



International Association of Cryospheric Sciences

News from IACS (Issue 1, August 2011)

This irregular update of activities will be posted on the IACS website about 3 times per year.

Between 27 June and 4 July 2011, IACS scientists participated in the XXV IUGG General Assembly held in Melbourne, Australia. As the newest of the eight IUGG Associations (IACS only became a full association in 2007 at the Perugia IUGG Assembly) this was our first General Assembly. Altogether about 3600 participants attended the General Assembly and, although the number of IACS delegates and of IACS-led symposia was smaller than those of the larger well-established Associations, the scientific standard was generally very high. I sincerely thank all the convenors who developed, promoted and organized the IACS symposia for a great job – the convenors are the backbone of meetings such as this.

Following from the initiative established with the joint oceanography-atmospheric science-cryospheric science Assembly in Montreal in 2009 (MOCA-09) many of the IACS-led symposia at IUGG were joint with other associations. We believe, particularly with so many other specialized ice and snow meetings, that the focus at these large assemblies should be on interdisciplinary links. We will continue this focus at the Atmosphere and Cryosphere Assembly on Ice & Air - Process Interactions in Davos, Switzerland in July 2013 (www.daca-13.org).

A highlight of the IUGG Assembly was the series of 9 Union plenary lectures, which were of very high standard. The IACS Union Lecture was given by David Vaughan (British Antarctic Survey) on “The Hidden History of Ice Sheets: The Secret to Predicting Sea-level Rise”. This lecture (the Radok Memorial Lecture) was named in honour of a past President of the International Commission on Snow and Ice (the forerunner of IACS) who died during the last IUGG Quadrennium.

During the IUGG Assembly, IACS held a number of business meetings to plan our future activities, and to elect our new Bureau for the 2011-2015 Quadrennium. The retiring Bureau members [past-President Georg Kaser, Secretary-General Manfred Lange, Peter Jansson, Gino Casassa, Kumiko Goto-Azuma, Claude Duguay and Julian Dowdeswell] have provided a firm foundation on which to build and expand our Association, and I thank them for their pioneering work. Ralf Greve and Valérie Masson Delmotte will continue to serve on the Bureau. I look forward to working with the newly-elected Bureau and a range of new ideas. The new Bureau members are Charles Fierz (Switzerland, President-elect and previously Head of the Snow and Avalanches Division); Andrew Mackintosh (New Zealand, Secretary-General); Vice Presidents Olga Solomina (Russia), Xiao Cunde (China) and Andrés Rivera (Chile); and Division Heads Ethan Greene (USA, Snow and Avalanches), Cecilie Rolstad Denby (Norway, Continental Glaciers and Ice Sheets) and Hiroyuki Enomoto (Japan, Marine and Freshwater Ice). H. Gerald (Gerry) Jones was appointed an “Honorary Member of IACS” in recognition of outstanding service, particularly his unselfish and untiring commitment to establishing IACS as the 8th IUGG Association.

We also held our Association dinner, “Festa Cryospherica”, in Melbourne. This maintained a tradition started in Perugia and continued in Montreal of a gathering of cryospheric scientists and partners over an informal meal. Each “Festa” has been different in format, but each has provided a great opportunity to renew old and to develop new friendships. At the Melbourne dinner, “Certificates of Appreciation” were presented to the out-going Bureau members.

Over the last several years, IACS Working Groups have developed “The International Classification of Seasonal Snow on the Ground” and the “Glossary of Glacier Mass Balance and Related Terms” (<http://www.cryosphericosciences.org/products.html>). Both have been published by the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO, and in the first case, translated into several other languages. At IUGG XXV the IACS Bureau proposed a formal Resolution urging all snow and ice scientists, practitioners, and scientists from related disciplines to adopt these new schemes as standards. This resolution was adopted by the IUGG Council, and is on the IUGG website (in English) at <http://iugg.org/resolutions> and (in French) at <http://iugg.org/resolutions/fr>.

Other current IACS activities include negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) to help foster the next generation of researchers that will face new challenges regarding the global significance of cold regions and the impacts of climate change on them, and reinstating an MoU with other organisations with a stake in cryospheric science to maintain better communication and exchange, particularly with regard to scheduling scientific meetings. The IACS Working Group on glacier and permafrost hazard in alpine zone (GAPHAZ) was reconstituted as a Standing Group. This group will be the main IACS link to the IUGG Union Commission on Geophysical Risk and Sustainability (GEORISK).

The Global Terrestrial Network – Glaciers (GTN-G), which is affiliated with the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS)/Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) Terrestrial Observation Panel for Climate (TOPC), links the various networks and systems for integrated observations of glacier systems and their fluctuations. A new GTN-G Steering Group has been established, consisting of an Executive Board and an independent Advisory Board. Members of the GTN-G Advisory Board are jointly nominated by the IACS Bureau and the GTN-G Executive Board and the GTN-G Steering Group has been formalized as an IACS Standing Group.

IACS is still a small, but growing organisation and we welcome your suggestions and ideas to help us serve the community. Although our budget is small we do have a structure that can facilitate bodies formed to achieve specific tasks, and we can provide a potential gateway to larger International funding sources. We can also sponsor symposia addressing the latest cryospheric and cross-disciplinary challenges, particularly at our biennial Assemblies. Please let us know how we can help you.

Ian Allison, IACS President

16 August 2011