

Travel Grant Report - ITG 04-950

Fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union, 2004

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This report is a review of my trip to San Francisco to present at the American Geophysical Union fall meeting. AGU is the principal American conference for geology and related subjects.

My research is focused on the flow properties of faults and using numerical models to predict flow properties of the damage zone surrounding faults. I am in my third year of my PhD, and I was able to present the motivation for the work, the model that I have developed and some preliminary results showing that I had the model working.

There were five principal reasons for attending AGU

- 1) To present the research and get feedback from those in attendance
- 2) To gain experience of presenting at a prestigious international conference and to develop my communication and presentation skills.
- 3) To attend other presentations in my area, so that I am aware of other research that is going on
- 4) To chat informally to others in my area
- 5) To attend random sessions and broaden my general understanding of science.

AGU is a huge conference. There were approximately 10,700 presentations arranged over five days, and the book of abstracts alone was 500 pages of A4. However the problem of parallel sessions was not as great as might first appear. The conference was divided into themes, and each theme was divided into sub themes. For my research I was interested in attending sessions within the Hydrology, Seismology and Tectonophysics themes along with Union sessions, which were on subjects that might be of interest to everyone.

AGU provided an online planning tool that made it a little easier to make a plan of the sessions that you wanted to attend. The planning tool allowed you to search through both sessions and individual talks for keywords, and authors. It wasn't infallible, as the some things that I missed because I hadn't done a search that would pick a particular talk up, but it gave a structure that made flicking through the book of abstracts on each day easier.

My presentation was on the afternoon of the first day. This was excellent timing as it allowed me to get it out of the way, so that I could relax more and enjoy the rest of the conference. There were a number of people there, probably around 50 people in a room that seated 200. There might have been more, but our session was missing from the board outside and I have since learnt that some people thought the session had been cancelled. . I was slightly nervous but I don't think that it was too obvious. The talk went fine; it felt short, but I had prepared it to the guidelines of 10 minute talk with 5 minutes for questions, which it seems no one has had done. After the talk there were a few questions, mainly showing polite interest. There was one technical question addressing one of my modelling choices, which I have taken onboard for

future work. The presenter for the slot after mine failed to show up, so there was a break in the session; this gave me the chance to chat to some of the people who had asked questions and this gave me further positive feedback and details of people and papers I should look up when I got back. In reflection I think the talk went well, and that I would have been less nervous if I had been more confident that the audience would be interested in my research.

At one of the poster sessions there were a number of people whose names I recognised from papers. I introduced myself to Steve Martel, and chatted to him about the poster he had just presented. I also met Rich Shultz, who had met briefly on a previous fieldtrip. He was very positive about discussing the research and arranged a time to meet. Unfortunately he was then unable to make the meeting, as he had to rush back home for a family emergency.

Overall I think the conference was a valuable experience. It has helped clarify and develop my understanding of my own thesis. It has given me the opportunity to speak to the leaders in my field, and I am aware of ways to make my next presentation at a conference that much better.