

The spacecraft and the submarine

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Deep sea explorers often compare what they do with space exploration, many times only superficially and rarely favorably to the space explorers, whom they believe get too much money. It is common for books on undersea exploration to include a throwaway comment about how we know far more about the surface of the Moon than the bottom of the ocean, or how more people have been into space, or on the Moon, than have reached the bottom of the sea. These comparisons are often not terribly accurate. Every year thousands of sailors travel under the oceans in military submarines, thousands of commercial divers work on pipelines, cables and oil rigs, thousands of hobbyists engage in recreational diving, and hundreds of researchers travel to great depths in the interests of science. Robots regularly venture where humans do not. What is usually fueling these claims is jealousy, or more politely, professional envy: the United States spends billions of dollars exploring space every year, and far less money exploring beneath the sea.

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