

2013 MEDALS & AWARDS

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEOINFORMATICS AWARD

Presented to
Clifford A. Jacobs



Clifford A. Jacobs
National Science Foundation

Citation by Tim Killeen and Lee Allison

In 2009, the atmospheric sciences community recognized Clifford Jacobs as “one of the giants” for his contributions during his then 25 years at the National Science Foundation. Since then, he has gone on to engage the broader Earth science community with his vision and leadership.

Cliff Jacobs has done more than anyone else to envision, develop and sustain high-

performing, enterprise-level, community-owned, community-managed and community-serving cyberinfrastructure for the geosciences in the United States. Cliff has demonstrated both fabulous intellectual leadership and wonderfully effective and persistent management skills in this regard and it is most fitting for him to receive this notable recognition from the Geological Society of America.

Cliff served as the NSF program manager for the National Center for Atmospheric Research for a period of two decades and was a driving force behind the continuous modernization and upgrading of the NCAR supercomputer system which has served generations of university researchers well and supported the development of world-class community models for both weather and climate prediction for decades. It was also Cliff’s vision to establish and nurture the UCAR UNIDATA program (now involving more than 250 institutions) more than 25 years ago, providing leadership community tools to access, visualize and exchange data sets. One of the products of this work was the NetCDF standard, now used worldwide. He has been a true pioneer in what is now referred to data-enabled science and engineering - long before it became fashionable. Through his patient, calm and purposeful leadership from the NSF, Cliff was able to shape UNIDATA into the major community asset it is today. More recently, Cliff Jacobs has been the intellectual leader for NSF’s innovative EarthCube program. Cliff led the design team that created the novel management and funding structure for EarthCube – one that stresses open source, open architecture, and resolutely community-based design. Cliff Jacobs’ contributions have

been primarily made “behind the scenes” at NSF, but those closest to process attest to the level of knowledge, professionalism, tenacity, and dedication that he has brought to the entire geosciences community. We all owe him a debt of gratitude.

Response by Clifford A. Jacobs

I am honored and deeply appreciative of the recognition this award bestows. My accomplishments, so generous outlined in the citation, were inspired by the geosciences community. They have demonstrated an unwavering devotion to the advancement of science through creativity and dedicated endeavors, with the level of resourcefulness that is the envy of other disciplines. My contribution lies solely in guiding and harnessing the intellectual capacity of researchers, cyber-technologists, and educators to bring to fruition a continually improving milieu for the studying of the Earth system. Along the way, I have been educated by the best and brightest in the science and engineering communities and developed a sincere admiration for their intellect, devotion, and insight gained from experience. Working at the National Science Foundation has offered me the privilege of being exposed to, and enriched by, the national and international research enterprise. That knowledge provided me with the opportunity to be an integrator of ideas and accomplishments of the Geoinformatics community.