

34th International Geological Congress (IGC) AUSTRALIA 2012 Strategic Communication and Outreach Plan

OBJECTIVES

Stemming from the goals of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), the IGC aims to promote development of the earth sciences relevant to preserving Earth's natural environment, using all natural resources wisely and improving prosperity and the quality of human life; and to strengthen public awareness of geology and advance geological education.

The general objectives of IGCs's are to:

- Contribute to the advancement of fundamental and applied research in the geological sciences.
- Provide a general assembly of geologists where ideas and information can be freely exchanged.
- Provide the opportunity, by way of geological excursions, to examine geological problems and features in the field.

Specific goals include:

- Improved identification and assessment of energy and mineral resources;
- Clarity in understanding global change;
- Assessment of geological hazards;
- Employ the learnings of the geological sciences; and
- Facilitate international and interdisciplinary cooperation.

An outcome of achieving of the objectives is furthering public welfare by assuring that geology makes appropriate contributions to and influences public policy decisions of an international nature.

Secondary objectives include, but are not limited to;

- i. Increase IUGS membership and IGC participation,
- ii. Disseminate information on the geological sciences,
- iii. Increase and enhance professional education in the geological sciences,
- iv. Enhance existing affiliations and partnerships, along forming new ones, and
- v. Increase visibility of the geological sciences.

The increased visibility of geological sciences is a particularly broad objective. For the purposes of AUSTRALIA 2012, this will mean increased awareness of the geosciences amongst younger people, additional delegates, government and non government organisation awareness, corporate awareness, financial involvement, and perhaps most importantly encouragement of increased numbers choosing the earth sciences as a career path. Public outreach to the City of Brisbane is also a broad goal, however, the returns on this effort are uncertain. Outreach also encompasses enhanced understanding in the developing countries through a high level of participation in the congress.

PRIORITIES FOR OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

The level to which the above objectives of the IGC can be achieved is closely linked to the level of financial support provided from a variety of sources including the government and commercial sectors. At the time of writing in early 2009, the commercial sector is severely constrained by the global economic conditions.

Outreach activities and tools for IGC 2012 may include:

- A volunteer program is essential for the machinery of the Congress, but will also achieve the objective of increased awareness amongst young people.
- An open day for the public would go some way to achieving increased awareness in the city of Brisbane.
- A careers night would increase engagement between students, the commercial sector, universities and government.
- The existing Carillon database of potential delegates will be an important tool for disseminating information.
- Guest speakers might be engaged for the public, but marketing will need to be strong or there could be an empty room.
- Concurrent sessions provide too much technical detail for young students and consideration could be given to a specific program for them.
- An Antarctic Centenary display in the “GeoSpace” (IGC meeting area) to enhance interest has been explored with Phil O’Brien of Geoscience Australia.

Outreach tools/strategies/activities may include:

Print – This can include brochures, news releases, feature articles, newsletters, educational curricula, direct mailing

Electronic – This can include video, email, documentaries, radio interviews, television, internet (websites)

Visuals – This can include displays, exhibits, posters/billboards, signs, stickers, bulletin boards, magnets, pens

Personal contact – This can include workshops, presentations, lectures, interviews, press events, conferences, face-to-face encounters

Other – partnerships, cooperative agreements, volunteers, careers night

A communication sub-committee needs to be established under the 34th IGC

Organising Committee, including, not limited to the following criteria:

- To define communication needs for important communication phases before and during the congress. Objectives for the communication activity need to be defined and a communication strategy with concrete tasks developed;
- To define goals and target groups, and recommend cost effective communication channels;
- To promote the message that geoscience can contribute to a safer, healthier and wealthier world;
- To determine outreach tools – print, electronic, visual, personal contact etc;
- To develop a schedule of timelines;
- To determine funds and resources; and
- To develop a method of evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the outreach activities.

It is vital that the same consistent message is communicated to the target audience through all forms of outreach tools and activities.

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Branding of AUSTRALIA 2012 commenced with the bid for the congress made in Florence, Italy in 2004. A consistency with this graphical branding has been maintained since 2004, particularly in publications and posters created to promote the IGC in Brisbane, but also in electronic communications. The primary channel of communication for AUSTRALIA 2012 is through the Congress website, URL- www.34igc.org. An operational media strategy will need to be formulated in early 2012, to facilitate strategic work with press and media outlets domestically and overseas, in the phase prior to and during the congress. Key values for the strategy might include criteria such as a professional and innovative approach, a friendly and inclusive atmosphere and an environmental focus with transparency in decisions.

