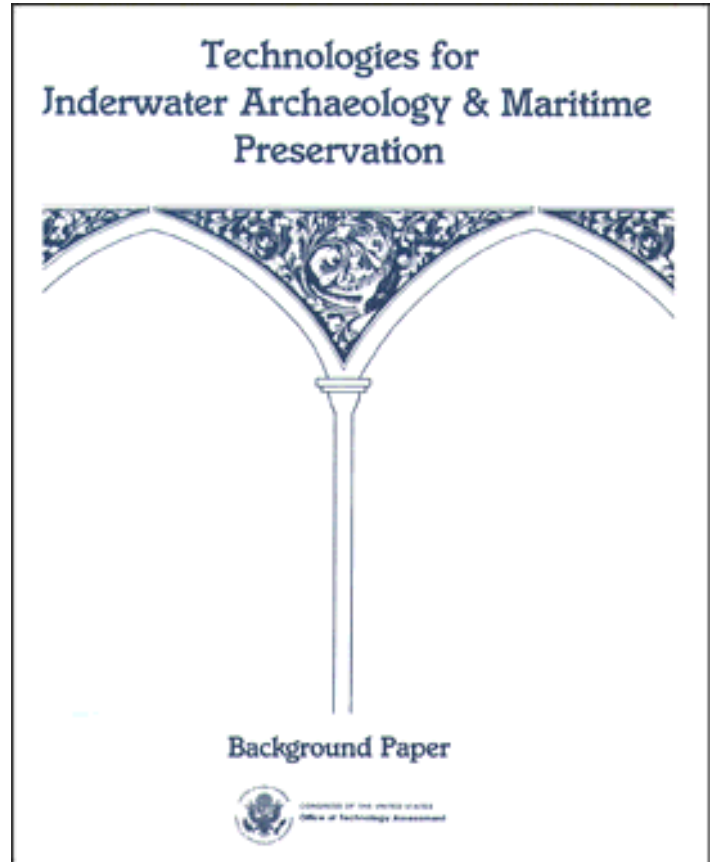


*Technologies for Underwater Archaeology
and Maritime Preservation*

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Foreword

Exploration, trading, and other maritime activity along this Nation's coast and through its inland waters have played crucial roles in the discovery, settlement, and development of the United States. The remnants of these activities include such varied cultural historic resources as Spanish, English, and American shipwrecks off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts; abandoned lighthouses; historic vessels like Maine-built coastal schooners, or Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks; and submerged prehistoric villages in the Gulf Coast. Together, this country's maritime activities make up a substantial component of U.S. history.

This background paper describes and assesses the role of technology in underwater archaeology and historic maritime preservation. As several underwater projects have recently demonstrated, advanced technology, often developed for other uses, plays an increasingly important role in the discovery and recovery of historic shipwrecks and their contents. For example, the U.S. Government this summer employed a powerful remotely operated vehicle to map and explore the U.S.S. *Monitor*, which lies on the bottom off Cape Hatteras. This is the same vehicle used to recover parts of the space shuttle Challenger from the ocean bottom in 1986. The Commonwealth of Virginia is using a variety of advanced techniques to document and excavate one of General Cornwallis's ships, intentionally sunk off Yorktown during the Revolutionary War to prevent General Washington from capturing it. In international waters, the location and documentation of the British luxury liner *Titanic* was possible only by using a variety of sophisticated positional devices and deep water submersibles. These efforts have captured the interest and imagination of the American public.

This background paper also examines the legal framework that affects the salvage of historic shipwrecks and recovery of artifacts. Historic shipwrecks in U.S. coastal waters contain a wealth of important information about the economic and social history of this country. Yet they are suffering rapid attrition, in part because the United States lacks a coherent national policy to guide the identification and preservation of underwater and maritime cultural resources. For example, State laws governing historic shipwrecks found in State coastal waters often conflict with Federal Admiralty law, which gives private salvors the right to salvage shipwrecks, regardless of their age or historic value. Attempts to place historic shipwrecks under the same protection as other historic cultural resources have led to the Historic Shipwreck Act of 1987, which is discussed and analyzed in this background paper.

In undertaking this work, OTA sought the contributions of a wide spectrum of knowledgeable and interested experts within Federal and State Governments and the private sector. Some provided information and guidance, others reviewed drafts of this background paper. OTA gratefully acknowledges their contributions of time and intellectual effort.



JOHN H. GIBBONS
Director

Workshop Participants: Technologies for Underwater Archaeology and Maritime Preservation, Feb. 20, 1986

Reynold Ruppe, Chairman
Underwater Archaeologist, Department of Anthropology
Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

J. Barto Arnold III
Underwater Archaeologist
Texas Antiquities Committee
Austin, TX

Calvin R. Cummings
Senior Archaeologist
Denver Service Center
National Park Service
Denver, CO

Anne G. Geisecke
Consultant
Underwater Archaeology and Maritime Preservation
Arlington, VA

Daniel J. Lenihan
Chief
Submerged Cultural Resources Unit
National Park Service
Santa Fe, NM

Charles H. Mazel
Nightsea Research
Charlestown, MA

Craig T. Mullen
President
Eastport International, Inc.
Upper Marlboro, MD

Carol Olsen
Underwater Archaeologist
Maritime Preservation Department
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Washington, DC

J.K. Orzech
Oceanographer
Marine Biology Resources Division
Scripps Institute of Oceanography
La Jolla, CA

Sheli O. Smith
Underwater Archaeologist
Mariners Museum
Newport News, VA

NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the workshop participants. The workshop participants do not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

Technologies for Underwater Archaeology and Maritime Preservation OTA Project Staff

Lionel S. Johns, *Assistant Director, OTA
Energy, Materials, and International Security Division*

Peter D. Blair, *Energy and Materials Program Manager*

Ray A. Williamson, *Project Director*

Mary Lee Jefferson, *Contractor*

Jannelle Warren-Findley, *Contractor*

Administrative Staff

Lillian Chapman Linda Long

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Richard K. Anderson
National Park Service

Richard Anusciewicz
Minerals Management Service

Michele C. Aubry
National Park Service

Larry Banks
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

johan T. Benson
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
Washington, DC

John D. Broadwater
Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks
Research Center for Archaeology
Yorktown, VA

Toni Carrell
National park Service

James Delgado
National park Service

Ralph E. Eshelman
Calvert Maritime Museum
Solomons, MD

Rob Floyd
john E. Chance & Associates, Inc.
Lafayette, LA

John Fowler
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Donald Frey
Institute of Nautical Archaeology
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

Ed Friedman
Minerals Management Service

James Hand
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Lynn Hickerson
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Helen Hooper
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Stanley Hordes
HMS Associates
Santa Fe, NM

paul Johnston
Peabody Museum
Salem, MA

John R. Kern
Department of State
Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs
Dover, DE

Thomas F. King
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

John J. Kneed
National Park Service

Garry Kozak
Klein Associates, Inc.
Salem, NH

Emory Kristoff
National Geographic Society
Washington, DC

Edward M. Miller
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Nancy Miller
National Conference of State Historic Preservation
Officers
Washington, DC

Charles Moorhead
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Marcia Myers
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Loretta Neumann
Foresight Science & Technology, Inc.
Washington, DC

Mike Roberts
Timelines, Inc.
Groton, MA

Beth Savage
National Park Service

Carol Shun
National Park Service

Eugene Sterudt
National Endowment for the Humanities

Melanie J. Stright
Minerals Management Service

Douglas R. Weimer
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Bill Westermeyer
Office of Technology Assessment