

# OS13A-1796: Robert G. Snider and the International Indian Ocean Expedition

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## Introduction

The International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE) was conceived in 1957 at the first meeting of the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR) (Deacon, 1957). IIOE was planned as a five-year multinational project focused on the Indian Ocean, the “largest unknown” (Behrman, 1981).

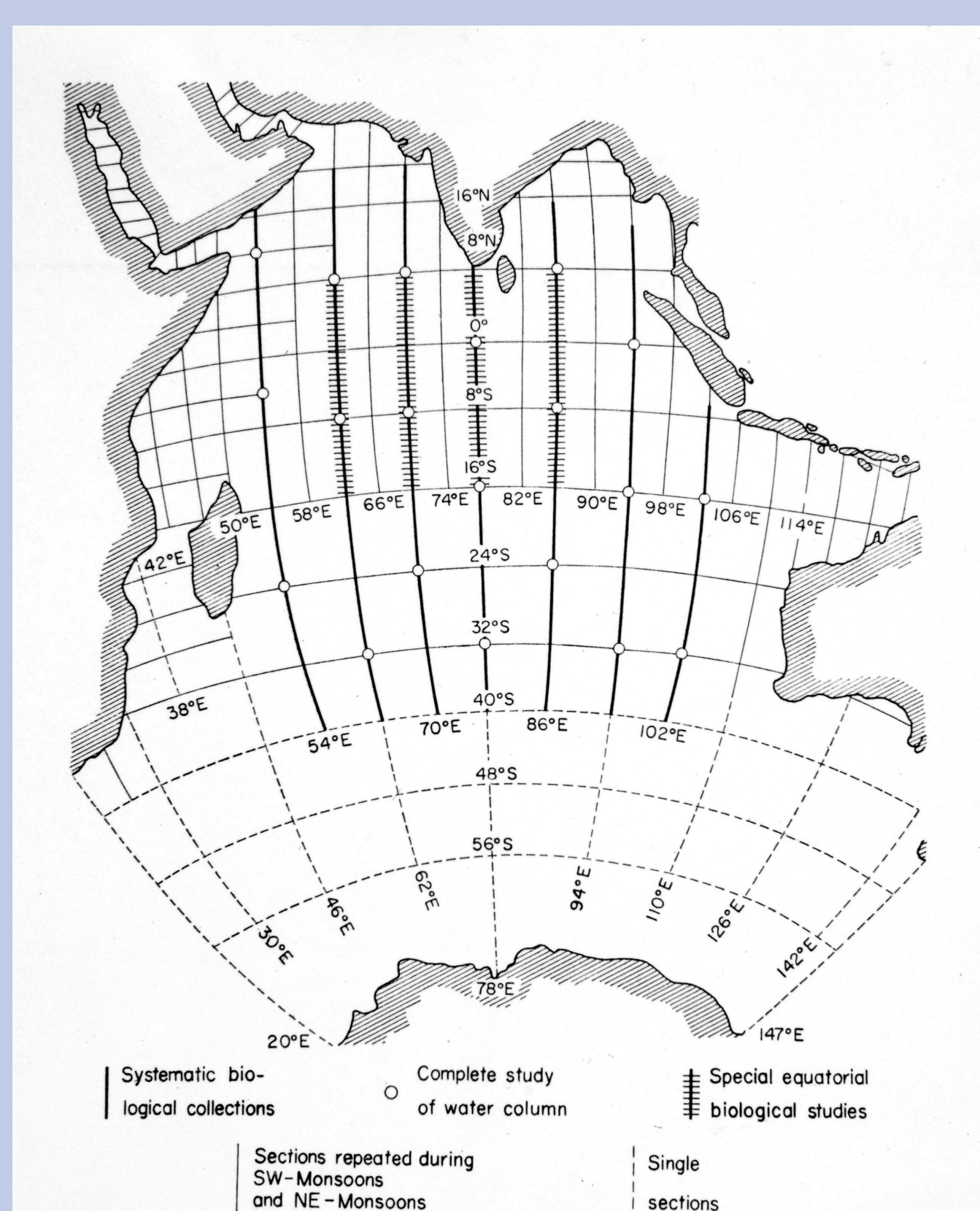
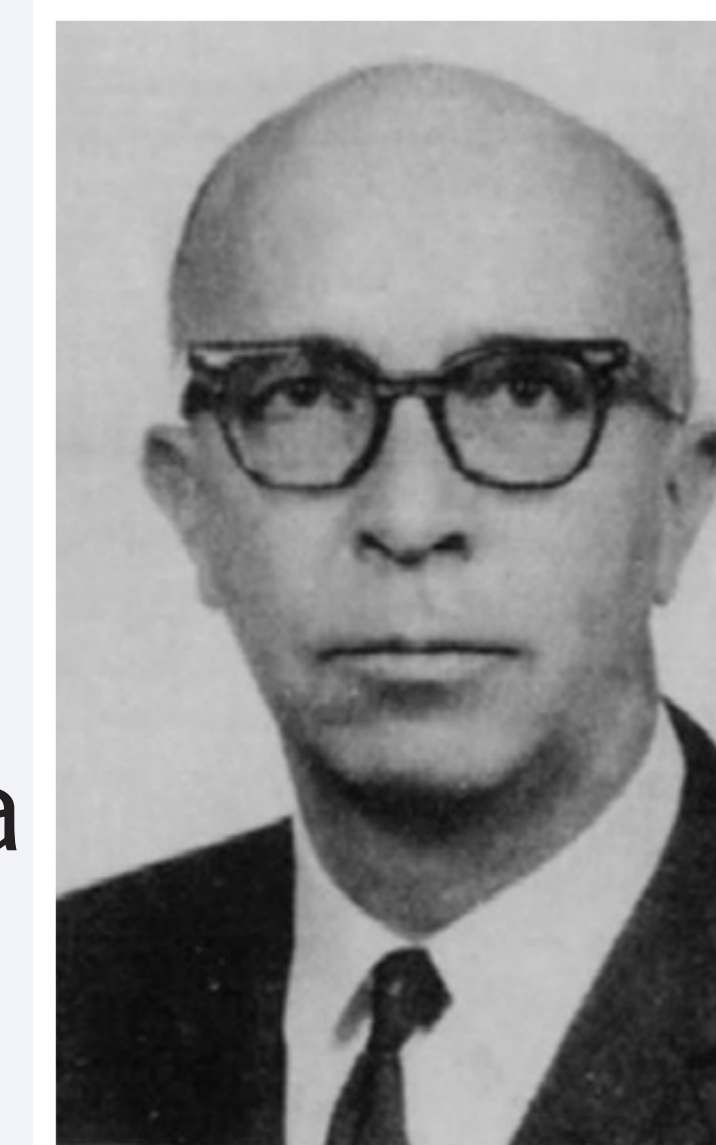
## IIOE Prospectus

