

Postgraduate Conference Attendance Grant: AGU 2015 Fall Meeting

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My first American Conference

This report summarises the benefits of attending the American Geophysical Union's Fall Meeting last December in San Francisco. The largest Earth and Space science conference on the planet was as to be expected: absolutely full of scientists. To be given the privilege to attend this mammoth conference among 24,000 other members was fantastic, and it would not have been possible without the generous support (£638) from the BSG. Arriving in San Francisco in the early evening and staying in an Airbnb apartment 20 minutes from the city centre, I did not at first appreciate the sheer scale of the conference and how effective we were at taking over the entire city. The benefits of attending a conference of this scale were manifold: many prolific academics in the field of fluvial geomorphology congregate in San Francisco each year to present the most progressive ideas within the field. It was an honour to be sat with, and to discuss ideas with, the most intellectually advanced minds on the planet. It was also a chance to make connections with people and plan the next step of my academic career.

The purpose of attending the AGU conference at this stage of my research career was to present some results from my doctoral thesis (Fig. 1). The work in question assesses the role of sediment supply on channel mobility, and, in particular, whether there are any systematic trends in bend deformation resulting from varying sediment supplies. The work has relied heavily on Landsat imagery of the

Amazon Basin which suggests there is a relationship between sediment supply and the deformation style of meander bends within the reach. We believe this is associated with the sequestration of alluvial material on point bars, which effectively accelerates bank erosion. The poster was kindly accepted by Edgardo Latrubesse and Jorge Abad, and included in their session on tropical river dynamics. The poster was also featured in an article on the NASA Landsat site on the day of the presentation

(<http://landsat.gsfc.nasa.gov/?p=11865>). The final stages of my thesis will examine the growth of these bedforms and how they change with varying sediment supplies to reconcile the observations from the field with the outputs from numerical models.

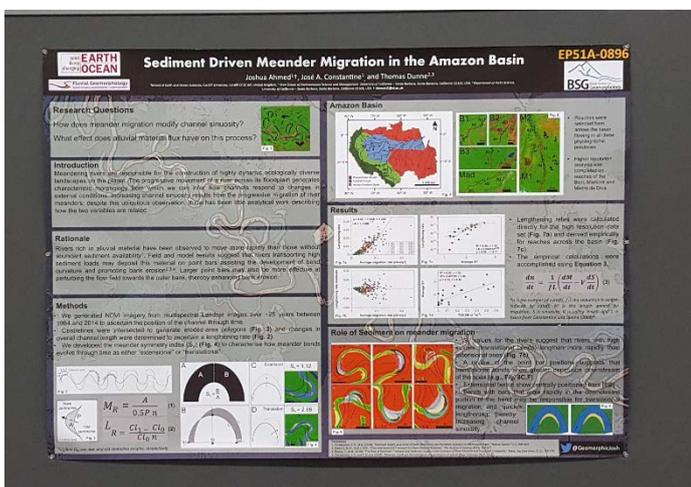


Figure 1. The AGU poster

Attending the conference also allowed me to network with other researchers who are tackling similar problems using quite novel techniques. There has been some post-conference discussion about organising an informal meeting around these varying techniques to ensure the field is up-to-speed on the most advanced, and efficient, methods in river research (keep your eyes peeled!). Discussions with many of the "famous faces of geomorphology" reassured me that the work I am conducting is important and highlighted that possible collaborations in the future are ever-emerging.

I would highly recommend that every postgraduate attend one large scientific conference during the course of their PhD for two reasons: first, presenting your work to a larger demographic will enhance possible collaborations in the future and also expose your work to a wider audience; second, being exposed to the broader field will encourage you to expand your ideas and assess the context of your work in the wider field of geomorphology. You will also meet some fantastic people, some of whom will undoubtedly be your future collaborators. One final thing of note is that these conferences are often held in beautiful locations (See Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Obligatory Golden Gate Bridge shot