
Letters to Editors

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

A Response to Pyroclasts (by A.D. Miall, *Geoscience Canada* (March 1990))

Poor Andrew Miall. Appalled by the overlap between "organizations, events and research products" and horrified at their proliferation, he tears his hair in protest at the awful state of the earth science world. He gasps at geo-acronyms, jibes at journals and worries about too many meetings. His cries are presumably both more intense and more sincere because of his own involvement in launching at least one new journal and one series of conferences.

Miall's complaints are commonplace. They remind me of the dismay of first year students when confronted with the world of mineralogy or systematic paleontology and the (eventual) need to learn dozens, if not hundreds of mineral and fossil names. It seems fairly obvious that the perceived complexity of the natural world should be mirrored by a complex and voluminous set of terms used to describe it. And how could the glorious international republic of science be other than overlapping and proliferate when, by any numerical measure (number of scientists, journals, books, projects, degrees, even unemployed), it continues to grow by huge leaps and bounds at rates that must really alarm poor Andrew.

Of course as the accomplished editor, organizer and do-er, Professor Miall himself points out, the plethora of conferences, projects, organizations and journals could be reduced and streamlined by top-down management. But only at the expense of scientific democracy and the opportunity for young scientists and those outside the establishment to express themselves in these time-honoured ways. Yes it is tiresome to keep up with the flood of new ways to organize science, but Heaven preserve us from the naïf who shakes her head every time a familiar name crops up in conversation to save a dozen words. "U-N-E-S-C-O? What's that?" Any educated geologist who doesn't know what the UN and the major geoscience organizations are in general on about — or who refuses to inform himself — deserved a well-placed kick.

Miall asks a few questions that deserve answers. "How do the costs of five fluvial symposia stack up against the costs of global poverty?" Quite simple; they don't. But then neither would the absence of any modest number of watery meetings make much useful difference to poor people in Zanzibar, Aklavik or Quirpon. Cut all meetings and fora in science, then you might be talking — but not if you want a healthy scientific community and the kind of cooperation that solves societal problems like smallpox, identifies one like climate change, and tackles challenges like AIDS.

Is there a larger role for umbrella bodies in coordinating scientific activities? Of course — but not to the extent of curbing the energy and efforts of those outside the establishment. And "is waste the price we pay for the dynamism that has resulted in the overwhelming dominance of Western science?" Most assuredly, my boy, most assuredly. As throughout Western society, excess and waste seem to the order of things. Like dandruff, we try to keep it at bay but rarely commit suicide when our shoulders bear witness to the problem above!

Finally, dear chap, don't throw up your hands or fill your BIRPSAC at the little world of acronyms. Just be glad you don't have to repeat the names in full every time you mention the organizations, programs and journals they represent. Rejoice at the health of the growing little Qua family, with mother INQUA and her widespread progeny CHIQUA, DEUQUA, CANQUA, AQQUA, NORDQUA, CADINQUA, ASEQUA, ABEQUA and others. Smile at a self-explanatory LADLE: COGEODOC, or EDITERRA — alas now gone to its eternal repose with EASE. Don't GARP in horror of SODEMI, but GEOCOME and ISECALM yourself in rapt contemplation of the CRUMANSONATA!

For the curious:

ABEQUA	Brazilian Association of Quaternary Studies
AEQUA	Association Espanola para el Estudio del Cuaternario
AQQUA	Association Québécoise pour l'Étude du Quaternaire
ASEQUA	Association Senegalaise pour l'Étude du Quaternaire de l'Ouest Africain
BIRPSAC	BIRPS (British Institutions Reflection Profiling Syndicate) Advisory Committee
CADINQUA	Comite Argentino de Investigacion del Cuaternario
CANQUA	Canadian Quaternary Association
CHIQUA	Chinese Quaternary Research Association
COGEODOC	IUGS Commission for Geological Documentation
CRUMANSONATA	Crust Mantle Study of Son-Narmada-Tapi Lineament (Geological Survey of India)
DEUQUA	Deutsche Quatarvereinigung
EASE	European Association of Scientific Editors
EDITERRA	European Association of Earth Science Editors
GARP	ICSU/WMO Global Atmospheric Research Programme
GEOCOME	Congress on the Geology of the Middle East
INQUA	International Union for Quaternary Research
ISECALM	International Study of the Earth's Core and Lower Mantle
LADLE	Lesser Antilles Deep Lithosphere Experiment
NORDQUA	Nordic Association for Quaternary Research
SODEMI	Société pour le Développement Minière de la Côte d'Ivoire

A.R. Berger, Ottawa, Ontario

Letters to the Editor, cont'd

Dear Editor,

Origin of the Meech Lake "conglomerate": an alternative model

Garland (1990) has drawn attention to occurrences of an unusual clastic rock in the syenitic orthogneiss near Meech Lake, Quebec. Whereas the description by Mawdsley (1930) is interesting, his sedimentary origin of this rock ("conglomerate") is now open to serious criticism. The occurrences north of Meech Lake were re-described by Béland (1951), who noted that the rocks overlying the clastics were generally the same type as those below, and that the clastic occurrences pass outward through fractured rock into solid orthogneiss. Furthermore, some clasts are angular and most are corroded by the matrix (with production of a phlogopite-amphibole selvage). Additional petrographic details of the occurrences described by Mawdsley and similar rocks south of Meech Lake, were provided by Sabourin (1952). Later research (mainly unpublished) has shown that the composition of phases in both matrix and selvage (Sr-rich calcite and fluorapatite, Al-depleted fluor-phlogopite, U-rich pyrochlore-group minerals, F-rich alkali amphiboles) are atypical of conglomerate. Rather, the rocks are best described as explosive

breccia, with clasts cemented by calcite and other minerals, as proposed by Beland (1951), Sabourin (1952) and Hogarth (1966).

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Positions Available



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The Quebec Geoscience Centre (QGC), according to the Agreement between the Geological Survey of Canada and the Institut national de la recherche scientifique, has to complete by 1991 the hiring of fifty (50) persons employed in equal proportion by both institutions. Presently, the staff of the Centre comprises forty-eight (48) employees, thirty-three (33) of whom are researchers.

In order to meet the development objectives of QGC, the Institut national de la recherche scientifique has to staff two "teacher-researcher" positions. The candidates will be involved in the research projects of the Centre dealing with regional geology, metallogeny and/or Quaternary and environmental geology. A Ph.D. degree is required.

For any additional information, please contact:

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Une collaboration:



La Centre géoscientifique de Québec (CGQ) devra, selon l'entente conclue entre la Commission géologique du Canada et l'Institut national de la recherche scientifique, compter en 1991 cinquante (50) personnes provenant à part égale des deux institutions. Actuellement, le centre compte quarante-huit (48) personnes dont trente-trois (33) chercheurs.

Pour répondre aux objectifs de développements du CGQ, l'Institut national de la recherche scientifique devra combler, deux postes de professeur-chercheur. Les candidats devront être titulaires d'un Ph.D. et seront appelés à contribuer aux programmes de recherche du centre qui ont trait à la géologie régionale, la métallogénie, la géologie du Quaternaire et de l'environnement.

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