NAMS NEWS
Newsletter of the North American Micropaleontology Section, SEPM
September 2010 Volume 31, No. 2

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

It seems to me that if you've found yourself talking with a couple of micropaleontologists over the last ten to fifteen years or so, you stood a pretty good chance of the conversation having turned to the state of the science in academics and industry. Typically the refrain can be likened to the old joke about an Englishman's favorite topic (the weather… and it not being that great). Without wanting to recapitulate the same familiar tune, I wanted to offer a few comments based on my own perspectives on a few related issues.

Many people, in many places and many ways, have well described the numerous significant uses of micropaleontological data. I believe that as long as there are people trying to solve geological problems, there is going to be a need for the tools micropaleontology can provide to solve those problems. My own experience of applying micropaleontological data in academic and industrial settings supports my confidence in this assertion. In simply limiting an assessment of our utility to providing detailed subsurface correlation and chronostratigraphic control, and observing the impact we have, I think the insights we can provide are so ubiquitous that people almost take them for granted. By way of analogy, how often do people think about how significant it is to them that they have a calendar and can tell time?

I agree with the comments that many people have made over the years that we have to continue to make other geologists less unconscious of the framework we provide for them; but that really isn't what I want to address here. What I'd like to discuss is not the value of our data, but rather where that data comes from, and the consequent value of data generation itself. Micropaleontology seems increasingly unique these days in that to get good data, you need to have an experienced and skilled taxonomist sit for a long time manually observing and making hundreds or thousands of judgments to make "one" data point. I suppose it may be possible one day to have a machine replicate our ability to discriminate taxa (I still have my doubts for the foreseeable future), but until that time, for there to be micropaleontological data someone has to make the data. I wonder if over the last several decades we've been so concerned with validating the utility of our discipline that we've underplayed the significance of the fact; where the rubber really meets the road is at the ocular. Visual inspection and identification of individual specimens into valid species-level populations is as complex an interpretive skill as any cognitive ability you care to mention. It is not a black-box exercise, but rather an experience-driven set of judgments. Oddly enough, because the process is based on observation and logic it seems many diminish its value relative to a number spit out by a machine. Perhaps we need to spend a bit more effort to communicate the impressively intricate and challenging nature of taxonomy, rather than trying to distance ourselves from it because it is too boring to non-paleontologists.

A contributing factor to the downplaying of the "data generator" role was the steady decline in the number of micropaleontologists since the mid-1980s. This was particularly evident in the oil industry, where there were significant staff reductions from then through the 1990s. It was once not uncommon for

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In this issue:

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Garry Jones and Brian O'Neill Memorial Fund

Jones & O'Neill Award Solicitation
Application Deadline: February 1, 2011

The North American Micropaleontology Section (NAMS) of SEPM is pleased to solicit applications for the 2011 Garry Jones and Brian O'Neill Memorial Fund for NAMS student research. The Jones & O'Neill grant is a $1,500 award available to one NAMS student member to support research with a substantial micropaleontological component. The student's research must involve one or more micropaleontology disciplines, including foraminifers, nannofossils, diatoms, radiolarians, pollen, spores, dinoflagellates or conodonts. Projects may apply micropaleontology to traditional fields such as biostratigraphy, paleoecology, and paleoceanography or to rapidly expanding fields like biogeochemistry and geomicrobiology. The NAMS Council of Officers will rank proposals based on scientific merit, faculty recommendation and financial need. The grant will partially support a M.Sc. or Ph.D. research project that is not funded through other major grants. Applicants must be student members of NAMS.

To apply, interested students should submit the required award application forms along with a one to three page summary of his/her research, a Curriculum Vitae, and a budget. A supporting letter of reference from the applicant's faculty advisor must be provided separately to the address below. Application forms may be requested from the same address. Proposals should be submitted by **February 1, 2011** and directed to the same address. The award notification is scheduled for March 15, 2011.

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Barun Sen Gupta 2011 Moore Medal Awardee

Barun Sen Gupta, Louisiana State University, has been chosen to receive the SEPM 2011 Moore Medal for Excellence in Paleontology. He will receive the award during the SEPM President's Reception & Award Ceremony that will be held during the AAPG/SEPM Annual Convention in Houston, Texas in April 2011.

Please take the time to congratulate him on this outstanding honor.

Nancy Engelhardt-Moore

Mobil Travel Grant

Attention Students and Faculty Members

Once again, NAMS (the North American Micropaleontology Section of SEPM) is pleased to have the opportunity to send a student to the SEPM/AAPG Annual Convention and Exhibition, thanks to the generosity of the SEPM/Mobil Foundation Student Participation Grant Program. We encourage all NAMS student members to apply. If you are student who is *not* a member of NAMS, we encourage you to join.