Website

The dedicated website with the URL www.34igc.org was developed by Carillon Conference Management, the Professional Conference Organiser (PCO), in consultation with Geoscience Australia (GA), and based on the original AUSTRALIA 2012 website hosted by GA. The PCO developed and managed the web content management system, including design and functionality. Content has been and will be delivered by the IGC organising committee, which has ultimate responsibility for publishing content on the website. The website is the core communication channel for the congress, offering the opportunity to steer relevant information to different target audiences. Significant effort will be maintained in optimising content and phraseology to ensure visibility and maximise hits from search engines.

Crucial information to be communicated through the website includes registration deadlines, abstract submission, excursion participation, accommodation and travel bookings, and planning for social events.

Relevant Experience from the 33rd Oslo IGC Webcast Project

The 33rd IGC held in Oslo employed a strong focus on “webcasts” through the www.33igc.org website for promotion and information dissemination. As part of the communication activities a webcast team was active throughout the IGC congress mainly to cover lectures from the plenary hall. A webcast studio was centrally situated in the venue, attracting attention from delegates.

The 33rd IGC Organising Committee found it difficult to measure audience numbers for webcast transmissions, but some polls indicated around 200 viewers. The webcasts have a significant value as an archive for 33IGC and were a cost effective means for global communication.

The success and effect of this effort will need to be assessed by the AUSTRALIA 2012 Organising Committee, prior to making any commitment to this level of interest accessibility.

IGC Brochures and Postcards

These printed documents provide a means to promote AUSTRALIA 2012 at geoscience conferences and other meetings. However, they were designed to work in conjunction with the up to date information published on the IGC website. Further runs of these publications may be required in the lead up to publication of the First Circular. While these products do broadcast the congress to the general public, their key objective prior to the congress is building delegate numbers.

First Circular

The First 2012 IGC Circular, will be published and distributed around May 2010. Based on the experience of the Oslo Congress in 2008 a circulation of around 20,000 copies will be required. While the website will remain the primary means of communication, a printed circular is necessary to encourage support and interest particularly in developing countries. The published First Circular will be made available on the IGC website in downloadable PDF format.

There may be a requirement to publish subsequent circulars depending upon circumstances, such as modifications and demand. Like the brochures and postcards, the circulars will build general awareness of the congress along with boosting delegate numbers.

MARKETING BEFORE THE CONGRESS

Strategic marketing challenges include:

- Promoting the congress in order to encourage maximum number of registrations, as early as possible,
- Extension of existing marketing strategies, see Appendix 1,
- Communicating key information both to people aware of the congress, and
- Reaching out to people unfamiliar with IGC and AUSTRALIA 2012.

Event Marketing

Conferences with a similar delegate audience to the IGC are amongst the richest sources of potential delegates. To take advantage of these opportunities, card, brochures, banners and roll-ups have been produced to promote AUSTRALIA 2012 at significant conferences and events. Such promotional impact in numbers of IGC participants can be difficult to assess, however it is essential to be represented, particularly in terms of recruiting exhibitors, where personal contact is important. Furthermore, we can usually get an idea of post promotion response by monitoring web hits after each promotion – with a spike in activity indicating an impact. Promotional stands also offer the opportunity to give updated information about the Brisbane IGC.

Other promotional products produced have included, ties, scarves, koala pins, pens and broaches. While effectiveness and value is difficult to assess, these items are proven in effective conference promotion and have proven essential in attracting attention and initiating conversation.

Attracting participants to a congress only held every four years is challenging, and event marketing is especially important to reach potential exhibitors and participants.

Online Marketing

Paid advertising in print publications has been considered as part of the congress promotion. Geoscience Australia has commissioned advertising in the International Journal of Earth Sciences and Engineering (ISSN 0974-5904) published in India and the effectiveness of this project is yet to be assessed.

Email newsletter

Interested persons can register on the www.34igc.org website and by providing their email address will receive email newsletters. The timetable for these newsletters is yet to be established, however, it is anticipated that there will be quarterly distributions from mid 2010 onwards.

Online Navigation

A particular challenge is to create an intuitive structure and easy navigation for the scientific program and Excursion sections, which will include detail about symposia, workshops, abstracts, excursions and field guides.

Media relations and results

Sponsorship remains a large unknown in terms of media relations for AUSTRALIA 2012, as it is important that congress sponsors gain exposure in the media. A list of media liaison activities will be compiled prior to the Congress, including specific media outlets and journalists to be contacted.

OUTREACH DURING AND AFTER THE CONGRESS

Relevant Experience from the 33rd Oslo IGC Daily News Project

The Oslo IGC press centre included a production room for the media team responsible for Daily News, press releases and informal press gatherings and one-to-one interviews, as more traditional press conferences after the panel debate, attracted little interest.

