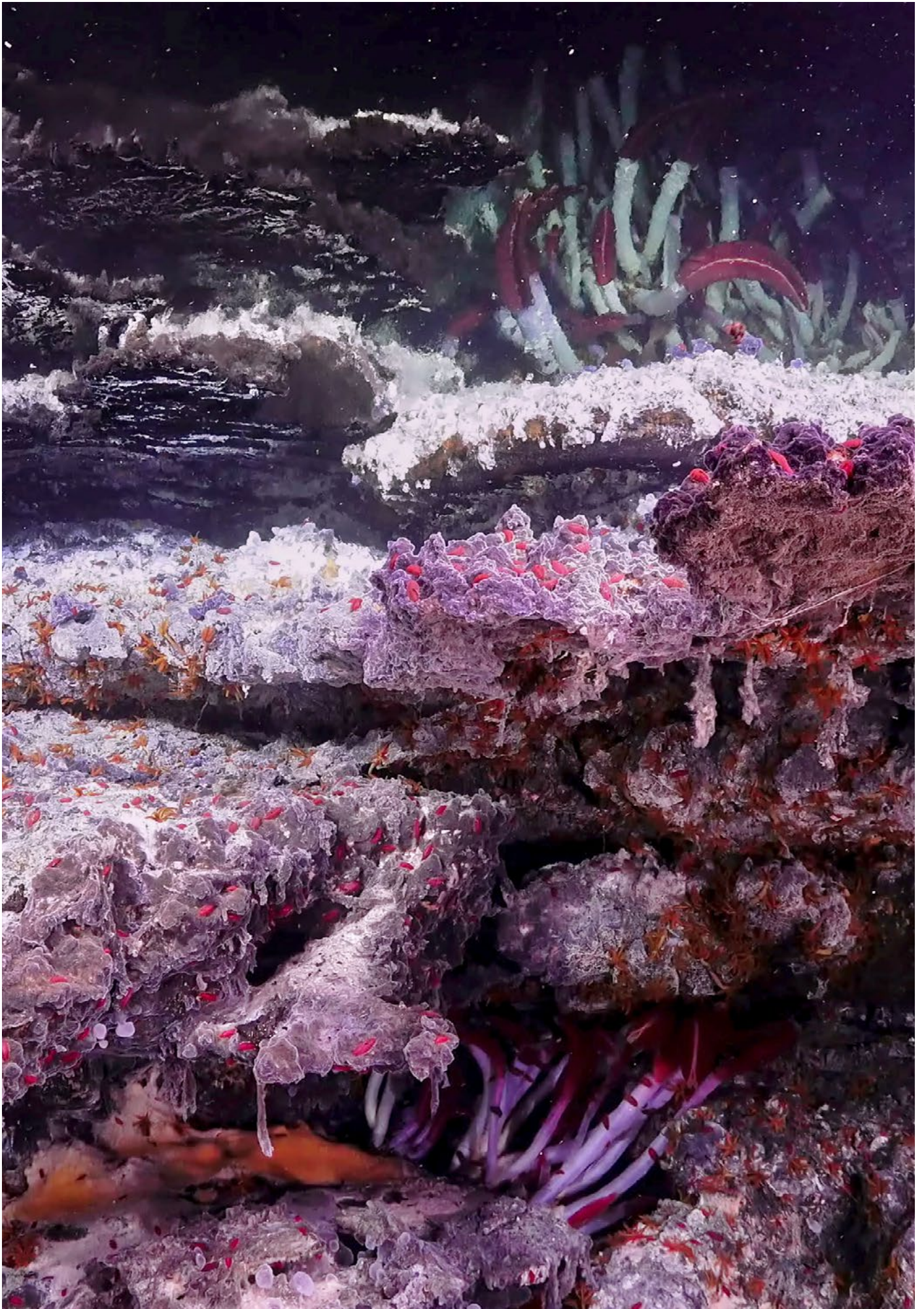


SPACE AND OCEAN INSPIRATION

Technology makes it possible to walk the deepest depths of the ocean and see alien marine life without leaving your living room; however, there is a greater interest in searching for life on other planets. More than 21 million people watched the rover, *Perseverance* touchdown on Mars to begin its rock-collecting mission and search for signs of life, but when a marine scientist brings back volcanic rock from deep sea hydrothermal vents teeming with new life forms, the public barely blinks.