Each year at the annual SEPM/AAPG meeting, SEPM sponsors a "Student Awards Poster Session" that includes poster presentations as nominated by SEPM's Sections. A Section's awardee is not only provided this venue to present his/her work, but also receives up to $1500 for travel to the national meeting from SEPM via the Mobil Foundation's Student Travel Fund. At the past meeting in New Orleans, Shari Hilding-Kronforst (Texas A&M) presented 'A Closer Look at Mid Eocene 41-44 Ma Biostratigraphic and Environmental Conditions at Blake Nose Western North Atlantic ODP Leg 171B Site 1051'.

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Treasurer's Report

As of August 30, 2010, the NAMS treasury contained $12,905.50 on account. Since the last report dated March 30, 2010 for the Spring 2010 Newsletter, NAMS received $240.00 in membership dues. Expenditures totaling $750.00 are solely related to a contribution to the INA Foundation for student support of the International Nannoplankton Association Meeting (INA 13). Expenses associated with the newsletter have been generously subsidized by the Energy & Geoscience Institute.

If your membership is not paid through 2010, we would appreciate your payment to bring your membership up to date. We suggest for your convenience that you pay for multiple years to reduce the number of professional memberships you need to track. Many of our members do so and we appreciate your support. You may also find it convenient to pay your annual dues to NAMS with your dues to SEPM.

NAMS members that already have subscriptions to 'Micropaleontology' have their membership to NAMS included in the subscription price. This is another good reason to subscribe to 'Micropaleontology'. Please see www.micropress.org for further information. For verification, you may send a copy of your subscription to NAMS to ensure your dues are promptly credited to your account.

It has been a privilege to serve you as Treasurer since April of 2007 and I look forward to seeing you at future NAMS meetings.

Don Van Nieuwenhuise
Treasurer

Please visit NAMS online at:
http://www.sepm.org/nams/index.htm

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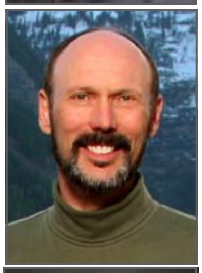

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NAMS NEWS is published by NAMS two times a year, just before the GSA annual meeting in the fall and the AAPG annual meeting in the spring. Submissions are always appreciated.

THE MICROPALEONTOLOGY COMMUNITY

Chevron

There are nine full-time biostratigraphers currently working in their respective fields of specialty at Chevron Corporation world-wide, with retained experience and data records from most of the Chevron-heritage companies (Getty, Gulf, Tenneco, Texaco, Unocal and Chevron). Chevron uses a mix of three reporting models for these staff, including: 1) Core Team, 2) Core Team (co-located) and 3) Business Unit assigned.

Core Team - This presently consists of seven members, all resident within the Chevron Energy Technology Company in Houston, Texas. They include three foraminiferal specialists, Erik Anthonissen (University of Oslo), Tom Dignes (University of Maine), and Rome Lytton (University of Florida); two palynologists, Heidi Howe (University of Western Australia) and Roger Witmer (Virginia Tech University); and two calcareous nannofossil specialists, Richard Howe (University of Western Australia) and Alicia Kahn (Rutgers University).

Core Team (co-located) - Chevron occasionally places one or more individuals from the Core Team with individual projects in the business units. Currently, Rome Lytton is co-located with the Gulf of Mexico Regional Team in Houston.

Business Unit assigned - Two Chevron biostratigraphers presently report directly to the overseas business units in which they are resident. In Lagos, Nigeria, this includes palynologist O.K. Ulu (University of Calabar), and in Rumbai, Indonesia, we have Satia Graha (Padjadjaran University), a foraminiferal specialist.

Our current project activities focus largely on Angola, Nigeria, Indonesia, Australia, the Middle East, Brazil, the Gulf of Mexico, Canada, the continental U.S., and the Arctic. We do considerable microscope work, in addition to integrating contractor-derived data sets. Other activities include well-site work, paleoenvironmental interpretation, sequence stratigraphy applications, contractor coordination and quality control, regional correlation studies, biostratigraphic data management, targeted research projects, industry/academic research consortia involvement, guest lecturing at selected universities, and internal biostrat training for Chevron earth scientists.

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University of Nebraska

The University of Nebraska has a long history in micropaleontological education and research. I joined the program in 1984, when Prof. Paul Krutak was lured away from academia to work in the oil patch. Since then we have added David Harwood and Sheri Fritz to our faculty, giving us one of the strongest micropaleontology concentrations in the country. Taken together, our research covers the globe, from the tropical and polar oceans to anywhere on land that is wet (or used to be wet). By the same token, our classes, combined with those of other faculty, provide our students with a broad background in all micropaleontologically-related subjects.