Eight "Daily News" flyers were published and available each morning of the 33rd IGC. This information sheet included interviews and news about lectures, excursions, social programme, exhibitions and sponsors. The 33rd IGC Organising Committee found that the Daily News was a popular publication during the congress and was made available through the 33rd IGC website.

The success and effect of this effort will need to be assessed by the AUSTRALIA 2012 Organising Committee, prior to making any commitment to this level of interest accessibility.

Carillon Conference Management Pty Limited (CCM) will handle most communication with delegates directly from their office, as part of the registration process. CCM is assembling a promotional data base for the Congress by aggregating various available lists (for example the Oslo Congress delegate list, membership lists and other sources), responses to email campaigns and those who have registered

interest on the website. This aggregated data base is used to distribute further email newsletters, reminders and special offers. As delegates register, a data base of registered delegates will be formed and used by CCM to distribute registration confirmations, tax invoices, accommodation and reservation confirmations. In the months immediately prior to the Congress registered delegates will receive further information with regard to arrival formalities, accommodation reservation reminders, transfer details, program and schedule updates. The process is designed to ensure that delegates arrive in Brisbane with a comprehensive understanding of what to do on arrival and the schedule of Congress events.

The preferred method for all of these communications is email. This is not only very cost effective, but allows organisers to develop an ongoing dialogue with delegates and inform them regularly of important developments. Email distribution is also consistent with environmental and sustainability considerations.

The communications function in relation to handling media on site during the Congress is best handled by an external Public Relations consultant and detailed further in the section below.

At the IGC Oslo Congress a daily news sheet was printed and available for collection by delegates. The effectiveness of this in Oslo is unknown, however, CCM advises that while some delegates do enjoy such a publication, the majority of printed copies are never collected and must be dumped. The utility of such a publication must be questioned. The exercise is expensive, places considerable pressure on those responsible for producing it and is inconsistent with environmental and sustainability considerations. Content is also of questionable value, as it usually comprises little scientific information with most space given over to social photos taken at Congress social events. All things considered, the publication of a daily hard copy newsletter during the Congress for delegates is very unlikely to be a worthwhile exercise.

Contracting an External Public Relations (PR) Company

It is usual for major conferences to appoint a PR company to create media interest in an event while the event is running. The combined resources of the committee, stakeholder organisations and CCM will adequately cover pre-Congress communications and promotional requirements. CCM's past experience has shown that engaging any form of communications company during the pre-event phase is unlikely to prove a worthwhile investment. However, during the Congress itself the emphasis of the communications role changes very significantly from one of attracting delegates and sponsors to generating wide media coverage of the event – a specialist role.

It is usual for major conferences to appoint a PR company to create media interest in an event while the event is running. For example, when you see on the news “today at the XX Conference” that is nearly always because a PR agent has been retained to get the media to come to the event and do interviews etc. In order to get general media coverage during an event, a PR contractor is necessary in.

Contracting a specialist Public Relations (PR) consultancy is also recommended for management of media communications. Such a consultant would be appointed approximately one month ahead of the Congress, and would commence distributing

release to media agencies in the two weeks prior to the event itself. The PR consultant will have existing relationships with media agencies and this will ensure a much higher rate of interest on the part of the media than could otherwise be achieved. During the Congress, the consultant will be on site to schedule interviews, handle media requests and arrangements and facilitate media access to the Congress itself.

When CCM organised the 2004 Entomology congress, the company appointed a PR agent to handle media immediately prior to and during the event and this achieved the desired outcome. The congress got coverage on all networks and all major metro papers in Australia over the course of the six event days. Similarly, over 3,000 international delegates were attracted to that congress without any PR company involvement.

Recommendations from the 33rd IGC in Oslo

These are some areas of improvement for future IGCs. Suggestions include:

- Start planning a communications strategy early in the process.
- If a communications agency will be involved in media relations support, involve the agency early in the process.
- Close liaison between the scientific committee and the communications department, in order to source interesting and newsworthy abstracts or special symposia from the scientific programme for media pitches.
- Choose themes of great importance. Identify degree of newsworthiness and media angles.
- If possible try to pre-produce press releases before the congress starts. This will save time when activity levels rise and free up resources for more operational activities, such as personal telephone follow-ups to editors and journalists, and assisting accredited members of the press room.
- Ensure the press centre has sufficient staff. Organise staff shift rosters with regular breaks. Nine days (eleven including preparation days prior to congress launch) and long hours will be a hard schedule without properly organised shifts.
- Test the sponsors' expectations regarding profiling and media coverage in advance to make sure their expectations can be fulfilled. This strategy might help avoiding discussions with the sponsors when the workload is high.
- Ensure that some major news items are presented during the congress. For example the launch of OneGeology by the BGS, the USGC special symposium and their new report on oil and gas resources in the Arctic. These events were regarded as particularly newsworthy by both Norwegian and international news media.