Those who explore the oceans, discovering alien life forms and strange and marvelous landscapes on a daily basis, often wonder why public interest in space exploration is so much greater than in ocean exploration. Is it simply because anyone can see the stars but not everyone lives by the coast, and those that do cannot see what hides beneath the sea surface? No - research shows there is more to this dichotomy than meets the eye.

The two communities have distinct and critical differences in how they inspire and engage a broader audience (Virmani, 2017). While space stories are generally positive, trigger the imagination, and are focused on exceptionalism, coverage of the ocean is negative and tends to be driven by pragmatism and problems. Popular culture and future technological inspirations revolve around space stories, whereas ocean tales are typically set in the past. Conversations about the ocean often have a call to action, which may alienate or even bore a segment of the population. Space conversations differ in that they encourage fun and creativity and although space is currently out of reach for most people, space narratives are mission-based and more easily understandable. Ocean narratives are often idea-based and therefore harder for people to grasp, perversely, making the ocean more inaccessible.



THE CHANGING TIDE

Presently, with the world's attention focused on human health and the economy, the ocean has fallen further down the news agenda. The good news is the growing interest in all forms of science, and a hunger to reconnect with our natural world with positive stories that lead people to explore all frontiers and achieve positive climate action. We have an opportunity to reframe the ocean as exciting, interesting, and spectacular.

As we aim to build back better in a post-COVID world, how do we get the populace to consider the ocean and its impact on our livelihoods, and inspire the public in substantive and meaningful ways? Ocean science is now available for public engagement, bringing in data visualization, technology, and the arts. The tools are in place for experts from all walks of life to convey the story

of the ocean, weaving key messages in unexpected and new ways into our everyday culture. We must expand the reach beyond those connected to the ocean through geography, sport, or career to connect our cultures more deeply to the ocean.

Creating various engagement points and tactics will help to reach diverse and inclusive audiences as every community is different and should be considered. In light of this, we argue that the key to transformation is targeting established industries outside of the community by providing successful examples, identifying what is missing, and making suggestions for a way forward. This paper will take prior recommendations on how to inspire the public and put them into an actionable framework, at first engaging five different industries:



Each sector plays a critical role in defining our diverse cultures and shaping human behaviour. We encourage readers to explore each section individually or read in its entirety, and to share widely with those who have not yet engaged with

the ocean. Our hope is that we can familiarize the public with the ocean – not just making them aware of its plight but engaging them with innovative and inspiring solutions.