Sheri Fritz uses diatoms and other proxy data in lake sediments to reconstruct the history of lakes, their watersheds, and their climate systems, primarily during the Quaternary. Sheri and her students are involved in projects spanning the globe, including recent efforts in tropical South America, the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains, and Thailand. Sheri's courses in biogeochemistry and Quaternary Paleoclimate and Paleoecology provide important paleoenvironmental tools to all of the micropaleontology students at UNL. Graduates from Sheri's program hold a diverse array of academic and professional positions in environmental geology, with one recently sneaking off into consulting for the oil companies.

David Harwood uses diatoms and other siliceous microfossils to examine the Cenozoic and Cretaceous paleoclimatic and paleoceanographic evolution of the Southern Ocean and the Antarctic margin. He is the Principal Investigator for the Andrill Program, an on-going effort to recover stratigraphic records from the Antarctic margin, with current emphasis on the McMurdo Sound region. David and his students lately have been concentrating on using Antarctic margin records, in concert with pelagic ocean drilling records from the Southern Ocean, to establish a quantitatively-tested biostratigraphy for the high southern latitudes so as to better constrain the paleoclimatic record of the ice sheet. David teaches the general Micropaleontology course, as well as specialty courses in siliceous microfossils. David's graduates have gone in a number of different directions, including governmental and private-sector environmental employment and the petroleum industry.

My own program is focused on the use of calcareous nannofossils to examine the evolution of oceanic and epeiric sea systems in the Mesozoic and Cenozoic. My students and I have had a long association with ocean drill-

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Marine Micropaleontology Research Group Report

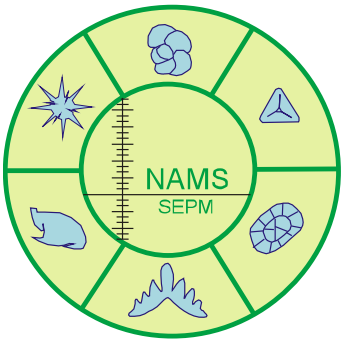
The annual Marine Micropaleontological Research Group Meeting (MMRG) was held this year in association with the 2010 AAPG/SEPM Meeting in New Orleans. There where two topics for discussion for this meeting: 1) the meaning of "high-resolution" biostratigraphy and 2) apparent inconsistency in the application of nannofossil taxonomy. Both subjects received considerable attention, with many ideas being exchanged.

For the first issue, there was general agreement that the term "high-resolution" can, and is, used in many ways. It is used to mean a methodology involving quantitative data collection, it is used to suggest more events per time or thickness in a section, or more bioevents applied to an interval. Alternatively it may be used as a catchy marketing phrase, or as a way to suggest that your biostratigraphy is somehow better than someone else's. It was not clear how to determine when a certain situation should be considered high or low resolution, as this would depend on many factors. In jest, several participants suggested that perhaps we need to start using the phrase ultra-high resolution stratigraphy. In the end, the Research Group agreed the term is too loosely defined, and should either not be used or should be clearly defined by an author

see MMRG Report (cont.) on page 11

Waszczak: NAMS' SEPM Foundation Representative

During our last NAMS Council Meeting, at the New Orleans AAPG, we were joined by Howard Harper (Executive Director, SEPM). We returned to discussions we'd had on previous occasions about how NAMS might be able to keep a closer eye on the Garry Jones and Brian O'Neill Memorial Fund, managed by the SEPM Foundation. Howard related an offer by Tim Carr, Foundation President, to include a representative of NAMS on the Foundation. After some discussion we voted to support having a member on the Foundation. Following post-meeting discussion, I asked former NAMS President Ron Waszczak if he would be willing to take on that responsibility. He agreed, and the NAMS Council gave its unanimous support to naming him our representative. This summer the SEPM Council approved the appointment of Ron Waszczak to the SEPM Foundation Board. Let's all extend Ron a big thank you for taking on this important role.



Jason Lundquist

21st Century Paleo

A symposium dedicated to Ed Picou was a highlight of the 2010 SEPM/AAPG Annual Convention held in New Orleans. The symposium 'The Gulf of Mexico: Regional to Local, Mesozoic to Recent P:aleontology in the 21st Century' was co-sponsored by NAMS, honored Ed Picou for his many years of contributions to paleontology and his role in oil exploration and production. A slate of talks covered a wide variety of topics from around the world including taxononomic practice in microfossils, and applications in in the Gulf of Mexico, Gulf Coast, North Alpine foreland, Paratethys from Triassic to Recent. Particular congratulations are due to Regina Dickey (Texas A&M) whose talk, co-authored with Tom Yancey, on 'Palynology Across a Sequence Boundary in the Wilcox Group, Central Texas' was selected by SEPM as one of the outstanding oral presentations of the 2010 meeting. On behalf of the other session chairs (Rashel Rosen, Dana Griffith), I thank the presenters and audience for their participation.

