

From museum to web: the evolution of earth science outreach at the British Geological Survey

David Bailey, Emma Ward and Ian Wilkinson

The BGS has performed an educational role since its earliest days, opening the Museum of Economic Geology in 1841. However, we have not been able to maintain a permanent public exhibition in recent years. Here we describe how we have instead adapted our approach to earth science education to reach a wide audience in a cost-effective way.

While educational outreach is not a primary objective of a geological survey, we take seriously our responsibility to communicate our science to the wider community and to encourage a geoscientifically literate society. And, as an employer, BGS relies on a supply of quality recruits to reinvigorate its research programmes.

This presentation will:

- address what attributes we look for in recruits and, thus, what we hope educationists will deliver;
- consider, from an employers' perspective, constraints on the educational system from national curricula to the Bologna Accord;
- set out how the BGS is supporting earth science education at all levels; and
- discuss some of the constraints, not only of cost, but also of expertise and scientific 'culture' which influence what we can do.

Our strategy has involved a move from print publications towards electronic, and especially web-based, interactive, resources such as 'Make-a-Map', the 'Geological Timeline' and our 'Ask-about-geology' service. We will discuss the pros and cons of paper and electronic resources and will demonstrate some recent online products.

We will also describe the importance we place on direct interaction between our scientists and students and teachers through school visits and educational events; our role in supporting the establishment of Geoparks; and the need for our own School of Field Geology for the teaching of essential field techniques.

Finally, we will explore the potential for new developments, including resources that draw on developments in 3D visualisation and multimedia.