

PAGES 2nd Open Science Meeting – Beijing, China – 10–12 August 2005

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After the 1st PAGES Open Science Meeting (OSM) in London seven years ago, the PAGES community finally gathered again for the 2nd OSM, this time in Beijing. More than 370 scientists from 45 countries attended to discuss scientific issues around the theme “Paleoclimate, Environmental Sustainability and Our Future”. The broad questions that were addressed by oral and poster presentations and a panel discussion included: What is the pre-industrial historical context of present and future global change? How did land, ocean and ice interrelate during climate transitions? How did people in the past interact with environment and climate? What specific answers do Asian regional scale studies provide?

It is noticeable that the set of questions would have been just as timely for the first OSM in 1998. However, it is equally obvious that the answers are much more detailed now than 7 years ago, owing to substantial progress in the field of past global change, such as in climate-environment reconstructions for the late Holocene, reconstructing and modelling past global changes across remote regions and hemispheres, understanding the relevance of climate modes in the past, and quantifying feedback mechanisms of past environmental change on climate, etc.

There were numerous scientific highlights, not only presentations of the state-of-the-art in specific fields of paleoscience from invited speakers but also new high-quality studies and datasets from less well-known scientists. Young research talent was acknowledged by selecting three posters for short presentation to the plenary and by prizes to five students for their poster contributions.

There were other highlights beyond the purely scientific results. My subjective, non-comprehensive list has to include the remarkable harmony that was attained between modelling and reconstruction approaches, providing a promising foundation for data-model based paleoresearch in the future. Several presentations contained direct comparisons of data and models. Moreover, the climate modellers made a successful effort to communicate their methods and results, and to put forward their wish list to the data community.

The similar process of convergence between disciplines in the study of the human aspects of past global change was furthered at the meeting. Many contributions included humans as a component of the Earth System, both as an additional information source (the most obvious example being documentary data) and to demonstrate the relevance of paleoresearch.

Another more general success was in community building, achieved especially through the attendance and integration of many scientists from Asia and developing countries, and researchers in early career stages. This effort was supported by funding from START, APN, TWAS, the Indian Department of Science and Technology, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the National Natural Science Foundation of China.

The meeting culminated in a lively plenary discussion on the future role of PAGES, an essential and valuable discussion from the point of view of the PAGES project. Suggestions to better address southern hemisphere changes, to focus on the past water cycle, to further data synthesis and their accessibility, to disseminate the importance of paleoscience, and many other ideas were taken on board and may be considered for future activities in the framework of PAGES.

The 2nd OSM provided a much too rare opportunity to discuss the various core themes relevant to PAGES and to foster a community spirit that encourages participation and hence drives PAGES. Instead of waiting another 7 years for such an opportunity, PAGES plans to hold the next OSM 4 years from now in 2009 in the United States.

PAGES 2nd Open Science Meeting - Abstract Book



Paleoclimate, Environmental Sustainability and our Future

The PAGES International Project Office and its publications are supported by the Swiss and US National Science Foundations and NOAA.



The OSM abstract book is available to download free of charge from the PAGES online Product Database (www.pages-igbp.org/products). There is also an online poster exhibition (www.pages2005.org/posters.html), with currently around 70 of the OSM posters available to view and download. A collection of the plenary lectures is planned for publication in the new open-access journal of EGU “Climate of the Past”.