Martin Farley

Micropaleo in the News

Much attention has been centered on the oil well disaster in the Gulf of Mexico associated with the Deepwater Horizon rig. While the leaking oil itself and its impact has quite properly garnered most of the attention, this event has had impacts on the micropaleontology community. Specifically, the moratorium on deepwater drilling has thrown a number of micropaleontologists specializing in offshore wellsite paleontology out of work. This occurrence was noted in the Energy and Environment section of 'The New York Times' (August 2, 2010; see http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2010/08/02/02greenwire-gulf-drilling-boom-goes-bust-for-key-group-of-76708.html?scp=1&sq=gulf%20boom%20goes%20bust%20scientists&st=cse). Most of the micropaleontologists interviewed in the article including Mitch Covington, Art Waterman, and Dave Watkins, are stalwart members of NAMS. As with many summaries in the popular media, there are inaccuracies. The article leaves the impression that paleontology was a "luxury" in the

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE

StrataPlot — Graphic Correlation Application

As part of the National Science Foundation sponsored GEON project, the Stratigraphy Group at the Energy and Geoscience Institute (University of Utah) developed a software application (StrataPlot) for chronostratigraphic analysis. This application was built for the storage, retrieval and graphing of biostratigraphic datums. StrataPlot is a stand-alone, Windows-based application that employs Shaw's (1964) graphic correlation procedure.

The primary output of this software is a graph that displays the first and last stratigraphic occurrences of fossil species that are in common between an analyzed section and the composited stratigraphic ranges from hundreds or thousands of individual localities. When a new section is analyzed, datums are graphed against a selected composite standard. A successful interpretation results in the analyzed section becoming part of the composite standard against which future sections will be calibrated.

StrataPlot is a dynamic system that continually refines the composite standards as the user adds more stratigraphic information. StrataPlot provides a large number of user-friendly "on-screen" operations that greatly improve the efficiency of the interpretation process. Data from over 2,000 global research localities analyzed by Amoco Exploration & Production and later donated to the University of Utah by BP-Amoco are contained in StrataPlot's database.

StrataPlot is available as freeware and can be downloaded from the EGI/GEON website: http://strataplot.egi.utah.edu. Over 80 users, including academia, as well as industrial biostratigraphers, are registered users of StrataPlot. Students from may countries - Argentina, China, Colombia, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, and the USA - have downloaded StrataPlot for their research. For more information on the StrataPlot application contact Emil Platon at <eplaton@egi.utah.edu>.

Emil Platon

Jones /O'Neill (cont. from page 2)

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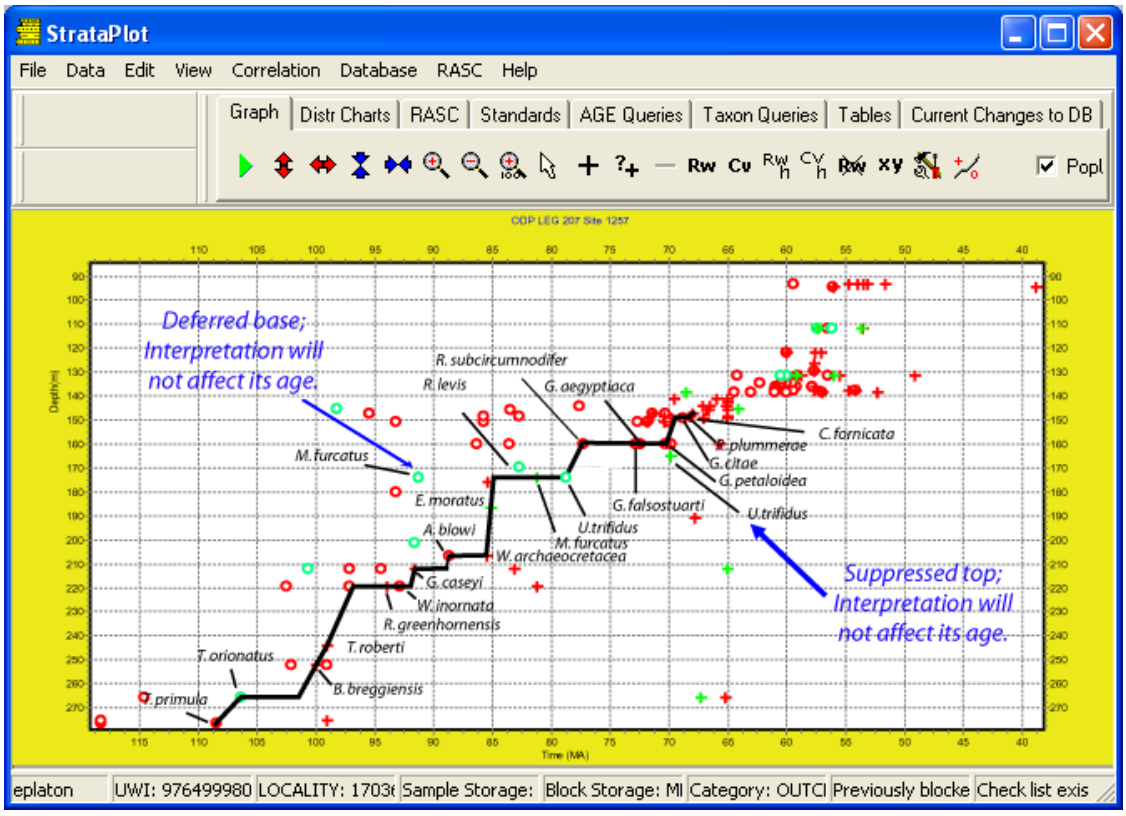

