

## GOLDSCHMIDT 2013



Chris Ballentine (left), EAG President, and Richard Carlson (right), GS President, opening the Goldschmidt2013 conference



The 23<sup>rd</sup> V. M. Goldschmidt Conference was held this year in the beautiful Renaissance city of Florence, the capital city of the Italian region of Tuscany. Florence is renowned for its history, architecture and culture. It was a centre of medieval European trade and finance and one of the wealthiest cities of medieval times. It is generally considered to be the birthplace of the Renaissance, the flowering of art, diplomacy and science which began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Given Florence's beauty and popularity as a tourist destination, the organizers were not surprised that this Goldschmidt Conference attracted the largest number of abstracts and participants so far. The number of abstracts submitted was 4132, of which 4062 were presented at the conference, with 2095 oral and 1967 poster presentations. The total number of registrants was 4183 (25% students), and the 20 largest delegations were from the following countries: USA (743), Germany (456), United Kingdom (402), France (377), Italy (250), Japan (250), China (240), Australia (182), Switzerland (158), Canada (142), Russia (106), Spain (95), Denmark (78), Sweden (68), Korea (68), Brazil (48), Netherlands (46), Belgium (39), Poland (38), and Turkey (35).

### Organizing the Conference

The Goldschmidt Conference is organized in alternate years by the Geochemical Society and the European Association of Geochemistry (EAG). Florence 2013 was the responsibility of the EAG. Few venues in Europe are capable of hosting the 18–20 parallel sessions required for a Goldschmidt Conference. Owing to the increasing success of Goldschmidt Conferences, however, the Organizing Committee decided that it would not be too risky, in financial terms, to hire a major conference centre built for large multi-sessioned scientific conferences. Hence the decision to hire the conference centre located in Florence's 16<sup>th</sup>-century fortress.

The principal convenors were the Organizing Committee chairman, Bernard Wood, EAG's past president, Bernard Bourdon, EAG's current president, Chris Ballentine, the local convenor, Massimo Coltorti, and the chairman of the 2011 Goldschmidt meeting, Bernard Marty. (You don't have to be English or French, but



Beautiful Florence



Goldschmidt2013 Banquet

being Bernard helps!) These individuals were supplemented by members of the Scientific Committee (see below), and the administration of the conference was ably run by Cambridge Publications, whose head, Paul Beattie, was also a member of the Organizing Committee.

Our Science Committee, composed of Bernard Wood, Janne Blichert-Toft, Andreas Kappler, Massimo Coltorti, Martin Frank and the EAG president, defined 24 science themes and searched for scientists worldwide to chair these themes. The theme chairs each formed a committee that then identified 4 to 8 sessions in their themes and selected scientists to convene these sessions. In total, about 140 sessions were identified by autumn 2012. Following a call for sessions to the community, and after review by the Science Committee, approximately 70 additional sessions and one further theme ("Union") were accepted. This led to a total

of 211 sessions distributed over 25 themes. Given the flexibility of the conference centre, we were able to accommodate most requests for an oral presentation.

### Field Trips and Workshops

The conference was preceded by 14 workshops, 12 of which were hosted in Florence by our colleagues at the University of Florence. Total attendance at the workshops (in an outstanding location) was 444, while the 2 "external" workshops attracted 94 participants. Three field trips ran before the conference and 4 after the conference, with a total attendance of 136. The Organizing Committee thanks once more the University of Florence for its hospitality and all the field trip and workshop organizers for their enthusiasm and energy in bringing their diverse skills and knowledge to the Florence Goldschmidt.



Attendees of DINGUE3, one of the pre-Goldschmidt2013 workshops



Bernard Wood, Chair of the Goldschmidt2013 Organizing Committee

### The Conference

After a well-attended icebreaker on Sunday afternoon, the conference began in earnest at 9 am on Monday, 26 August. In a departure from previous meetings, it was decided that the plenary lectures and formal opening ceremony would take place immediately after lunch. After welcoming remarks from the rector of the University of Florence, Geochemical Society President **Rick Carlson** presented his plenary lecture, "Making Earth". On succeeding days the plenary lectures were presented by **Francis Albarède** ("Isotopes of Disease"), **Paolo Gasparini** ("Natural Hazards and Scientific Advice: Interactions among Scientists, Decision Makers and the Public"), **Robert Hazen** ("Earth's Carbon through Deep Time") and **Sujoy Mukhopadhyay** ("Probing the Hadean World with Noble Gases"). Despite the lunchtime attractions of sun-bathed Florence, the post-lunch plenary lectures were well attended, and this time slot may become a feature of future meetings.

