

# **South American Workshop on Marine Biodiversity for the Census of Marine Life**

## **Inaugural Speech**

**Jesse H. Ausubel**  
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(translated from the Spanish by J. Ausubel)

I come from a large, Latin city: New York. Thus, I address you in Spanish. Please pardon my errors.

I would like to thank the University of Concepcion, its authorities and Professor Victor Ariel Gallardo and his colleagues for the effort manifest in organizing this meeting and for being, one could say, our gallant hosts.

Thanks equally to all the participants and their associates. They have worked hard to prepare documents of great erudition. I think this collection of papers will be the best volume on the marine biodiversity of South America.

The creative capacity of Latin America has always been very great. Latin America produces the best fiction in the world. It can also produce top science.

Marine biodiversity offers the perfect occasion. About academia it is said: "Demons tell us there is a hell for pedants, an interminable palace more empty than full, and without windows." So may be the ocean. But it can also be a palace of inestimable beauty. It depends on the researchers and their techniques and ingenuity.

For me biodiversity is a type of magical realism within science. We can follow it on solitary roads. Better, in the Census of Marine Life, all our stories and brief essays can constitute an extraordinary book, an atlas of the past, of the present, of the future, an atlas of the kind that Jorge Luis Borges imagined.

I have confidence that in the year 2010 we will compile and present a book about marine life that would impress even Jorge Luis Borges. A book from marine worms to blue whales.

After all, the differentiation of the creatures is something that comes from the origin, from the depths. It merits the highest science. I know that oceanographers aspire to penetrate the depths. Already today we have heard inspired thoughts. Tomorrow we will hear more, and I hope some projects will emerge.

The work is not easy. There are many divine gifts. We need the gift of perseverance. Fortunately, the Census of Marine Life fits the oceanographic community. It is a program of circulation and mixing. It is a program of coupling.

I do not want to fall in the grave like a ripe fruit. I prefer to adventure.

For me, the Census of Marine Life is at the same time a means and an end. As an end, it will produce marvelous discoveries, discoveries of new species and new relationships; it will produce an Atlas in 2010 of what we know, what we do not know, and what we may never know about marine life.

But the Census is also a means. It is a means to create an impulse, a vitamin impulse for marine research, to speed the creation of a system of global observations of the ocean, to create a new generation of information infrastructure to understand and manage the sea.

I conclude finally by saying that the goal of the Census of Marine Life is to make all of you rich and famous. Rich, because the success of what we will do will bring abundant financial support, support for the universities, museums, laboratories, and government departments that study marine life. Famous, because glory adheres to scientific discoveries and superior management and conservation of marine life.

Thank you.