Example of StrataPlot's graphic correlation display and capabilities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MIKRO 2011

The Grzybowski Foundation and The Micropalaeontological Society are pleased to announce the combined MIKRO-2011 Workshop and TMS Foram/Nanno Group meeting on July 27 - July 2, 2011. The workshop is open to all Micropalaeontologists irrespective of society membership, and follows workshops previously held in the Holy Cross Mountains (MIKRO-2009) and at the Natural History Museum (TMS Foram/Nanno group). The combined workshop/meeting will consist of three days of technical sessions, followed by a two-day field excursion in the picturesque Carpathian flysch deposits made famous by Józef Grzybowski and co-workers.

The meeting will be held in the main building of the AGH University of Science & Technology situated on the outskirts of the medieval city of Kraków. This is the first joint meeting hosted by the Grzybowski Foundation and The Micropalaeontological Society, and we hope this will be an ideal venue for colleagues from east and west. Microscopes and seminar rooms will be made available for working groups and for demonstration purposes. The Grzybowski Foundation will publish the conference abstract volume as a Special Publication.

For further information check the Grzybowski Foundation website under **"what's new?" - http://www.es.ucl.ac.uk/Grzybowski/new.htm.**

Mike Kaminski

Chevron (cont. from page 4)

We occasionally recruit students (international, as well as domestic) who have completed at least one year of post-graduate study in micropaleontology for 2 - 3 month long internships focused on very specific projects. We hire not only from this intern pool, but also have interest in experienced individuals with expertise in targeted sub-disciplines. A Masters degree is required for entry-level positions in biostratigraphy with Chevron in the U. S., but the bulk of our staff come to us with a Ph.D. in hand.

Tom Dignes

Micropaleontology Working Group on Information Technologies

Invariably, when I attend a meeting, such as the 'Geologic Problem Solving with Microfossils II' conference in memory of Brian O'Neill (March 14-19, University of Houston), I discover a useful or intriguing micropaleontology-oriented computer application, database or analytical technique that I didn't know existed. After talking to other meeting attendees I realized that I was not alone. There is wide range of 'digital' efforts in micropaleontology, both academic and commercial, that span taxonomy, chronology, quantitative stratigraphy, charting, analytical methods, semantic technologies, and whatever else that is being done that I will see at the next meeting I attend.

To increase awareness and foster synergies among these activities it was informally suggested that NAMS establish a working group focused on information technology applications (e.g., software, databases, quantitative methods and emerging technologies, such as semantic technology) within the domain of micropaleontology. At the

see IT Working Group (cont.) on page 11

Change at Oxford

The Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Oxford is relocating to new premises within the Science Area at Oxford. For those who have visited the Department in the past, they will recall it is situated next door to the University Museum of Natural History on Parks Road. Despite additions to the original 1930's building during the 1960's and late 1980's, the Department has outgrown the facility. Our new home (pictured) is situated approximately 500 meters away, and fronts onto South Parks Road, with a lab block (left) and office block (right) connected by a glass atrium. Consequently we have a new address:

Department of Earth Sciences
University of Oxford
South Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3AN

The Department of Earth Sciences at University of Oxford's new home on South Parks Road

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Hilding-Kronforst @ AAPG

Ms. Hilding-Kronforst, recipient of the 2010 Mobil Travel Grant and Jones/O'Neill Memorial Grant, presented her poster, co-authored with Dr. Bridget Wade, titled 'Middle Eocene 41-44 Ma Biostratigraphic and Environmental Conditions at Blake Nose Western North Atlantic ODP Leg 171B' during the SEPM Student

