

2009 MEDALS & AWARDS

2009 GSA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Presented to Karl E. Karlstrom



Karl E. Karlstrom
University of New Mexico

Citation by Brendan Murphy

It is a pleasure to nominate Karl Karlstrom for the GSA Distinguished Service Award.

Karl is a Professor in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque). He obtained a B.S. in 1973 at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, an M.S. in 1977 and a Ph.D in 1981, both at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. He moved to the University of New Brunswick, Canada for a two year post-doctoral fellowship with Paul Williams, a renowned structural geologist. Karl had various academic appointments between 1982 and 1994, when he joined the University of New Mexico as a Professor. His main research interests involve structural geology and tectonics, including evolution of tectonic styles in the Precambrian, processes of continental accretion, assembly, and stabilization, and tectonic evolution of the southwestern U.S. from the Precambrian to the Quaternary. At the last count, he has authored or co-authored nearly 140 refereed publications, 24 geological maps, 36 reports and guidebooks. He has supervised or co-supervised nearly 45 graduate students, and judging by their track record since graduation, he has been an excellent mentor. This body of work has tackled fundamental geologic processes that have shaped the evolution of our crust from the earliest Paleoproterozoic to the Cenozoic. Although trained as a structural

geologist, his recent research on tectonic geomorphology in the American south-west is testament to the breadth and depth of his expertise. These contributions are but a small sub-set of his total academic achievements.

Karl has been involved in many of the core activities of GSA publications, as an editor, reviewer, and author. He served the society as editor of *GSA Today* (GSAT, 2000-2003), and of *GSA Bulletin* (GSAB, 2005-2008). He served on the Publications Committee as an articulate and passionate advocate for those journals, and on the editorial board of *Geology* (1988-1991). He has also contributed enormously to the society as a researcher. At last count, his vita documents authorship or co-authorship of 51 GSA publications (14 in GSAB, 18 in *Geology*, 3 in *Geosphere*, 4 in *GSA Today*, 3 in GSA Special Papers). He has also have presented 159 GSA abstracts since 1983—many co-authored by his students. He has chaired numerous topical sessions, instigated and organized Pardee keynote symposia and has led several GSA field trips.

As *GSA Today* (GSAT) editor, he followed in the great footsteps of Eldridge Moores and Sue Kay. He built on their legacy by soliciting ground-breaking articles that represented the breadth and depth of our rapidly expanding science. Typically, these articles dealt with hot topics or controversies, had outstanding graphics, and reached out to the broad readership of *GSA Today*. Each article was carefully and tenderly guided by Karl through the many iterations required to shape the article for the GSAT readership. Many professors have volunteered that they assign many of these articles to their graduate and undergraduate students. During Karl's tenure, the GSAT monthly science article routinely became the paper with the most hits on the GSA webpage.

As *GSA Bulletin* (GSAB) editor, I can attest that Karl was a delight to work with, a view shared by Yildirim Dilek, my predecessor and GSAB editor from 2003–2006. Sound advice was always just a phone call away. Throughout his stewardship, he worked tirelessly to maintain the international stature of the Bulletin, and helped shape its niche and as a prime outlet for high impact data-rich, archival papers. He constantly reminded me (in a good-natured way) of the importance of maintaining the highest of standards. The success of this philosophy is borne out by citation statistics. During his tenure, the impact factor of GSAB has risen steadily, and the on-line publication facility (see “Ahead of Print” on the GSAB website) has reduced the publication lag-time. In short,

the journal flourished during his stewardship, and has enhanced its stature at the forefront of geoscience publications. He has followed in the footsteps of many excellent editors and has helped the journal to evolve, paving the way for new GSA journals such as *Geosphere* and *Lithosphere*.

After each of his terms GSAT and GSAB editor, he was replaced by two editors, a sure testament to the workload he carried and to the success of his tenures!!

Karl is also an exemplary geocitizen, and has participated in several science outreach programs to the general public, most notably in explaining the spectacular geology in the vicinity of the Grand Canyon.

For his service and dedication to the geoscience community in general, and the Geological Society of America in particular, he is a most deserving recipient of the GSA Distinguished Service Award.

Response by Karl E. Karlstrom

I appreciate receiving GSA's Distinguished Service Award. Following in the footsteps of Eldridge Moores and Sue Kay, I was *GSA Today's* science editor from 2000 to 2003, and the sole editor for much of 2001-2003. The process of soliciting top science articles, working with authors to make the papers understandable to broad audiences, and always fearful we might not make the next month's issue are palpable memories. I still feel that these science papers have the potential to be the Science and Nature papers for our discipline and (somehow simultaneously), a way to convey cutting-edge ideas to specialists, students, and the public. These articles have a special niche in our science, and subsequent science editors are carrying forward this tradition grandly. As an essential and overdue step, I look forward to seeing the *GSA Today* science article in the Science Citation Index and in *Geoscience World*.

My editorship for *GSA Bulletin* (2004-2008) was differently rewarding. The niche of *GSA Bulletin* articles is as the data-rich and archival record of our science. These papers are cited for decades—they have depth and staying power. With co-editors, Yildirim Dilek, then Brendan Murphy, we were successful in helping increase international participation and recognition for GSAB. I am proud that every one of the hundreds of manuscripts we handled (accepted or not, and many with several revisions) was improved by the peer review process. This process is filled with frustrations: a sometimes slow review process, some impatient and irate authors, and

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inevitably some unevenness in treatment of manuscripts. But, the GSAB review process is the best we have; it represents the Society's best efforts at identifying, improving, and publishing the best geoscience. The success of *GSA Bulletin* is at the core of the success of the Society. Both happen because we have a committed team: Associate Editors do an amazing job; reviewers are diligent, authors provide the work in the first place, my editorial assistant Eileen Embid kept it all keep moving, and the dedicated GSA staff help papers reach completion.

Thanks especially to Jon Olsen and Jeanette Hammann for their efforts and help to me over the years. In a tangible way, I view this whole team as the essential ingredients needed to work towards a better understanding of the Earth.

In some respects, though, I think my strongest sustained service to GSA has been my participation with my students in presenting talks and abstracts, leading field trips, chairing and organizing topical sessions, and otherwise being a supporter of the GSA National and Section meetings. Since 1979,

I have been coauthor of 180 GSA abstracts, most with my graduate and undergraduate students as first authors and coauthors. GSA meetings are where these students meet each other and future professors, and where many present and defend their first research projects.

It continues to be a pleasure to be part of both the scientific meetings and publishing aspects of GSA — a scientific society that emphasizes its membership and the science first.