

PAGES 1st Young Scientists Meeting and 3rd Open Science Meeting

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The PAGES 3rd Open Science Meeting (OSM) and 1st Young Scientists Meeting (YSM) were held at Oregon State University, in the pleasant college town of Corvallis. Located in the heart of the Willamette Valley, Corvallis is about two hours south of Portland and within day-trip range of the rugged Oregon coastline, Mount Hood and the scenic Columbia River Gorge. A little further away is Mount St Helens, Washington, which is still impressively barren almost 30 years after the eruption.

The theme of the meetings was “Retrospective Views on Our Planet’s Future”, recognising the role that palaeoclimate research plays in the science of global climate change. There was a strong Australian presence, including five young scientists whose attendance had been subsidised by AQUA and ARCNESS (Joelle Gergis, Michael Griffiths, Sophie Lewis, Lynda Petherick and Steven Phipps).

The Young Scientists Meeting took place over the first two days. This was the first such meeting held by PAGES, and recognised the need to nurture young scientists if palaeoclimate research is to thrive in future. There were more than 90 participants from 21 different nations; for many of those present, it was their first international meeting. The aim was to allow the young scientists to share and discuss their knowledge, and to enable them to make contacts across both geographical and disciplinary borders.

After a warm welcome from the hosts, the first one-and-a-half days were devoted to oral and poster sessions. These spanned a wide range of topics, and the quality of the presentations was very high. The first day also included breakout groups, which discussed key topics such as public awareness of palaeoclimate research, the involvement of young scientists in the palaeoclimate community, and access to published data. Each group reported back the following day, giving the participants the opportunity to provide feedback and to make suggestions and recommendations. The final afternoon was devoted to career development, with presentations by senior scientists and journal editors on grant-writing, getting work published, data management and communication of scientific results.

Running parallel to the YSM was a special one-day workshop on the new PAGES 2K regional network. This

brought together key representatives from the North American, European, Arctic, Antarctic, Australasian and African research communities, to present recent advances in regional multiproxy data syntheses covering the past 2,000 years. While the priority is on combining annually-resolved palaeoclimate records, the importance of developing low-frequency baseline climates using decadal–multidecadal resolution records in data-sparse regions like Australasia was discussed. The aim of the initiative is to publish a 2K book detailing each region’s reconstructions and palaeomodelling efforts in time to contribute a state-of-the-art review towards the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC’s) fifth assessment report, which is due out in 2014.

Following the YSM, the young scientists were joined by senior scientists for the Open Science Meeting (or Old Scientists’ Meeting, as it was cheekily dubbed). Three hundred scientists from six continents and 30 countries attended, with interests falling under the umbrella of PAGES’ four foci:

- Climate forcings
- Regional climate dynamics
- Global earth-system dynamics
- Human-climate-ecosystem interactions

The four-day meeting consisted of a mix of oral/poster sessions and a selection of “Hot Topic” talks. These included an entertaining and informative presentation by Richard Alley (Pennsylvania State University) on “How abruptly can sea level rise?”, which discussed the current lack of knowledge of ice sheet dynamics and the likely response of the Greenland and Antarctic ice shelves to global warming. Jonathan Overpeck (University of Arizona) gave everyone a timely reminder that we should be aiming to publish our best, high-impact papers within the next two to three years, so that they are peer-reviewed in time to form part of our community’s contribution towards the next IPCC assessment report. He also emphasised the urgent need for us to develop the ‘policy relevant’ science needed by regional-scale decision makers, thus ensuring that palaeoscience remains an evolving discipline capable of meeting the current challenges of anthropogenic climate change. Webcasts of the keynote talks are now freely available online (<http://www.pages-osm.org/osm/videos.html>).

Evening sessions included a public lecture by Jim Hansen (NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies), who spoke to a packed auditorium on the “Global warming time bomb: The path from science to action”. Avid scientific discussions were held at the local pubs, enhanced by the superb range of local microbrewery stouts and ales (including a particularly tasty raspberry beer). These conversations continued over the conference dinner, which was held at a local winery. The meeting was also the setting for the inaugural PAGES Soccer Cup, which saw the Modellers score a 2-1 victory over the Proxy People!

Throughout both meetings, one of the continuing themes was the great importance of communicating scientific results to the public. Several keynote speakers noted the significance of being able to clearly report scientific findings to the media, while avoiding misinterpretation or sensationalism. This is especially true when discussing projections of future climate change.

Overall, the six days were remarkably informative and inspirational. In particular, the presentations demonstrated a consistently high degree of integration, both between different proxies and between the data and modelling communities. This sets a standard towards which we should all aspire.

The authors made many invaluable new contacts, and the meetings have given rise to many new collaborations. We also learnt a lot more about PAGES, which aims to act as an integrator between communities and disciplines. PAGES has a lot to offer the Australasian palaeoclimate community, and there is a lot of potential for PAGES and the local community to work much more closely together in future. In the short term, a regional workshop for the Australasian 2K working group is being planned for mid-2010. Please contact us if you are working in this time period and are interested in being involved.

We wish to thank PAGES and the hosts for organising such excellent and enjoyable meetings, and also wish to thank AQUA and ARCNESS for offering financial support.

