

Initiation of the Goldschmidt Conferences

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The inception began from a general conversation on the state of geological sciences. In 1983, Brian Skinner (Yale) and Hu were returning homeward after the Indianapolis meeting of the Geological Society of America. We were commiserating over the relatively poor state of funding for geochemical research although the consensus among geochemists, unabashedly, was that many of the recent major discoveries in geological sciences frequently were based on geochemical concepts. Brian observed that appropriate recognition of geochemistry as the source of many crucial insights was unlikely unless the field became better recognized as a discipline, similar to the traditional fields of geology and geophysics. An annual meeting specifically for geochemistry would help with that identification and, if designed to be comprehensive, also could alleviate another problem by providing an opportunity for interaction among geochemists, scientists who are especially disperse internationally.

When Hu became President of the Geochemical Society, Brian's perspective was discussed thoroughly by the Council and was found to be consistent with the views of its members. To consider possible courses of action, Hu proposed at the May, 1985 Council Meeting the forming of an *ad hoc* committee on the "Future of the Geochemical Society" with Bruce Doe (U.S.G.S.) as chairman and Ed Anders (Enrico Fermi Institute), Vice-President Stan Hart (M.I.T.), and Hu as members. The mandate from the Council was to find a means for consolidating and strengthening the realm of geochemistry and coincidentally of our Society. That "FOGS Committee," so-named by Bruce, reasoned that a continuing annual series of meetings among geochemists on frontier research was sorely needed; that led to some fruitful international correspondence. Consequently, the committee recommended action which the Council approved in October, 1985. The resolution stated that the Geochemical Society would sponsor an initial meeting jointly with the European Association of Geochemistry in Strasbourg in 1987, an effort that ultimately failed. Also, the Council made a commitment to organize a second joint meeting to be held in Baltimore in the spring of 1988, just prior to the American Geophysical Union Meeting. By having both our geochemical meeting and the AGU meeting in the same city with only a day or two between them meant that participants, especially those from Europe, could be attracted by the opportunity to attend both meetings for the travel costs of one. Associated with that commitment, and accepted by the Council, was the intent of the FOGS Committee that the annual joint meetings should have sites alternating across the Atlantic. When Stan Hart became President, he concluded that because the Society's commitment to the new meetings had been developed during Hu's tenure as president, the responsibility should be his to chair and recruit an organizing committee for the 1988 meeting.

The naming of the meetings was the result of an opportune circumstance. Earlier, in the May, 1986 Council Meeting, Charlie Sclar (Lehigh University) had been asked to form an exploratory committee to develop a proposal to celebrate the upcoming centennial of V. M. Goldschmidt's birth in 1888. Goldschmidt was already widely appreciated as the father of geochemistry, a belief later documented in 1992 by Brian Mason in the Society's Special Publication No. 4. Discussions of possible commemorative events converged with the developing plans for the international meeting. Spontaneously, Charlie and Hu agreed that the new meetings appropriately should be christened as "Goldschmidt Conferences." It would merge the purposes both of commemorating Goldschmidt's birth and of fulfilling the mandate for an international meeting in geochemistry.

Financing of that meeting generated an immediate crisis because the Geochemical Society was not rich and funds were needed to cover the many bills tendered long before registration fees would be collected. Furthermore, the society, with its limited resources, could not risk any financial loss from the meeting. The problem was solved through the Penn State Continuing Education Office which routinely organizes meetings around the globe and readily provided the crucial initial funding. Furthermore, that office accepted the risk of some loss as it operated under a decree to be a non-profit organization. That this help was the critical catalyst was immediately apparent. In addition to resolving the dilemma of the up-front costs, the staff provided superb administrative support for the meeting and absorbed our small loss from that first, 1988 Goldschmidt Conference. They continued to provide administrative and financial assistance for four of the first five Goldschmidt Conferences.

By 1993 when Tony Lasaga became President, the issue of where to hold the Society's annual meetings had become a prime concern of the Council. Problems with scheduling and room capacities for geochemical sessions at the Geological Society of America Annual Meetings had caused serious dissatisfaction. Alternatively, the American Chemical Society was favorably disposed to strengthening ties to geochemists but the huge size of ACS meetings was daunting to the Geochemical Society Council. The spring meeting of the American Geophysical Meeting was hospitable but lacked the preferred, uncompromising emphasis specifically on geochemistry and not as a secondary component of geophysics. The Goldschmidt Conferences were clearly favored, especially for their proposed broader international flavor but, to be viable over the long term, they probably had to take place annually.

The principle of having the Goldschmidt Conferences alternate between North America and Europe was accepted early by both the Geochemical Society and the European Association of Geochemistry but organizing of the European meetings was a major burden for the comparatively smaller society. Furthermore, the European geochemical community had been participating in the European Union of Geosciences meetings in Strasbourg. Consequently, not until 1994 was a Goldschmidt Conference consummated in Europe, at Edinburgh, Scotland. Under the Chairmanship of Ben Harte (University of Edinburgh), it was a superlative initiation for the European Goldschmidt Conferences. Nevertheless, the Geochemical Society Council continued to have strong doubts that the Goldschmidt Conferences could be successful if scheduled for every year. However, Tony urged the Council to realize that the proposed annual alternation was both necessary and feasible. With a somewhat reluctant agreement in hand, but with a lead time already shorter than normal for such meetings, he recruited Peter Deines and Hu to quickly organize the fifth Conference at Penn State in 1995 to inaugurate the conversion of the meetings from biennial to annual. Meanwhile, Tony carried on discussions on the potential for meetings between Europe and North America with European geochemists, especially with Claude Allegre, Ben Harte, Al Hoffmann, Keith O'Nions, and Jan Veizer. A joint agreement with our European colleagues on the annual alternation soon followed and was implemented in 1996 with the sixth Conference to be in Heidelberg. Since then, as we all recognize, the Goldschmidt Conferences have thrived in attendance and quality to become the dominant annual meetings of geochemistry. Furthermore, they have now become truly global as attested by this year's meeting in Kurashiki, Japan.

The First Fifteen Goldschmidt Conferences:

Date	Chairs	Location	Publisher
May 1988	H. L. Barnes	Baltimore, MD, USA	Geochemical Society
May 1990	P. Deines	Baltimore, MD, USA	Geochemical Society
May 1992	B. Doe	Reston, VA, USA	Geochemical Society
Aug-Sept 1994	B. Harte	Edinburgh, Scotland	Mineralogical Magazine
May 1995	H. L. Barnes, P. Deines	University Park, PA, USA	Geochemical Society
March-April 1996	H. Lippolt	Heidelberg, Germany	J. Conference Abstracts
June 1997	M. J. Drake	Tucson, AZ, USA	Lunar & Planetary Institute
Aug-Sept 1998	J. Schott, S. Callahan	Toulouse, France	Mineralogical Magazine
Aug 1999	S. B. Jacobsen	Cambridge, MA, USA	Lunar & Planetary Institute
Sept 2000	M. Coleman, C. Hawkesworth, K. O'Nions	Oxford, England	J. Conference Abstracts
May 2001	R. J. Bodnar, M. P. Hochella	Hot Springs, VA, USA	Virginia Polytechnic & State University
Aug 2002	A. N. Halliday, J. Kramers, R. Wieler	Davos, Switzerland	Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta
Sept 2003	Y. Matsuhisa	Kurashiki, Japan	Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta
June 2004	S. Stipp, B. Jamtveit, B. Nielsen	Copenhagen, Denmark	Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta
May 2005	S. A. Wood, M. E. Gunter, P. Larson	Moscow, ID, USA	