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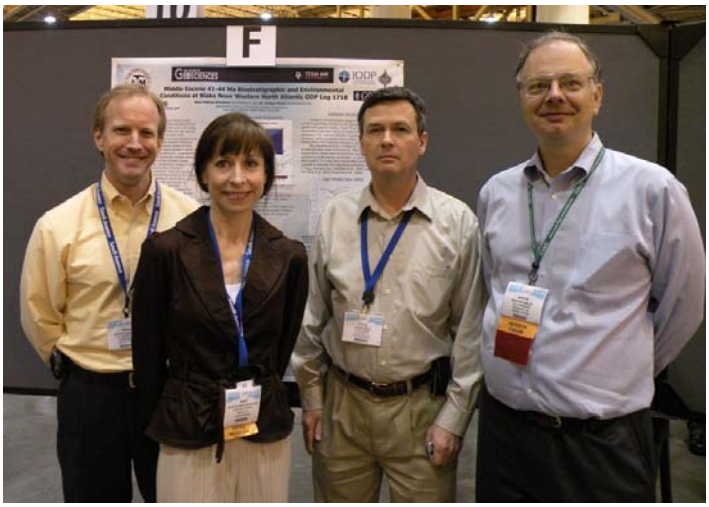

Shari Hilding-Kronforst (left center) at AAPG with Jason Lundquist, President (left), Jason Crux, President-Elect (right center) and Martin Farley, Past-President (right) .

Dickey: Best Oral Presentation

Regina Dickey (speaker) and her co-author Dr. Thomas Yancey were awarded the 2010 SEPM Best Oral Presentation at the annual AAPG/SEPM meeting held in New Orleans, LA this year. She presented her talk titled 'Palynology Across a Sequence Boundary in the Wilcox Group, Central Texas' during the oral session 'Paleontology in the 21st Century: A Symposium Dedicated to Ed Picou'. Ms. Dickey is a Ph.D. student at Texas A&M, College Station, TX. Her goal is to compile a detailed palynological biostratigraphic analysis of the upper part of the Wilcox Group in central Texas, encompassing an interval that includes the Paleocene-Eocene Boundary. Ms. Dickey is a past recipient of the GCSSEPM 2009 Ed Picou Fellowship Grant for her proposal 'Palynological and Biostratigraphic Analysis of the Upper Part of the Wilcox Group in Central Texas'. At the SEPM Council meeting held at AAPG in April, the Council voted to add a student member to each of its committees. Nancy Engelhardt-Moore (SEPM Councilor for Paleontology) appointed Ms. Dickey to SEPM's Moore Medal Selection Committee as the first student at-large member. Ms. Dickey will also be participating in SEPM's Website Review at GSA in Denver, CO.

Nancy Engelhardt-Moore

MEETING CALENDAR

American Association of Petroleum Geologists Annual Meeting
April 10-13, 2011
Houston, TX, USA

American Association of Petroleum Geologists International Conference
September 12-15, 2010
Calgary, AB, Canada

Geological Society of America Annual Meeting
October 31 - November 3, 2010
Denver, Colorado, USA

FORAMS 2010
September 5-10, 2010
Bonn, Germany

GCAGS
October 10-12, 2010
San Antonio, TX

Micropalaeontological Society Annual General Meeting
Quaternary to Recent Records of Environmental Change
November 17, 2010
University College London
London, UK

American Association of Stratigraphic Palynologists
September 29 - October 2, 2010
Harbourview Holiday Inn
Halifax, NS, Canada

MIKRO - 2011
June 27 - July 2, 2011
Kraków, Poland

GCSEPM Foundation Perkins Research Conference
December 5-8, 2010
Houston, TX

Please submit meeting announcements to the Editor for inclusion in future editions of the NAMS News.

President (cont. from page 1)

major companies to have 20-40 paleontologists on staff (Amoco once had 80). During the downturn, many companies decided to retain only a few biostratigraphers, who generally were not expected to generate data. Rather, they coordinated the work of external micropaleontologists. The model worked because a great many paleontologists, who had received years of high quality training and experience at oil companies, were available to do the work. What I think may be underappreciated is the degree to which this tended to magnify the lack of new data generators entering the field, and tended to devalue the perception of that portion of the biostratigraphic workflow. It also tended to uncouple the data generators from the application of the data to solving problems. The problem solving was done inside the companies, where the relevant contextual data was available. The result; data analysts became increasingly unfamiliar with the taxa represented by the marks on their range charts, and data generators became uninvolved with actually getting to use their data. My experience has been that micropaleontological data can be best interpreted and applied to problem solving by someone who has the intimacy with the data that comes from regularly generating it; and that the best data generator is someone who gets to actually use the data and see how it is applied.