Snider issued a prospectus for IIOE on 21 January 1960, in advance of his first trip to the Indian Ocean region. The prospectus made the case for the importance of the project (for increasing fundamental knowledge and improving the human condition in the region), estimated the cost (about US\$13.4 million), and presented the Wüst (1959) grid of proposed transects for IIOE (see figure at immediate right). The community eventually rejected the idea of a regular grid of stations in favor of ship tracks that would increase understanding of ocean processes (see figure at far right).

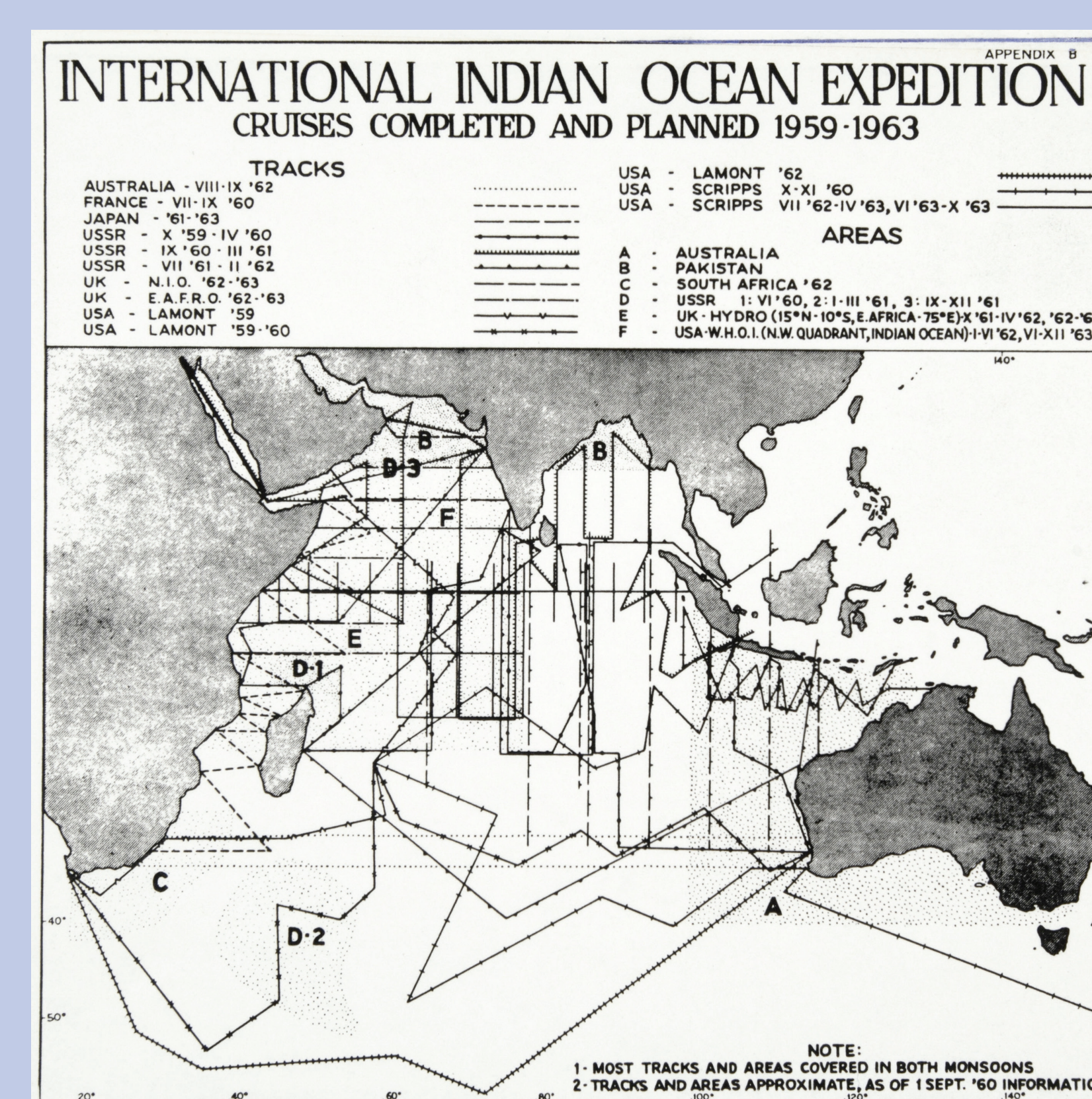
## Selection of IIOE Project Coordinator

