



International Association of Geoanalysts

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

IAG Sponsors a μ -RM Conference

Over the past year the IAG has supported a new initiative by contributing to the underwriting of the costs of workshops and symposia of particular interest to the geoanalytical community. In 2011 this effort was initiated with our support of a detrital zircon workshop held in Prague. In January 2012, we followed up by supporting the three-day short course Nuts and Bolts of Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry, held at the University of Bristol. Here I would like to report on the most recent initiative, when our Association supported a gathering devoted to the topic "Microanalytical Reference Materials," which was part of the Microanalytical Society's topical conference series.

Held during the semester break on the campus of the Colorado School of Mines, this conference attracted 65 registrants from as far afield as Australia. Organized in large part by members of the U.S. Geological Survey's Denver office, this gathering focused on the analytical challenges specific to the characterization of materials at nanogram and smaller sampling scales. Key themes included the quantification of sample heterogeneity, the synthesis of both amorphous and crystalline materials for development into microanalytical reference materials (μ -RMs), the origin of matrix-dependent ion yields in laser ablation ICP-MS analyses, and new strategies for minimizing the total uncertainty budgets in electron probe analyses. A highlight of the conference was a presentation by the USGS Denver office on the results of a major and trace element interlaboratory comparison study using a newly synthesized basaltic material. Though based on a relatively small data set from less than two dozen laboratories, the results revealed a frighteningly wide scatter in the data. In fact, for some elements reported at the nanogram or picogram scales, the difference between the maximum and minimum reported quantities exceeded a factor of ten, clearly indicating analytical challenges well beyond the realm of calibration issues. The three-day meeting closed with a series of presentations devoted to recent advances in atom probe tomography as applied to geologic materials.

For me, the overarching conclusion to be drawn from my participation in this symposium is that much more attention needs to be focused on metrology issues before one will truly have confidence in results reported at nanogram or picogram levels.



Attendees at the recent Microanalytical Reference Materials topical conference held in Golden, Colorado, USA. This event was sponsored by the Microanalytical Society, with support from the IAG and other organizations.



Members of the IAG's Council during their recent biannual meeting, held at Wallingford, UK

Spring Council Meeting

On 29 May 2012, the IAG's Council met at the Natural Environmental Research Council's ecology and hydrology research facility in Oxfordshire, UK. With 13 people in attendance, including participants from five countries, nearly all members of the IAG's Council were able to attend. As has been the trend in recent years, the expanding number of initiatives supported by the Association meant that the meeting had a lengthy agenda, which kept the Council busy from 9:30 in the morning until 5:00 in the afternoon. Key tabled documents included information about increased activity by the IAG's marketing company, IAGeo Limited; further developments at the Association's official journal, *Geostandards & Geoanalytical Research*; reports from the organizing committees of Geoanalysis2012 in Brazil and Geoanalysis2015 in Austria; recent actions by the geochronology interest group; and reports from both the GeoPT and G-probe proficiency testing programs. Other matters that were addressed included the current activities of the IAG's material Certification Committee, the IAG's representation in the ISO/REMCO metrology organization, and the first application for IAG recognition of a short course in 2013.

We have now reached the point in the IAG's triennial cycle where elections are to be organized for new officers and members of the IAG's Council. The newly constituted Council will lead the Association during the period from 2012 to 2015. The soon-to-be-elected Council members will represent the interests of the wider membership and will oversee ongoing and new activities during this three-year period. The new Council will take over from the current sitting members at the Association's general meeting, which will be held in September during the Geoanalysis2012 meeting in Búzios, Brazil. All full members of the Association will be receiving their nomination materials during the course of the summer. I am looking forward to an enthusiastic participation in the election process from the IAG's general membership.

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