There are several issues that come to mind relative to this situation, the first is that because of this model, most companies stopped training paleontologists, and so the people with the many years of experience necessary to develop the skills to do excellent micropaleonlologic data generation are getting pretty thin on the ground. Yet, industry now drills deeper and more costly wells, in complex settings where the value of chronostratigraphic control and correlation is easy to demonstrate. The data used to do that are going to have to come from somewhere. Over the last several years, a number of companies have seemed to have finally begun to come to terms with this situation, and have begun to hire and train micropaleontologists. Unfortunately, in many cases this hiring only seems to be happening at a replacement or subsistence level of staffing necessary for future coordination. At some point the experienced data generators are going to retire, and that model is not going to work anymore. My hope, and belief, is that over the next few years the inescapable logic of the situation will force companies to realize that they need to hire and train staff to fill the data generation role, before the experienced staff needed to train them retire. It's a funny thing about micropaleontology; it takes a lot of time to get good at it. The geologic column is long, and there are always more taxa to learn (and the turnaround time necessary in applied industrial data generation often requires a level of overt familiarity with taxa that allows for near instant recognition of specimens). Even a good analyst can make significant misidentifications working in a time and place where they are inexperienced. Training that results in relatively uniform taxonomic standards requires an experienced mentor. I recall two comments I heard when I was first entering the field that I appreciate better now. One was that it used to be more or less considered true that you weren't really earning your salary for about five years, and the second was that no matter how you tried to change it, to get ten years of experience, it takes about ten years.

Back in the days of industry hiring a number of paleontologists every year, it was relatively easy for academic departments to justify programs turning out new micropaleontologists. Without that driver, academics have mirrored many of the trends in industry. It strikes me though that the issue of shrinking support for micropaleontology in academic settings is (pardon the expression) a microcosm of a larger academic situation with science in general. There is clearly a current emphasis toward grand innovation and synthesis, and away from fundamental research and problem solving using established tools. Rather than being offset by funding meant to support basic science, much of this appears driven by the direction set by premier funding organizations - and the accolades/ advancement that accompany garnering their support. My concern with this emphasis, as it impacts micropaleontology, is that it distracts us from appreciating that you can't build to new heights without a solid grounding in the fundamentals, and those fundamentals must be learned anew by each generation. We work within a science of experience. It is difficult to become a great taxonomist from a book. Much of what we need to learn we need to learn from or with mentors, while working on projects requiring significant time and effort. While we can record much of what we learn and know, much of it is not easily recoverable without time and training. The discipline and its skills are truly resident or live at any point in the current population of practitioners – not recorded for all posterity and ready for use at any future time. Micropaleontology programs (in academics and industry) need to maintain a bench strength and capability not just because of its demonstrable current utility, but because it

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Fundamentals (cont. from page 9)

is a fundamental knowledge set that would be lost if not maintained.

It strikes me that this is a broadly present issue in the geological sciences, not one of micropaleontology's construction, or one that we are likely to address on our own. If geology programs decide to do away with paleontology and stratigraphy classes to make room for new topical subjects, can structure and mineralogy be far behind? At what point would we no longer be producing scientists many of us would call geologists? If you try to explain to someone who wants to do away with these requirements that they are the basic core of what geology is, and they don't want to hear it because it interferes with what they want to do, it may be that you are just wasting your breath. I think we unnecessarily berate ourselves for not having sufficiently proselytized about micropaleontology's utility. The willfully blind cannot be made to see.

So, what of micropaleontology? Perhaps our numbers will never be as great in academics and industry as they once were. I imagine there is some natural equilibrium level, that essentially represents the balance between the number of positions justified by a stable and valuable field not needing to pump out scores of new students each year, and the number of solid new professionals there are to fill those positions. I have a feeling we were well above our equilibrium for a while, and have probably slid below it for a time. There is a tide in the affairs of men. New people are needed to replace a generation, and maintain micropaleontology for another.

Jason Lundquist
NAMS President

Travel Grant (cont. from page 2)

NAMS will sponsor one of its student members at the upcoming SEPM/AAPG annual meeting in Houston, April 10-13, 2011. Information on the meeting and the abstract guidelines are available at http://www.aapg.org/houston2011. Students interested in presenting a poster and who would like to apply for the travel grant should first prepare an abstract following the guidelines outlined at the AAPG website, and then e-mail 1) the abstract and 2) 1-2 sentences outlining the value of presenting in Houston to NAMS President Jason Lundquist (BP; Jason.Lundquist@bp.com) by the AAPG abstract submittal deadline (September 23, 2010, unless extended).

