
Report on the 16th Annual V.M. Goldschmidt Conference

Christopher Pearce

The Department of Earth Sciences, CEPSAR, The Open University
E-Mail: c.r.pearce@open.ac.uk

The 2006 Goldschmidt meeting entered new territory by venturing into the southern hemisphere for the first time, being held in the excellent surroundings of Melbourne's Exhibition and Convention Centre. Unsurprisingly the Australians were extremely welcoming hosts, and upon registration the 1300 delegates were presented with bottle openers, a bottle of beer and a beer-cooler styled bag to keep it all in. I'm happy to report that the geologists enviable reputation as notorious drinkers was maintained in style, with most people choosing to sample the local brew immediately, even if they had just stepped off the plane after a 24 hour flight! This friendly and relaxed atmosphere remained present throughout the week, aided in no small part by the fact that refreshments and lunches were provided daily - the only downside being that this removed the excuse to bunk off for an afternoon to explore Melbourne itself (though the number of people suffering from jetlag did seem to rise as the week progressed...).

The scientific programme was extremely varied and I often found that 2 or 3 talks of interest were running simultaneously in different rooms. After a few attempts of running round the conference centre to try and make them all, I soon gave up and was more than happy to sit through entire sessions; those that I attended had a good balance of topics and an excellent standard of presentation from all of the speakers. As a palaeoenvironmental geochemist I focussed on the sessions that fell under the broad theme of 'Ocean Chemistry and Circulation; Climate and Environment', though many of the other sessions that I stumbled across in my few periods of free time threw up several interesting topics, ranging from episodes of mass extinction and faunal evolution to the intricate details of high-resolution isotope techniques that are currently being developed. In addition to these oral presentations, each session was allocated a time for poster display and discussion, and the fact that the posters remained up all week meant there was plenty of time to go round and speak to everyone I wanted to.

On a personal level, this was only my second international conference (the first being the AGU fall meeting last year), and as expected it was an excellent experience. I presented the results obtained during the last three years of my PhD, and my talk on 'Changes in the extent of marine anoxia during the Early Jurassic: Evidence from molybdenum isotopes' was well received. I undoubtedly benefitted from being in one of the larger lecture theatres and in a session with other excellent speakers who presented isotopic data on similar palaeoenvironmental issues (the following talk by Rebecca Poulson was also on molybdenum and our two talks provided a good overview of what is currently being done with the Mo-isotope system). By coming right at the end of my PhD the conference was perfectly timed and has given me much to think about when writing up my thesis, as well as potential post doctoral projects and areas of research that I'd like to continue in. Of particular interest were the keynote lectures by Greg Ravizza, Jim McManus and Gideon Henderson. Although

their topics of discussion varied greatly (weathering and glaciation, authigenic metal accumulation and the Li-isotope proxy respectively), each talk underlined the necessity for a multi-proxy approach when understanding past climate changes, and how quantifying changes in modern systems is essential before applying these techniques to similar situations in the past. In addition to these talks there were numerous presentations on old and new palaeoredox proxies and their application to various geological events. The scope of these ongoing projects is extremely encouraging, though it's clear that there's still plenty of work out there that needs to be done!

To summarise; I had a highly enjoyable and beneficial time at the 2006 Goldschmidt conference. It was the perfect situation in which to present and discuss my new data on both a formal and informal basis, and I know that my thesis and related publications will undoubtedly be improved as a result. The conference was also an excellent experience socially as I got to meet many researchers from other institutions from around the world, and get several ideas for how to progress my academic career. I'm already looking forward to the 2007 meeting in Cologne!