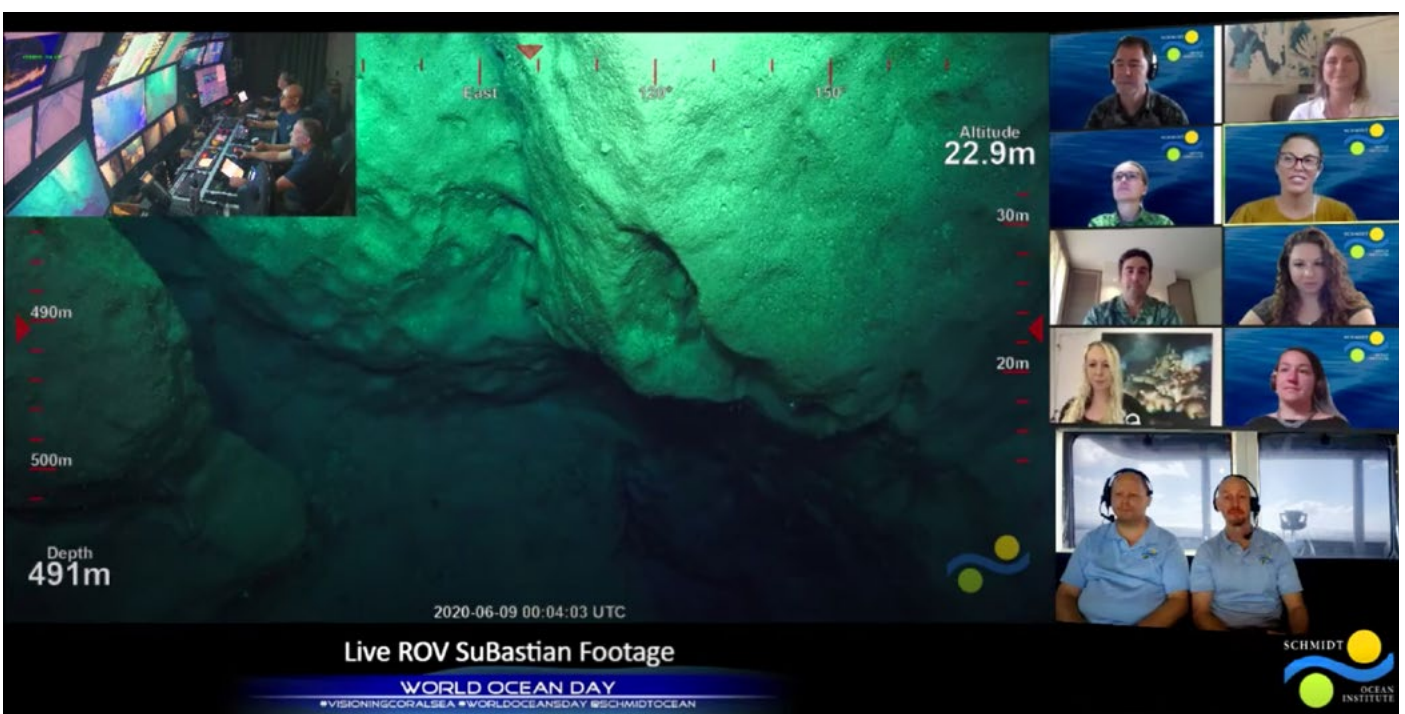




Social Media

Online platforms for social interaction have had a significant impact on the dissemination of information to a large number of people globally. The generations who have grown up with it have shifted away from terrestrial media and are reliant on social sites for content generation, including news, podcasts, and entertainment.

Social platforms create opportunities to develop societal connections to the ocean, but it can be difficult to get a message across the plethora of information.



Online celebration of World Oceans Day 2020





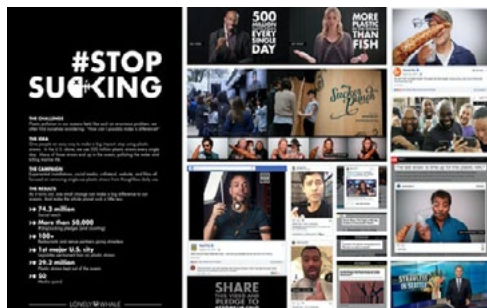
WHAT ARE GREAT EXAMPLES?

TAKE ACTION CAMPAIGNS

Movements with wide-spread appeal that provide an action for the public to engage with are important. The plastic ban campaigns such as #OneLess (2016), [#banplasticsKE](#) (2015), and #StopSucking (2017) provides strong examples. The #banplasticsKE for example, was created by one activist, James Wakibia, who inspired Kenya to ban single-use plastic bags.

Another plastic campaign that illustrates the democratic power of social media is [The Alternative](#) Facebook group. Created by Aditya, a 16 year old boy in India to discuss the effects of plastic and how its consumption could be reduced. Like the #StopSucking challenge, Aditya aimed to eliminate plastic drinking straws, and managed to keep 26 million straws and two million other plastic items from getting dumped in landfills. In just two years, he convinced over 150 entities including golf clubs, hotels and cinemas to go plastic-free.

The [#StopSucking](#) campaign took rise in 2017 from the Lonely Whale Foundation, and challenged people to #StopSucking and cease use of single-use plastic straws. After the campaign launched, it quickly went viral with celebrity endorsements from Adrian Grenier (the co-founder), Ellen Pompeo, Russell Wilson, and Emmanuelle Chiriqui. The campaign led to several plastic straw bans in many U.S. cities and challenged large companies like Starbucks. The [#ThankYouOcean](#) campaign, which received the Coastal America Award in 2008 is an additional online movement that went viral. The California-based campaign united voices to promote everyday actions to protect the ocean through a PSA, ad campaign, a toolkit for communicators, a website, and a podcast series. The participatory postings of people thanking the ocean brought a united appreciation. A user-generated social media competition about marine litter grew global awareness about waterway pollution with similar success under the UN Environment [#CleanSeasPhoto](#) campaign.



strawlessocean.org/stopsucking

OCEAN PODCASTS

According to Statista (2020), there are 700,000 active podcasts and 29 million episodes each week in the United States, and over 155 million people listening. This is a growing market globally that offers a way to focus on a variety of ocean topics, presenting the problem and solutions as well. As of April 2021, more than 40 ocean-themed podcasts exist, ranging from ocean science to careers in marine biology, to diving and surf stories.

