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Contact: Lisa M. Gillard Hanson, 1-732-445-7762, ext. 626, lgillard@rci.rutgers.edu

## SCIENCE ADDS SPICE TO SEA STORY

“Publishers Weekly” said it, so it must be true. Maritime history is hot, and Rutgers University Press has an offering in that category – one with a little twist of science.

“Upheaval from the Abyss,” by David M. Lawrence, chronicles a 130-year-long effort to study the oceans – an effort that fueled the scientific upheaval known as the plate tectonics revolution.

Not long ago, scientists viewed the ocean floor as a vast, featureless plain, an ancient repository of detritus eroded from the surface of an unchanging Earth. Light never reached the seemingly lifeless depths. The ocean basins were only of marginal scholarly interest. This all began to change in the 19th century with discoveries that overturned prevailing scientific notions of how the Earth's surface was created, rearranged, and destroyed.

The narrative begins in the age of sail, chronicling the early, backbreaking efforts to map the depths with weighted lines dropped over the sides of ships. It continues with improvements in research methods spurred by maritime disaster and war; and culminates in the publication of the first detailed map of the world's ocean floor in 1977.

Lawrence brings this tale to life by weaving through it the personalities of the scientists-explorers who struggled to see the face of the deep, and reveals not only the facts of how the ocean floor was mapped, but also the human dimensions of what the scientists experienced and felt while in the process.

David M. Lawrence has worked for years as both a scientist and a journalist, and holds master's degrees in both geography and journalism. Some of his work has appeared in the magazines “Geotimes,” “Mercator's World,” “The Lancet” and “Woods Hole Currents.” He also teaches at J. Sargeant Reynolds and John Tyler community colleges in Virginia. Lawrence lives in Mechanicsville, Va.

Upheaval from the Abyss: Ocean Floor Mapping and the Earth Science Revolution

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