Students may have co-authors, but the student must be the senior author and be the individual who presents the poster.

Jason Lundquist

NY Times (cont. from page 5)

past, whereas we know the rich history of micropaleontology in the industry both in operations and the office. Overall, this example fits the classic situation of mixed emotions: We are pleased to see micropaleontology and micropaleontologists get publicity for what we contribute, but it is an unfortunate set of circumstances that produced this publicity. We certainly hope that this "bust" in paleontology use in the oil industry passes quickly without permanent consequences for the people involved.

Martin Farley

Nebraska (cont. from page 4)

ing programs, which for me dates back to my doctoral studies under the tutelage of Woody Wise. In addition, our location in the Cretaceous Western Interior Basin provides us with access to some of the most beautiful microfossil assemblages of the Mesozoic. Some of the recent work of my students includes detailed biostratigraphy of the Coniacian-Santonian boundary, investigations on the interaction of basinal and (invading) oceanic water masses, as well as documentation of the effects of a bolide-related tsunami on pelagic sections in the Pierre Shale. There is also a lot of work in progress on the Cenozoic record, with current projects on Eocene sections from the North Atlantic, Australian margin, Spain, and the Gulf of Mexico, as well as with the Miocene of the Gulf of Mexico. I teach specialty courses on calcareous nannofossils and also a course on quantitative methods in paleontology. My recent students have all gone into the petroleum industry, with several of them taking jobs before finishing their degrees. I have no doubt that these students are all sitting at their desks, diligently finishing up their theses and dissertations.

If you want to know more, you are invited to visit our web site about the paleontology program in the Department of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Nebraska:http://eas.unl.edu/research/earth/paleontology.shtml.

David Watkins

Oxford (cont. from page 7)

The new laboratories will support a number of research groups with an interest in micropalaeontology and palaeobiology (Martin Brasier, Matt Friedman), biogeochemistry (Ros Rickaby, Heather Bouman) and stratigraphy (Steve Hesselbo, Hugh Jenkyns).

Offices and teaching laboratories will be moved starting in late September. The research laboratories will be moved in November.

Owen Green

MMRG Report (cont. from page 5)

wishing to use it. Further, the Group asked a sub-group to write a summary of these recommendations, and publish them in SEPM's newsletter, the Sedimentary Record. Jason Lundquist, Rich Denne, and Anthony Gary agreed to pursue this objective.

The second topic, on the issue of taxonomic consistency in nannofossil terminology and concepts, particularly as observed in Gulf Coast analyses, also drew plenty of commentary. There was general agreement that the perception of an issue here was warranted, and that a number of significant factors are likely involved. Key items touched on were 1) that nannofossil taxonomy has been considered proprietary by some, and that this may have contributed to a broader issue of independent workers developing unique concepts, 2) older holotype illustrations can be poor, 3) previous attempts to organize working groups to harmonize taxonomy had not made significant progress. The Research Group recommended organizing or re-starting a NAMS supported effort similar to that begun by a GCSSEPM working group some years ago. Rob Campbell agreed to discuss this with the organizers of the previous working group, and report back to the NAMS Council.

Jason Lundquist

Shari (cont. from page 8)

Awards Poster Session on Tuesday, April 13, 2010 at the AAPG Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA. Ms. Hilding-Kronforst, a Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M in College Station (Texas), plans to use the Jones/O'Neill Grant to cover the costs for the use of an SEM to image planktonic foraminifera. The images will substantiate identifications and preserve important research information after the specimens have been destroyed for isotope and trace element analysis. These analyses will support her research on how and why the climate transitioned from an Eocene greenhouse to an Oligocene icehouse (see NAMS Newsletter Vol. 31, No.1, 2010).

Nancy Engelhardt-Moore

IT Working Group (cont. from page 7)

NAMS Council meeting at AAPG it was agreed that the organization would support such a working group, if there was sufficient interest from the membership. Therefore, I am requesting comments – pro or con – on establishing such an effort. Please email me at tgary@egi.utah.edu with your comments.

Anthony Gary

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For voluntary contributions to the Garry Jones & Brian O'Neill Fund for NAMS Student Research enclose a check payable to 'Garry Jones & Brian O'Neill Memorial Fund'. Contributions are deductible as charitable gifts for U.S. Income Tax purposes.

Anthony C. Gary, NAMS News Editor
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FIRST CLASS

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
PLEASE FORWARD

The next issue of the NAMS News will be published before the 2011 AAPG/SEPM Annual Meeting. Please send news to the Editor through March 15, 2011. News regarding meetings, symposia, people, books, internet information, software, new journal articles, and just about anything else regarding micropaleontology is welcome. Submit your news by email (preferred), fax or letter to the Editor:

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