Following recent tradition the oral sessions ran from 9:00 to 12:00 (with refreshments) and from 14:30 to 17:30, and were succeeded by poster sessions (with beer) from 17:30 to 20:00. The latter were well located within the main building of the conference. Total consumption of coffee, tea, cakes and beer exceeded €400,000.



A captivated audience at one of the five plenary sessions

Six social events were held during the week. In addition to the icebreaker, these were a wine and cheese party in the Basilica, a classical concert at San Lorenzo church, a showing of the films *Chasing Ice* and *Thin Ice*, a rock/blues concert in the courtyard of the congress centre given by CRPG-based Double Scotch band and the conference banquet. The latter was held in the Cavaniglia Pavilion adjacent to the conference centre. A total of 19 local tours and events were also held, some of them multiple times.

### Media Coverage

At the behest of EAG Council, this Goldschmidt Conference was marked by a major effort to reach out to the world's media to promote our research. We engaged CampusPR to write draft press releases and Tom Parkhill as Goldschmidt press officer. Five press releases were distributed through agencies, via e-mail and during a press conference at the meeting. Steven Benner's work on the suggested evolution of early life on Mars went global, with reports in many

languages and in many top-rank media outlets. Some of the other stories also achieved considerable international coverage, enhancing the impact of the Goldschmidt Conference and our science on the general public. A fuller summary by Tom Parkhill can be found in the October 2013 issue of *Elements*.

### Summing Up

As anticipated by the Organizing Committee, Florence 2013 proved to be, in terms of participants, the most successful Goldschmidt Conference so far. This demonstrates, once again, that attractive locations with reasonable accommodation costs are of major importance when organizing international conferences. Although dealing with the conference centre was not entirely trouble free, most difficulties were resolved amicably through the good offices of Paul Beattie and his colleagues at Cambridge Publications. The size and success of the conference means that Goldschmidt is now large enough for us to consider other locations in Europe which have thus far been prohibitively expensive. Florence remains a viable option for some time into the future, however, and is actively being considered for the 2017 meeting.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the members of the Organizing and Science committees for all the hard work they put into ensuring that the 2013 meeting was a success.

**Bernard Wood**  
Chair, Organizing Committee

## EUROPEAN MEETING ON ANCIENT CERAMICS

The European Meeting on Ancient Ceramics takes place in different European cities every two years. The 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the meeting (EMAC2013) was held in Padova, Italy, on 19–21 September 2013. It was co-organised by Lara Maritan, Claudio Mazzoli and Rebecca Piovesan (Department of Geosciences, University of Padova), Celestino Grifa and Mariano Mercurio (Department of Biological, Geological and Environmental Science, University of Sannio), and Luca Nodari (Institute for Energetics and Interphases, Italian National Research Council, Padova). The presence of 180 participants (124 scientists and 56 students) from 28 countries of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, North and South America, and North Africa highlighted the fact that the EMAC represents an important moment in the discussion of methodological developments

and the characterisation of ancient ceramics. The meeting brought together scientists with different backgrounds, such as archaeologists, geologists, chemists, physicists, engineers, materials scientists and curators, but all dealing with the study of ancient ceramics. Fifty oral presentations and 124 posters covered both traditional topics (methodological developments, dating of ceramics, technology and provenance, alteration and conservation, glazed pottery, ceramics as building materials, technical ceramics) and experimental firings. The Organising Committee is very grateful to all the authors for contributing their results and encouraging productive discussion. EMAC2013 was successful, and, thanks also to an intensive social program, all participants had the chance to share their opinions, set up new collaborations and organise networks.

Participants voted on the three best poster presentations. Congratulations go to Bonato Enrica (University College London, UK), Eftekhari Negar (University of Ferrara, Italy) and Vukovi Birus Maša (Croatian Conservation Institute, Zagreb, Croatia).

The Organising Committee would like to thank the members of the Scientific Committee and all the people who contributed to the success of the meeting. The committee now passes the baton to the organisers of the next meeting, to be held in Athens in September 2015.

**Lara Maritan** (University of Padova),  
**Celestino Grifa** (University of Sannio),  
and **Luca Nodari** (National Research  
Council, Italy)