



# Association Internationale pour l'Étude des Argiles

[www.aipea.org](http://www.aipea.org)

## 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CLAY CONFERENCE

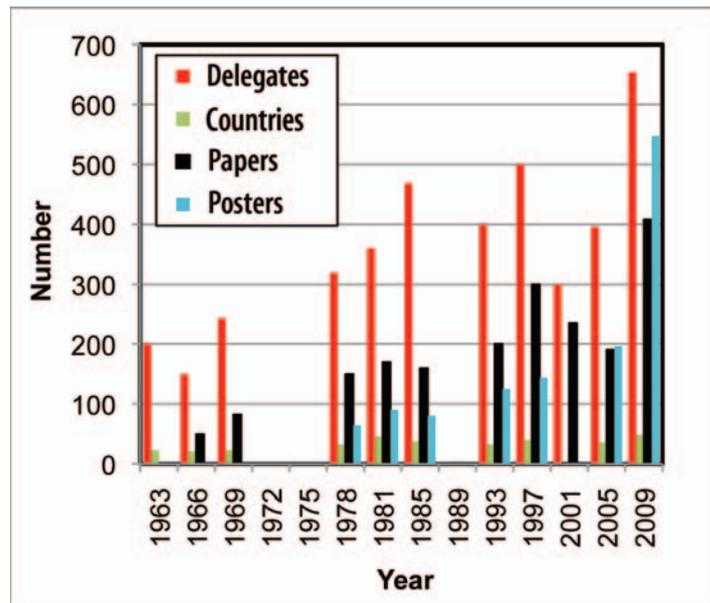
The year 1963 has always been something of a watershed for me. I had just turned 8 years of age, and my family had moved to a new house in a green suburb. Consequently, 1963 has always provided a clear point of reference in my early life. What I hadn't realised, until very recently, is that 1963 was also the year of the first International Clay Conference, making 2013 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event.

It all started at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Geological Congress, which was held in London in 1948. At this meeting clay scientists agreed to cooperate on clay research and formed an international group, the Comité International pour l'Étude des Argiles (CIPEA). Ralph Grimm was president of CIPEA until 1960, and CIPEA members actively participated in the International Geological Conferences held in Algeria (1952), Mexico (1956) and Copenhagen (1960). It was at the Copenhagen meeting that CIPEA decided to organise its very own international meeting. The 1963 conference in Stockholm was to become the first International Clay Conference (ICC), although it was not "badged" that way until later. At the same time, CIPEA became an international association affiliated with the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and changed its name to the Association Internationale pour l'Étude des Argiles (AIPEA). In 1966, during the presidency of Ivan Rosenqvist, who had organised the Stockholm meeting, the statutes and by-laws of AIPEA were approved.

The Swedish Society for Clay Research hosted the 1963 International Clay Conference and appointed an organising committee led by Ivan Rosenqvist and Paul Graff-Petersen. The six scientific sessions, which took place on 12–16 August, were (1) Clay mineral structures and compositions, (2) Clay mineral genesis, (3) Ion-exchange on clay minerals, (4) Clay–electrolyte–water systems, (5) Clay–organic complexes and (6) Clay minerals in industrial applications. More than 200 clay mineralogists from 23 countries attended the conference. The papers formally presented at the meeting were printed in advance and published as volume 14 of the International Series of Monographs on Earth Sciences by Pergamon Press, London, and cost just £5.00 (at least £100 in today's money). Authors were given just 5 minutes to cover the main points of their paper. The remaining time was allotted to discussion and to the presentation of brief communications elicited by the contributions printed in the published volume. The discussions and the additional, contributed papers were subsequently published in a second volume. During the conference there was a field trip to the varved clays in the Uppsala region. Two longer field trips took place after the conference, one to southern Sweden and Bornholm and the other to western Sweden and south-eastern Norway.

Since 1963 there have been 14 International Clay Conferences. They have brought the international clay community together to share ideas, postulate theories and enjoy each other's company. The ICCs are the principal mechanism through which AIPEA meets its stated aim of promoting and encouraging international cooperation in clay research and technology around the world.

The 14<sup>th</sup> ICC, in 2009 in Castellaneta Marina, Italy, attracted 654 delegates from 49 countries, and they contributed 408 oral and 548 poster presentations, reaffirming the global interest in clay minerals even during a severe economic downturn. Dave Bish, the outgoing AIPEA president, said in his opening message to the 14<sup>th</sup> ICC, "This is a powerful testament to the vitality of the international clay science community. I sincerely hope that this momentum can be maintained for the next International Clay Conference, which will take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2013."



**FIGURE 1** Trends associated with the International Clay Conferences, 1963–2009

The annual AIPEA Newsletter was initiated to keep the national clay groups informed of each other's activities. The Newsletter collated information and was of particular importance in the years before rampant electronic communication, and it continues to serve as a record of the activities of AIPEA's constituent clay groups. The first Newsletter was produced in July 1967 and included a summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Clay Conference, held in Jerusalem in 1966. It also included the text of a summary, by Ralph Grimm, of the twenty years "since a small group of persons interested in clay mineralogy met in London at the time of the 18<sup>th</sup> International Geological Congress." He went on to say that "in the twenty years since that first meeting, there has been a tremendous growth of interest in clay mineralogy, and with it a substantial increase in our knowledge in this area." The data in Figure 1 suggest that this tremendous growth has continued; it is reflected in the upward trend in the number of delegates, the number of countries represented and the number of oral and poster contributions, reaching a combined total of almost a thousand at the 14<sup>th</sup> ICC.

The 15<sup>th</sup> ICC will take place in Rio de Janeiro on 7–11 July 2013. This will be only the third foray by the ICC into the Southern Hemisphere, following the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> ICCs in Adelaide (1993) and Bahia Blanca (2001), respectively.

In a few months from now, we will have the statistics from the 15<sup>th</sup> ICC and, like politicians with poll results, we will look for positive points to make. For my part, I won't need the numbers to prove that the 15<sup>th</sup> ICC will have been a success – the fact that the overall trend has been upwards since the first International Clay Conference in 1963 is pretty convincing evidence of the continuing strength of AIPEA. The best way to make the 15<sup>th</sup> ICC a success is to go there, be inspired by the science, get involved in the discussions, and encourage young scientists to develop their confidence and capabilities. Then, in the quieter moments, take time to be still and watch as old friendships are reaffirmed and new friendships blossom. That is the only real foundation for the continuing success of any human endeavour.

**Chris Breen**, AIPEA President  
Sheffield Hallam University, UK