

## Message from the STS Chair

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The 2016 is the last year of my second term of service as chairman of the STS and this issue of *Albertiana* provides me the opportunity to share with all of you some considerations on this experience. I do not want here to focus on my personal experience (positive in all respects), but I would like to emphasize some problems in the life and organization of the STS encountered over the past years. Some changes have been made, but to my opinion the future of the STS is still unclear. In order to be short and straight I am going to stress specific points.

### No GSSP defined since 2008, which perspective on the future?

The mission of the STS is to support the ICS in the definition of World standards in Stratigraphy. In this general framework the specific duty of the STS is to define the GSSP (Global Stratotype Section and Point) of the Triassic stages. Since the ratification of the GSSP of the Carnian Stage at Prati di Stuoeres/Stuoeres Wiesen in 2008, no Triassic GSSP has been defined. Quite a lot of work has been done on some Stage boundaries (see below) but, as a matter of fact, in the past 8 years no GSSP has been defined within the Triassic System, while quite a significant number of GSSPs have been selected by other Subcommissions, and voted by the ICS. As a matter of fact, the STS cannot be anymore considered one of the most productive Subcommissions of the ICS!

There are several reasons for the slowing down in the GSSP selection, then I am not surprised of the result. However, I worry about the future.

The selection of a GSSP is a long lasting procedure, from 11 years for the Ladinian/Carnian boundary to the nearly 20 years for the Permian/Triassic and the Anisian/Ladinian boundaries. The selection of the 3 GSSPs between the 2001 and 2008 is the result of a huge investment of time by several specialists with long experience on Triassic, who devoted a significant part of their scientific career to study potential candidate sections since the 1970s. Many of these specialists are now retired, or passed away.

We are in the middle of a generational turnover, but with nearly no replacements for the full positions that are left. The number of specialists in several key-groups or tools has dramatically decreased in few years. If we do not perform our duty in the next 5 years, I wonder if we can accomplish our mission.

### Liveliness of the STS

The retirement of the historical members who joined the STS in the 1970s is not the only problem we are facing now. Some senior members do not seem to be very interested in the activities

of the STS, while some young members seem to be reluctant to invest time on long term research projects such as those aimed at selecting GSSP candidates. In order to better explain these statements, I report here some facts.

The Triassic Subcommittee is presently consisting of 24 Voting Members and 118 Corresponding members. A major update of the list of the corresponding was done in 2011, when 34 new members accepted the invitation to join in the STS. In term of number, the STS has never been so large, but if we take into account the participation of the member to the life of the STS, the situation is more than depressing. There is no interexchange between a major part of the Voting Members and the Chair, the Voting Members seem to delegate all the decisions to the Chair.

The Voting Members are crucial for every Subcommittee, because of their wide experience. They form the core of the Subcommittee. They should have to provide ideas, suggestions and support to the Chairman, Vicechairman and Secretary. If they are not active, the Executive Committee is left alone.

### International projects

Since its beginning, the STS has benefit from IGCPs, (e.g. IGCP 458 and 467), but after the end of IGCP 467, the STS activities lack of any support from UNESCO through IGCP. This lack is a severe limitation, especially after the beginning of the world economic crisis of 2009, that resulted in a severe cut of budget for scientific research in many countries.

To tell the truth, the IGCP 630 ("Permian-Triassic climatic & environmental extremes and biotic response") includes in its wide range of goals some goals overlapping with the mission of STS [e.g. Integrated stratigraphic (biostratigraphy, cyclostratigraphy, magnetostratigraphy, and geochronology) correlations between marine and terrestrial P-Tr and Early Triassic successions]. This IGCP, however, was not conceived, designed and scheduled in cooperation with the Executive Committee of the STS. As result, there is no integration between the activities and deadlines of the Working Groups of the STS (namely the Induan/Olenekian Working Group) and the schedule of meetings of IGCP 630.

I do not want to emphasize here a controversy, but as a matter of fact, despite of the huge investment of money and people, as well as the high number of workshops and excursions, no significant improvements to the solution of the Induan/Olenekian boundary thus far resulted neither from the IGCP 630, nor from the previous IGCP 572 ("Restoration of Marine Ecosystems following the Permian-Triassic Mass Extinction: lessons for the present").

### Is everything going bad?

Of course not. A tremendous amount of work has been done in the past years on several aspects of Triassic stratigraphy. Especially on the Induan-Olenekian, and on the Carnian-Rhaetian intervals. A significant part of this work is done by relatively few groups of stratigraphers, but they are very active. Few workshops and field workshops have been organized, but they have always been successful. *Albertiana* has been revitalized by the new Editor Chris McRoberts. There are several new entries in the Subcommittee, this is an investment on the future.

### Which future for the STS?

I hope the Voting Members will react to my shaking remarks. As I already wrote, the Voting Members are crucial for the life of the Subcommittee. I am asking them to motivate and stimulate their researchers and PhD students to participate to the STS activities. I will also do my best to motivate some young specialists through the selection of some of them as new Voting Members.

Membership must be active. The ideal member of the subcommittee is not a specialist who is publishing many papers on Triassic, but is a person who is actively participating to the life of the Subcommittee, no matter if his/her H-index is low, medium or high. One of the easiest ways to participate to the life of the Subcommittee, is by submitting contributions to the *Albertiana*. All the STS members as well as all the Triassic specialists non members of the STS, are warmly invited to submit contributions to our newsletter. *Albertiana* is the reference journal for the discussions on Triassic stratigraphy in broad sense. *Albertiana* is not an ISI or Scopus journal, however, it is a scientific journal in all respects and it publishes short communications, papers, and discussions that will never be published on ISI or Scopus journals. Even more important, the time you need to write a manuscript suitable for publication on *Albertiana* is usually few days.

I am going to finish this report by emphasizing that investing time on the STS (as in every other Subcommittee of the STS) is worth for. The goals of the Subcommittee are not old fashioned or not up-to-date. It is exactly the opposite. The time scales (and their definition) are one of the most popular topics in Geology. Just to give you crude numbers, in the last 5 years about 241,000 papers have been published on “time scale” and “Geology” (data source: Google Scholar). In the same time interval 20,700 papers have been published on “time scale” and “Stratigraphy”. This striking difference of one order of magnitude between the two statistics, is a basic demonstration of the strategic importance of Stratigraphy in Earth Sciences.

The time scales are calibrated by rather small group of stratigraphers, but their results are crucial for a much wider community of Earth Scientists.

One additional solution to motivate Triassic specialists to take part of the life of the STS, could be the organization international congress on the Triassic System, every 4 years. The specialists on Carboniferous, Permian, Jurassic, Cretaceous and Paleogene (only to report those in my mind) know that every 4 years there is an international congress dedicated to all the aspects of Stratigraphy, Paleontology, Paleoclimate and Paleogeography of their specific system. These congresses are big events, with one or two hundreds participants, on average. We had some big events on Triassic in the past (Lausanne, 1991; Halle, 1998; Albuquerque, 2007), but not on a regular basis. I do not think the Triassic is better known than the Carboniferous and the other, above mentioned, systems. It is mostly a matter of finding people and groups volunteering for the organization, and this is exactly the crucial problem. In the past years it has been difficult even finding volunteers for the organization of quite specific and logistically easier workshops. Hopefully this trend will be reversed in the near future.

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