One podcast of note is Nekton's [Catch Our Drift](#) with Dr. Helen Scales and Oliver Steeds. This podcast is different as it engages both ocean scientists and conservationists with those outside the ocean space, including actors, writers, musicians, and athletes. This combination and interest-based approach allows for a broader audience while still imparting knowledge, analysis, and opinion on ocean topics. "We aim to reach as wide an audience as possible by offering up a mix of inspiring, exciting, and entertaining stories that show how the oceans seep into so many aspects of our lives," says podcast host Helen Scales. "A key approach we've taken has been to interview voices from outside the ocean sphere, from the TV and music industries, chefs, artists and so on, with the hope of engaging listeners who don't necessarily identify themselves as 'sea people'".



catchourdrift.org/

Two other notable examples are the [World Ocean Radio](#), a weekly series of five minute audio essays that cover a wide range of ocean issues with host Peter Neill, and the World Surf League's PURE podcast [One Ocean](#) with Reece Pacheco, who speaks with activists, artists, athletes, and academics about ocean conservation, sustainability, and how to take action to save our seas.

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UNDERGROUND OCEAN

Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Vine have grown influencers, topics, and sub-cultures about the ocean that have blossomed into the mainstream, especially among youth. The virtual [Seapunk](#) genre is the most notable example. More recently, a large cult following of [all things mermaids](#) has created a community of those who dress in tails and promote the ocean.

At age 13, Riley Hathaway from New Zealand began [Young Ocean Explorers](#) with her father. Their educational platform has expanded views through social media, gathering more than 1.6 million content views. How do we continue to make ocean trends from these new platforms and use their influential power to make the ocean mainstream?

WHAT ARE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES?

In 2018, Instagram had more than one billion users, and that number has continued to rise. Sponsored posts exceeded 6.1 million in 2020, and with that comes a growing influencer market worth more than \$2.3 billion (MediaKix, 2020). Instagram offers one of the most far-reaching channels for public influence, but could be utilized for more than just commercial marketing. Some of the most prominent ocean influencers include divers like [Ocean Ramsey](#) (1.3m followers), surfers like [Kelly Slater](#) (2.7m followers) and [Bethany Hamilton](#) (2.1m followers), and photographers like [Brian Skerry](#) (930 k followers) and [Thomas Peschak](#) (1.2 m followers). However, if you compare this to other influencer categories, some of the ocean's "best" don't even stack up. According to Stastica (2020) the top Instagram influencer themes include beauty and fashion (19.2%), fitness and yoga (8.6%) and music (7.3%). At the bottom of the list, technology and science (0.6%), within science, the environment and ocean are not even listed.

How can we permeate these top categories with ocean awareness, and connect otherwise disparate themes? We might infiltrate the popular beauty and fashion influencers with more ocean connections using trends like [ocean hair color](#) and [ocean wave hair](#), or work with influencers like model and actress [Alexis Ren](#) (14.1 m followers) who uses her platform to highlight ocean problems. While most follow her for fashion tips, she educates along the way and has set up a startup, [Future Prosperity](#), selling aspirational lifestyle goods while recovering a pound of ocean plastic for every product purchased. Let us find more Alexis Ren's to make ocean health a mainstream topic across all influencer categories.



Ocean wave hair

WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

The ocean is certainly discussed across social platforms, but comparatively is not a topic on most people's radar. As part of the planetary system, the ocean should be included in the wider discussion across all topics from fashion to sports. At a time where climate concerns are rising into bipartisan political discussion and mainstream public consciousness, it is critical to ensure that the ocean is positioned within this discussion. To usher in these conversations it will require the help of those who can reach many. There is a lot out there, and people have busy lives, so ocean issues must be made relevant to them, wherever they live.

Many ocean vessels offer live streams of dives showcasing never before deep sea imagery and unique ecosystems. On average, these are viewed globally by thousands but are significantly underutilized. Imagine if Sir David Attenborough, Oprah Winfrey or China's Lu Yu hosted and narrated a live ROV dive? The opportunity to view and learn from these exciting, discovery-filled expeditions should be mass media events, similar to NASA, where there is excitement across broad swaths of the population instead of a niche segment. Let's start to get creative where everyone is connecting to the ocean in new and unexpected ways – where is the next sea shanty trend or ocean meme?