The report "An evaluation of Communications, Media Relations and Results", prepared by Gambit Hill & Knowlton for the 33rd IGC Oslo is available upon request from the 33rd IGC Committee.

Geological Products Proposed for Release at the Congress

GA is contributing to promotions of AUSTRALIA 2012, and providing personnel as required ensuring delivery of several products for the 34th IGC:

- Hard Cover Publication: Geology of Australia.
- 1:1m map of Australia + derivative 1:5m map of Australia;
- OneGeology: major demonstration consistent with the 33rd IGC.

Also under consideration, but dependent upon resources, is a 1:5m tectonic Map of the SW Pacific – geology, geophysics (magnetics), ridges, faults, geological ages, volcanoes, earthquakes and integrating Law of the Sea data and boundaries.

The major book publication, Geology of Australia commissioned by GA will include.

- A printed full colour book of around 500 pages with 8 themes or stories.
- A DVD multi-media disk with 3D models, simulations, animations and PDF content and extended content (appendices).
- A comprehensive website.
- A set of education posters and related content for public and general science interested community (such as for Catalyst or other electronic media stories).

Collectively these products represent key tools for public outreach at the time of the congress and will assist in leaving an ensuring legacy from the event.

SUMMARY COMMENT

Promotion, marketing and community outreach for the 34th IGC represent two distinct phases:

1. Pre-Congress promotion to ensure maximum number of participants (being delegates, sponsors, exhibitors etc) to be undertaken by existing IGC Organising Committee stakeholders.
2. Communications during the Congress to reach the wider community, requiring an investment in an external PR consultant.

Currently the main media outlet for the 34th IGC is the website, www.34igc.org, and the promotional activities being undertaken at geological gatherings. Publication of the first IGC circular in May 2010 will initiate direct communication between conference organisers and the broader international geoscience community.

Appendix 1

Strategic Promotion/Marketing Plan for the 34th International Geological Congress (IGC): Australia 2012 From the Queensland Events Contract with the AGC

March 2008

Background

The first IGC was held in Paris in 1878 and has been held at (more or less) 4 year intervals since.

As shown in Figure 1, delegate numbers for recent IGCs have been high.

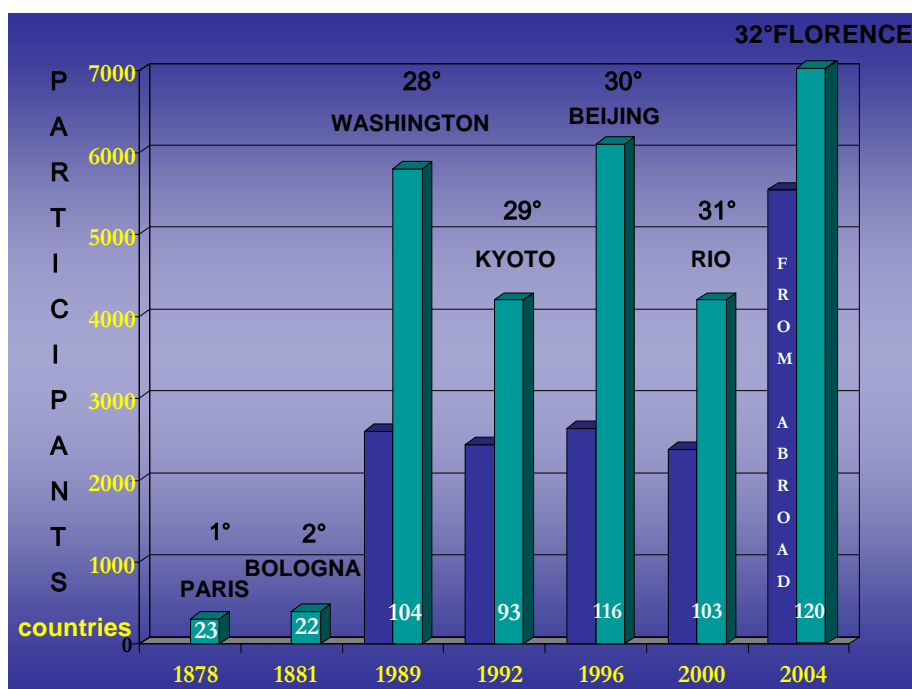


Figure 1: Host cities and delegate numbers for selected IGCs. The left hand columns indicate the subset of the total participants that came from abroad, and the numbers above the base of the columns are the number of countries represented.

