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## A 1958 snapshot of oceanography: the 83<sup>rd</sup> CNRS international colloquium

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In May 1958, an international colloquium, *La topographie et la géologie des profondeurs océaniques*, was convened by Jacques Bourcart (1891–1965) in Nice-Villefranche, under the auspices of the C.N.R.S., with the proceedings published in 1959 (Bourcart, 1959). About half the participants were from France (including Monaco and Tunis), with international visitors coming from Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United States. The conference comprised a week of presentations and discussions (a few per day), and four excursions, most notably on 11 May via the vessels *Calypso* and *Winaretta Singer* to explore “Coupes topographiques des vallées sous-marines de Nice.” Participants also viewed the film *Mars et Neptune* (Ertaud & Tailliez, 1957) about diving techniques and including pioneering underwater color footage.

The conference proceedings and pursuant discussions provide a disciplinary temporal snapshot not only of deep-sea marine geology and topography (as per the volume title), but also of tectonics and the nature of continental margins, as well as of physical and biological oceanography, and of developing methods in oceanographic exploration. Several papers focused on the Mediterranean, therein highlighting the state of tectonic thinking before plate tectonics, as well as the nature and composition of the sea floor, the origin of submarine canyons and seamounts, and the history of sea-level change and climate. The very last symposium topic represented “the elephant in the room” – a presentation by Bruce Heezen (1924–1977) on mapping the North Atlantic sea floor (and its mid-ocean-ridge rift) and favoring continental drift: “Géologie sous-marine et déplacements des continents.” The cartographic work of Heezen and Marie Tharp (1920–2006), was in this time frame (1957) getting its first scientific presentations and had yet to be published (Heezen *et al.*, 1959). Needless to say, the map and Heezen’s interpretation generated an animated discussion.

Bourcart, J. (1959). Allocution d’ouverture. In: *Colloques internationaux du C.N.R.S.: La topographie et la géologie des profondeurs océaniques*. Centre Nationale la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, p. 11-14.

Ertaud, J. & Tailliez, P. (1957). *Mars et Neptune*, a color film documentary, posted on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKCHqFEFxuU>, last accessed 30 March 2022.

Heezen, B.C., Tharp, M., & Ewing, M. (1959). *The floors of the ocean: 1. The North Atlantic*. Geological Society of America Special Paper 65, 122p. plus plates.