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It wasn't until the late 19th century that the name "oceanography" was applied to the science of the sea.

The great European research expeditions of the 1800s measured the depths of the ocean and the salinity and temperature of different water masses. These expeditions also recorded the surprising diversity of marine life and the characteristics of bottom rocks and sediments.

In 1927, a National Academy of Sciences committee concluded that it was time to "consider the share of the United States of America in a worldwide program of oceanographic research." The committee's recommendation for establishing a permanent independent research laboratory on the East Coast to "prosecute oceanography in all its branches" led to the founding in 1930 of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

A \$3 million grant from the Rockefeller Foundation supported the summer work of a dozen scientists, construction of a laboratory building and commissioning of a research vessel, the 142-foot ketch *Atlantis*, whose profile still forms the Institution's logo.

WHOI grew substantially to support significant defense-related research during World War II, and later began a steady growth in staff, research fleet, and scientific stature. Over the years, WHOI scientists have made seminal discoveries about the ocean that have contributed to improving our commerce, health, national security, and quality of life.

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The ketch-rigged *Atlantis*, the institution's first open-ocean research vessel, sailed more than 600,000 miles for oceanography from 1931 to 1964. (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)