

## 2014 MEDALS & AWARDS

### OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN GEOINFORMATICS

Presented to  
**Ian Jackson**



Ian Jackson  
*formerly British Geological Survey*

#### *Citation by Lee Allison*

The GSA Geoinformatics Division brings together professionals in our field to advance discussion of our issues and ideas, to facilitate teamwork by earth scientists and computer scientists, to promote publication of our progress, and to advance education in our crucially important discipline.

To pursue goals such as these, it is customary for groups such as ours to present major awards to those who have demonstrated the most admirable commitment to and leadership in our field, thus providing a model to which we all may aspire.

The Division therefore has established the 'Outstanding Contributions in Geoinformatics Award', to be presented annually to a highly worthy nominee for outstanding contributions to geology through application of the principles of geoinformatics.

Today, it gives me great pleasure to present the 2014 GSA Geoinformatics Division 'Outstanding Contributions in Geoinformatics Award' to Ian Jackson, who is widely known for his long and superb service to advance the field of geoinformatics through his pioneering work at the British Geological Survey, to the establishment and unprecedented success of the OneGeology initiative, and to many important international activities such as CGI – the Commission for the Management and Application of Geoscience Information.

Ian graduated from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1972. He began his career with BGS in 1973, working on mineral resource assessments in the UK and overseas.

In 1983, he became a field geologist in the coalfields of North-East England, where he applied early computing systems to large borehole and mine plan databases. Subsequently, he was appointed manager of a corporate project to introduce digital map production across BGS in 1990.

Ian then became BGS Director of Information from 2000 to 2007, and he was appointed Chief of Operations prior to his recent retirement from BGS. Concurrently, he fulfilled roles such as member of the European Commission team that drafted regulations for INSPIRE – the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community.

A dominant theme throughout Ian's career has been the wide application of geoscience data for societal benefit, a goal he continues to promote as a consultant on the international stage. Ian has been one of the first in geological survey organizations worldwide to understand, and more importantly, to change the organization of the survey to fulfill its role of "information agency."

Ian understood the importance of standards to achieve the opening of geoscientific data for diverse uses, and took a decisive part to the recreation of the IUGS/CGI.

Among his many accomplishments, Ian is perhaps best known as the primary instigator of OneGeology - a global initiative to make digital geological map data accessible throughout the world.

OneGeology began at the General Assembly of the Commission for the Geological Map of the World in February 2006 as a vision among a small international group of geologists involved with the management and publication of geological data who faced the daily challenge of sharing and exchanging data. Although many in the group were enthusiastic about the concept, it was Ian who ran with the idea and became the champion and leader of the initiative.

Ian's colleagues uniformly refer to his ability to inspire others on the OneGeology concept and build a strong team with the skills to create OneGeology, his keen awareness of how to get things done, and his ability to find constructive ways around obstacles as key to the success of the initiative.

The project gained momentum under the International Year of Planet Earth, and reached full speed at the stupendously successful Brighton workshop in early 2007, where the

Brighton Accord was unanimously adopted by delegates from 54 countries.

Ian knew that OneGeology could only be successful if it was promoted as a geology initiative rather than a purely technological project. The Brighton Workshop has been described as a masterful approach to launching OneGeology that showed how the news media could be harnessed to help promote a geoscience initiative. Knowing that international endorsement was a critical first step to OneGeology, Brighton publicity established OneGeology internationally with a degree of success that has rarely been seen before or since.

It is widely accepted that without Ian, OneGeology would not have become the success it is.

Ian's strong leadership is balanced with a diplomacy that managed to coordinate most of the European geological surveys (and the project delivered the first prototype implementation of INSPIRE. This positioned our community as the most advanced and organized community involved in INSPIRE.

Those who have been intimately involved in OneGeology know very well of the immense commitment, passion, and meticulous effort that Ian has contributed to these activities – much of it behind the scenes.

For these tremendous contributions to our field, the GSA Geoinformatics Division therefore is immensely pleased to present the 2014 'Outstanding Contributions in Geoinformatics Award', to Ian Jackson.

#### *Response by Ian Jackson*

I would like to thank members of the Geoinformatics Division and the GSA for this award; it is very much appreciated. If I may I would like to accept it on behalf of the OneGeology and British Geological Survey teams. In particular I would like to acknowledge the enormous effort and contribution of friends and colleagues in the less well developed countries of the world; it is they who have advanced the furthest and added most value.

Those who know me know well that I have maintained a strong belief throughout my career that the prime responsibility of geological surveys, and the geoscientists who work within them, is to apply their science for the benefit of society. While some of those in the academic sector have a legitimate reason to pursue knowledge for knowledge sake that, in my view, is not the role of geological surveys. Their mission is, or should be, to seek to maximise the value of their work for their stakeholders.

## 2014 MEDALS & AWARDS

In the context of geoscience information this means that geological surveys must ask themselves: *Given the new technologies available to us, are we fully adding value to and disseminating the data, information and knowledge we already hold before we embark on new surveys and data acquisition programmes?* I do not believe that this is a question that is asked often enough. The result is that good science and data produced by our predecessors, that has been funded by society and can improve health and welfare, lies hidden and inaccessible.

I am of course making the case for surely the most deserving Cinderellas in the geological domain - data management and delivery. It often seems to me that, as a science, geology's desire to build plush

washrooms far outstrips its ability to complete the essential sewage and water supply infrastructure.

The relevance to this award? Well I very much hope that the work done by OneGeology and BGS has in some small way adjusted the balance and demonstrated the value of managing and disseminating geological data. I would also hope that it has made those of us in the so-called developed world realise how much we can help those who are less fortunate than us and how much our colleagues appreciate that help.

Thank you.