The IGC is widely known in geoscience circles as the main scientific forum of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS; <http://www.iugs.org/>). It is widely appreciated that the IGC contributes to the advancement of fundamental and applied research in the geological sciences and provides the opportunity, by way of geological excursions, to examine geological problems and features in the field.

There is a cohort of at least 1,000 people around the world who are IGC “regulars” (through scientific interests or international geoscience committee responsibilities).

Our objective is to convince the thousands more (who have other options) that Australia 2012 should be their main international congress for the year.

Strategic approach

The elements of our approach to maximise delegate numbers are to:

- Highlight the scheduling of Australia 2012 in August, the peak holiday month in the northern hemisphere.
- Promote Australia 2012 at least two major international meetings each year from 2008 to 2012, particularly in the northern hemisphere. This will be done through the distribution of pamphlets and showing videos: the geoscience and tourism (with a focus on opportunities in Queensland) themes will be featured.
- Promote Australia 2012 at all appropriate national and regional geoscience meetings and arrange wherever feasible for such meetings in 2012 to be incorporated into the 34th IGC.
- From 2009-10, send out circulars to all on the extensive contact list maintained by the IUGS.
- Develop the 34th IGC web site and link with IUGS, QEC, Queensland Tourism, ATC and other relevant sites.
- Host meetings of the IUGS Executive and IGC Committee, and attend their meetings internationally as appropriate.
- As the 34th IGC is being hosted on behalf of the Region, undertake visit to key countries to maximise interest, including applications for funding support through AusAID and NZ equivalent.
- Continue dialogue with UNESCO in relation to their assistance with GeoHost program.
- Identify key topics to feature at Australia 2012 that are likely to increase delegate interest.
- Produce key maps and publications for release at Australia 2012 and develop a major launch/demonstration event of development in interoperability of geoscience data.

\$200,000 will be paid in stages in the period 2008-2012 by Queensland Events to support these promotional activities. The remainder of the costs will come from financial support for promotion of Australia 2012 from geoscience agencies and societies across Australia and New Zealand, which will accumulate progressively in the AGC IGC fund. In-kind contributions will be sought wherever feasible to minimize cash outlays. In particular, Geoscience Australia will be supporting attendance of its officers at major overseas meetings.

2008 Promotion/Marketing Plan for the 34th IGC: Australia 2012

March 2008

The main promotion for 2008 will be at the 33rd IGC at Oslo, 5-14 August.

Other promotion at the huge Prospectors and Developers Convention in Canada in February-March, the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy's International Uranium Conference in Adelaide in June, and the Australian Earth Sciences Convention in July in Perth (which will attract international delegates).

The Secretary General will make an initial tour (at GA expense) of selected regional countries to shore up their support and delegates.

Table 1 itemises the marketing/promotion activities planned for 2008, with indicative costs.

The QEC contribution for 2008 will be \$50,000. Major in-kind support from Geoscience Australia (GA) will be provided: this will include production of some promotional material and travel for GA members of the Organising Committee to promote the IGC. Remaining cash costs estimated at \$23,000 will be covered by funds from AGC's IGC fund.

Table 1: Summary of 2008 marketing/promotional activities for Australia 2012

Activity	Indicative Total Cost	In kind component provided by GA	Comments
Secure a large booth space at the 33 rd IGC, Oslo, which is the main promotion activity for Australia 2012.	\$50,000	+\$16,000	Large booth space + fit out Travel costs x 2 Video Production Brochures Freight
Undertake an initial promotion at the Team Australia booth at the Prospectors and Developers Convention in Toronto, Canada, which should be attended by over 10,000 delegates	\$10,000	+\$8,000	Travel costs and promotional material
Promotion at Australian Earth Science Convention in Perth	\$10,000	+\$8,000	Booth plus travel
Professional Conference Organiser involvement in Oslo promotion	\$10,000		Management and travel costs
Attend the IUGS Executive Committee meeting in Marrakech	\$12,000	\$12,000	Travel
Promotional products for AUSTRALIA 2012 for the 33 rd International Geological Congress in Oslo, Norway, including geological and tourism "map" ties, stickers, pens, bookmarks, caps, cups, shirts and koala pins. Wine function in Oslo also to be investigated, Includes showcase Australia event for the closing ceremony	\$40,000	+\$15,000	Organising Committee + Brisbane partners to provide inputs and ideas
Scope major new geoscience products for release at Australia 2012	\$10,000	\$10,000	Travel and prototype products
Regional promotion/consultation	\$10,000	\$10,000	Travel
	\$152,000	\$79,000	