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International Association of Geoanalysts

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AT IAG



The second half of 2007 featured three major developments at the IAG, which I would like to highlight in this issue of *Elements*. Each of these follows up on long-established IAG programs, and the achievements of the past six months represent noteworthy expansions in our level of activity. Any IAG member interested in supporting these efforts is warmly encouraged to contact either myself as president (e-mail: michawi@gfz-potsdam.de) or any other member of the IAG's governing council. In particular, members interested in offering additional short courses in metrology would be welcomed and supported.

Quality Assurance Short Course

A new facet of IAG's core activities is the organization of short courses devoted to quality assurance (QA) in geochemical measurements. Workshops on this theme have been held previously at many of the triennial Geoanalysis meetings; however this activity gained significant impetus when the IAG sponsored a one-day short course as part of the Goldschmidt 2007 Conference in Cologne (see IAG society news in the December 2007 issue of *Elements*). Because of the success of the Cologne short course and because the IAG perceives a need for better QA information access within the community, we have committed to hosting other such events in 2008. These courses address key themes of interest to the analyst, including:

- Recent trends in sampling and sample preparation
- Proper IUPAC terminology and recent ISO guidelines
- Reference materials for quality control and method development
- The role of proficiency testing within overall data quality assurance
- The production of new certified reference materials (RM)

We have now arranged to hold QA workshops at the 2008 Goldschmidt Conference (www.goldschmidt2008.org/shortCourses) in Vancouver in July 2008 and at the German Mineralogical Society's annual meeting in Berlin in September 2008. Three additional courses are already under development for 2009, when it is expected that a two-day format will be adopted, thereby allowing a more complete treatment of this broad topic.

Certification Committee

On 24 and 25 September 2007 the IAG's Reference Material Certification Committee met outside of Vienna in the historic town of Klosterneuburg. This was the committee's third meeting after earlier gatherings in Potsdam (2002) and Montréal (2005). Two main tasks were on the Vienna agenda: finalizing work on the certification of two whole-rock RMs and establishing a structure whereby the IAG will produce new certificates of

analysis on a roughly yearly basis. The decision that the Certification Committee shall meet on a yearly basis is worth highlighting, as this will result in a significant increase in the production rate of ISO-compliant certified RMs. Until now all IAG certification work has focused on powdered whole-rock samples, but with the increased level of activity it is hoped the development of RMs relevant to microanalytical methods can soon be planned. The primary goal of the IAG's Certification Committee is the production and distribution of new reference materials of the highest-possible metrological status. In pursuit of this objective, the Certification Committee has adopted a two-pronged strategy whereby the IAG will continue to produce and market its own materials and will also provide certification services for the geochemical RM programs of other organizations. It is hoped that a contract establishing the first such external collaboration will be agreed upon in early 2008.



Participants at the 2007 meeting of the Certification Committee. From left to right: Steve Wilson (USGS, Denver), Klaus-Peter Jochum (Max Planck, Mainz), Thomas Meisel (Certification Committee chairperson, University of Leoben), Michael Wiedenbeck (GFZ-Potsdam), Phil Potts (The Open University, Milton Keynes), Jean Kane (founding chairperson of IAG Certification Committee, Brightwood, Virginia), Marcus Burnham (Ontario Geological Survey, Sudbury), and Paul Bédard (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi)

Expansion of the G-Probe Microanalytical PT Program

Proficiency testing (PT) is an essential component of good laboratory practice. Blind interlaboratory comparisons often offer the best means of detecting significant analytical bias in results obtained under routine analytical conditions. Through the IAG's Geo-PT program, as well as through similar programs in other organizations, proficiency testing schemes are readily available for silicates and other bulk geomaterials. Unfortunately, for in situ microanalytical methods (EPMA, SEM, laser ablation, SIMS), there have been few opportunities to participate in proficiency testing programs. A primary reason for this is the difficulty of identifying natural materials that are chemically and/or isotopically homogeneous at the micron scale.

Since 2001 Steve Wilson, head of the U.S. Geological Survey's reference material program, has led the IAG's G-probe proficiency testing program for microbeam laboratories. Synthetic glass samples with natural chemical compositions were distributed, and a compilation of the reported data was then used to assess laboratory and method bias. In 2008 this program is set for a major expansion. Starting in March 2008, new samples will be distributed every six months, alternating between glass and pressed-powder materials of geochemical interest. The deadline for data reporting for the next round of G-probe (calcium carbonate pressed powder) is 30 April 2008, with a report to be published in September. This program is open to all IAG members and is free of charge in 2008. For further details see: <http://geoanalyst.org/G-probe/>.

Michael Wiedenbeck
IAG President

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Association members are reminded that their IAG annual membership dues should be paid by March. Those wishing to take advantage of the IAG members' rate for their annual subscription to *Geostandards & Geoanalytical Research* should send in their payments no later than

February, thereby ensuring delivery of all issues of the Society's official journal. Further information about subscriptions is available at <http://geoanalyst.org/benefits.html>.