



FACING SOME 21ST-CENTURY MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGES



Scientific societies in the 21st century must adapt to rapidly changing times. In the last issue of *Elements*, I discussed an emerging technology, webcasting, which has the potential to enhance Goldschmidt meetings by extending the impact of research presented there to a much larger audience. Here, I would like to continue the consideration of the response by our Society to a rapidly changing world. All scientific societies face the impact of electronic publishing on membership recruitment (Schwartz et al. 2008). For most of its history, the Geochemical Society (GS)

relied on journal subscriptions as an important part of its revenue stream. However, the Web is changing people's relationship to information. One relevant example of this change is the negative effect of online news sources on printed newspapers. Similarly, many existing and potential society members have online access to *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* through institutional subscriptions. This electronic publishing revolution has made a personal journal subscription at a reduced rate less of a draw to attract and maintain membership than it has traditionally been. There are still obvious benefits of membership, including a subscription to *Elements* and conference registration discounts at AGU, the Goldschmidt Conference, and the GSA Annual Meeting. Nonetheless, this transformation in information delivery has caused many scientific societies to reflect on the rationale for membership. Some of us in the "old guard" have a long-standing loyalty to the GS and continue to keep up our memberships because supporting the Society, and through it, our discipline, is the right thing to do. However, young scientists are not necessarily as strongly motivated. Young geochemists commonly become members by virtue of attending a Goldschmidt Conference, but may drop out later. We would certainly like to develop their continuing loyalty and participation in Society activities and, in so doing, develop a membership base for the future.

In one survey, graduate students listed facilitating networking and collaboration with experts in their field as the major way a scientific society could help advance their careers (Bahr 2008). The most powerful way we currently do this is through the face-to-face discussions that occur during our annual scientific conference. These interactions are critical for geochemists at all career stages, but are particularly important for early-career scientists. Therefore, expanding the networking and mentoring opportunities for young scientists, both at the Goldschmidt Conference and outside of it, would benefit both students and our Society. We are already taking some approaches along these lines:

- We will expand networking among geochemists by blogging from the 2009 Goldschmidt Conference. If you are interested, there is still time to participate. We are looking for attendees to join myself in blogging about the meeting. People of all levels of experience—from undergraduates to emeriti—are encouraged to participate (visit www.geochemsoc.org for application details). No previous blogging experience is required! A link to the blog will appear on the GS homepage. The blog will be an interactive tool for those onsite as well as those unable to attend. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to the Society!
- We will increase the visibility of job opportunities on our website. We have already taken steps to implement a "Geochemical Career Center." It will be operational on the Geochemical Society website by the time you read this and is free to all job seekers. We certainly encourage those with job opportunities to make them available on our site.

- We welcome participation in our Geochemical Society Facebook Group. This group provides an opportunity for networking outside of the conference setting and provides a way to keep current with your colleagues.

- In addition to those steps, we might provide opportunities for trainees to network (interact) and meet experts in our field. The use of a student-mentor breakfast or luncheon, where one mentor is seated with six to eight students, might be explored. I participated at a gathering of this type at the annual GSA meeting. It was extremely well attended by both students and society officers from all the GSA-associated societies, and I personally enjoyed it.

These are just a handful of ideas. We welcome others. Please forward your comments directly to me (mgold@usgs.gov) or put them to the GS Facebook Group.

Marty Goldhaber
GS President

References

Bahr J (2008) Are scientific societies serving the needs of graduate and postdoctoral students? *Reproduction, Fertility and Development* 20: 19-22

Schwartz M, Hunter M Jr, Dee Boersma P (2008) Scientific societies in the 21st century: A membership crisis. *Conservation Biology* 22: 1087-1089

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

The Nominations Committee of the Geochemical Society is seeking names of potential nominees for vice-president and three members of the Board of Directors for terms beginning in 2010. The new vice-president will become president in 2012. The new board members will replace retiring directors Yaoling Niu, Seth (Swami) Krishnaswami, and Marilyn Fogel. One of these directors must reside outside of North America. Board members should be outstanding geochemists with a keen interest in the work of the Society and be willing to travel to the annual board meeting at the Goldschmidt Conference. The nominees for vice-president should have established reputations of leadership in geochemistry and be willing to devote considerable time and effort to the work of the Society.

Suggestions may be communicated by **July 31, 2009**, to any member of the 2010 Nominations Committee or to the GS business office. More information regarding the duties and responsibilities of board positions can be found on the Geochemical Society website.

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GEOCHEMICAL SOCIETY CONTRIBUTIONS

Many members contribute to the Geochemical Society each year by including a donation with their dues. Between February 15, 2008, and February 15, 2009, 168 members contributed a total of \$5634. Of this amount, \$1628 was for the Student Travel Grant Program and \$4006 went to the General Support Fund. This is an 11% increase in total contributions and a 14% increase in the number of donors from 2007.

General Support Fund

\$250.00 or more

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Up to \$49.99

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Student Travel Grant Program

\$100 or more

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ANNOUNCING THE 2009
GEOCHEMICAL SOCIETY AWARDEES

The following awards will be presented at Goldschmidt2009 in Davos, Switzerland.

*V.M. Goldschmidt Award*

1 Mark H. Thiemens (University of California–San Diego)

F.W. Clarke Award

2 Cin-Ty Lee (Rice University)

C.C. Patterson Award

3 Boaz Luz (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Paul Gast Lecturer

4 Kenneth A. Farley (California Institute of Technology)

*2009 GS/EAG
Geochemical Fellows*

5 Georges Calas (Institut de Minéralogie et de Physique des Milieux Condensés)

6 Sumit Chakraborty (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

7 C. Page Chamberlain (Stanford University)

8 Rodney C. Ewing (University of Michigan)

9 Klaus Mezger (Universität Münster)

10 Samuel M. Savin (New College of Florida)

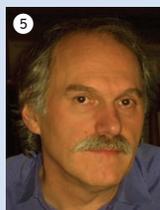
11 Everett L. Shock (Arizona State University)

12 Jonathan F. Stebbins (Stanford University)

13 Richard J. Walker (University of Maryland)

*2009 Distinguished
Service Award*

14 Frank A. Podosek (Washington University in St. Louis)

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