SCOR decided to appoint a project coordinator who could spend full time on the task and undertake the extensive travel that would be involved to develop support for the project in a pre-Internet age.

Roger Revelle, the first SCOR President, had worked with Robert G. Snider (see photo at right) as an officer in the U.S. Navy. Revelle described Snider as a “born expediter” (Behrman, 1981). Snider had served as Vice-President of the Conservation Foundation, as President of International Population Research, and as chairman of a panel on ocean resources set up by the National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Oceanography. He started as coordinator of the U.S. contributions to the IIOE, before serving as the international coordinator.



Wüst (1959) grid



Cruises Completed and Planned (1959-1963) (from 23 July 1960 report from R.G. Snider to SCOR)

## Development Trips

Snider made 5 developmental trips to the Indian Ocean region and to countries that would be major contributors to the project. In each country visited in the region, Snider had a standard procedure. He pre-arranged to meet with heads of the relevant government agencies, national SCOR committees, the U.S. Embassy in the country, and representatives of national and international charitable foundations. These trips proved to be one of most important foundations of the project. Snider documented each trip with extensive notes and listings of meetings and contacts. Snider particularly made a pitch for installation of tide gauges and wave recorders in each country he visited. Snider’s papers are available at [http://scor-int.org/IIOE-1/Snider\\_Papers.htm](http://scor-int.org/IIOE-1/Snider_Papers.htm). Snider was probably the individual most responsible for the success of IIOE.

## Transfer of IIOE to IOC Control

The SCOR Executive Committee decided at a meeting in April 1962 that the responsibility for coordinating that IIOE should be transferred to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). The date of transfer was originally 1 April 1963, but SCOR and IOC speeded up the transfer in 1962, with Snider reporting to the IOC Executive Secretary, Warren Wooster. IOC made the point that their mode of operation would be different from Snider’s, shifting from a network of personal contacts to a series of regional meetings.

Lloyd Berkner invited Snider to become the Vice President for Development of the Graduate Research Center of the Southwest in Dallas, Texas in late 1962. Snider’s term at this institution was short-lived, as he was named executive director of the Commonwealth Industrial Research Corporation (in Pennsylvania) in October 1963 until July 1966. In October 1967, Snider was appointed deputy to the assistant commissioner for program plans and development of the Federal Water Pollution and Control Administration in Washington, D.C. Snider died in Tucson, Arizona in 1993.

## References

- Behrman, D. 1981. Assault on the Largest Unknown. UNESCO Press, Paris.
- Deacon, G.E.R. 1957. International Cooperation in Marine Research. *Nature* 180:894-895.
- Wüst, G. 1959. Proposed International Indian Ocean Expedition. *Deep-Sea Research* 6:245-249