Next Steps

The above-mentioned examples are just a few of the efforts that connect the public to the ocean. We need to engage with the cross-section of the public that is not connected to the ocean in any way, and explore those sectors of our popular culture that have a global reach. How do we make knowing our ocean a celebrated experience? Businesses, artists, sports people – all can help to inspire the public about the ocean, engage new audiences, and bring the ocean to topics of dinner table conversation.





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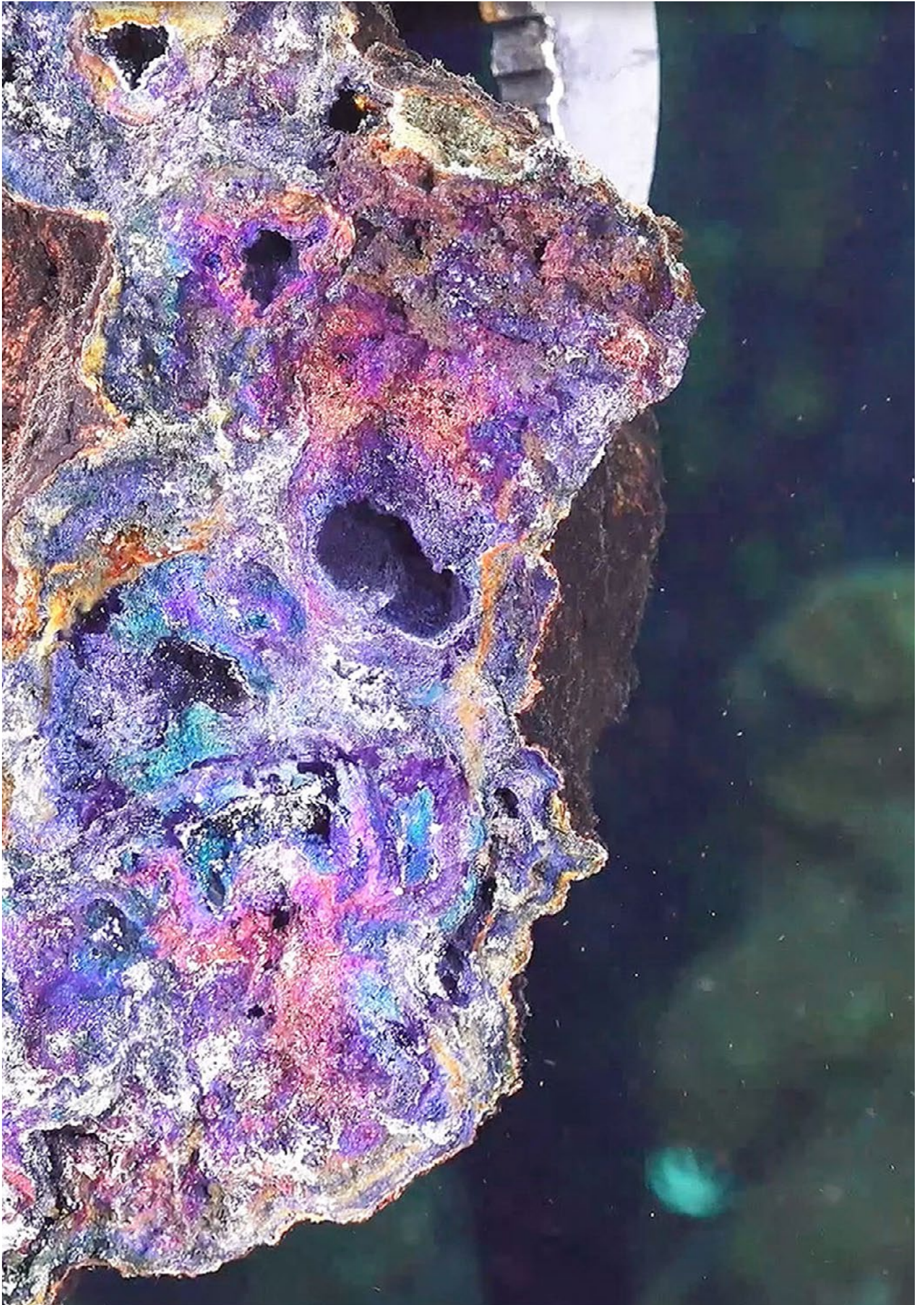
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NEKTON

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