2014 Denver X-ray Conference – Student Reflection

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The 2014 Denver X-ray Conference was held in a new location, Big Sky Resort in Big Sky, Montana. The scenic ski town, just south of Bozeman, was enjoyed by over 400 people who traveled to DXC this year, with a rise in student attendees. Five of our Robert L. Snyder Student Travel Grant Award winners gave an inside look to their experiences at the Denver X-ray Conference. The award offers limited travel support to enable graduate and undergraduate students to attend the Denver X-ray Conference. To find out more information about how you could receive a Robert L. Snyder Student Travel Grant Award, please visit our website: www.dxcicdd.com/awards.



Sofia Marah Frias
University of the Philippines Diliman, Philippines

Participating in conferences is one of the most exciting opportunities that a researcher could have. When I received an invitation from ICDD for the upcoming Denver X-ray Conference in the USA, I was thrilled because this is different from the other conferences that I attended before. It does not only offer talks about the latest research and innovations on X-ray analysis, but also workshops that aim to help researchers who use X-ray for analysis.

There were five things that I had been very eager to do in this conference. The first was attending the different workshops during the first 2 days of the conference. The workshops were really very informative, detailed and helpful in the sense that I was able to understand concepts better and even answer some of the problems that I often encounter during analyses. I was also able to talk personally to the instructors and seek professional advice that I was able to pass on to my colleagues. Second, I was able to present my research in the XRD poster presentation and talk to other researchers who were interested in my study. Third, and the event that I looked forward to the most, was to attend the Plenary Session, X-rays on Mars. As a geologist working on portable instruments for mineral characterization, listening to the talk of Dr. David Bish of the CheMin Team is the most fulfilling experience that I had in the conference. Fourth, and like the other conferences that I attended before, I was able to listen to a lot of research presentations. This conference opened my eyes to a myriad of possible applications of X-ray analysis. Most of all, the conference had a session of "Environmental and Geologic Applications of X-ray Analysis" where I was able to talk to fellow geologists. Fifth, and also the one that my research adviser encourages me to do during conferences, was to meet people who could offer possible research collaborations and opportunities to study abroad. It was so fulfilling to talk to people who are really interested to work with you and give you the encouragement to continue your research.



Marek Rouillon
Macquarie University, Australia

Coming all the way from Australia, I did not know what to expect at the 2014 DXC, yet I was immediately pleasantly surprised. Firstly, the organizers had changed the venue of the

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conference to Big Sky Resort in Montana, an area of the world I was not familiar with, yet soon fell in love with. The location was absolutely breathtaking, with accommodation and facilities to match. The ICDD organizers greeted us upon arriving and sorted us out with the conference essentials. The first 2 days of the conference focused on specialized workshops, which at the student level is quite helpful. The 'XRF Sample Preparation' and 'Micro XRF' workshops were both particularly interesting. The following 3 days were filled with unique oral presentations from all around the world. Even the poster sessions provided a great opportunity to network with world experts on X-ray diffraction and fluorescence. Combined with the location, it was a great experience, and made the trip all the more worthwhile flying all the way from Australia. I would highly recommend.



Will Paxton
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA

Looking back, I consider my experience at the 2014 Denver X-ray Conference an important milestone in my student career. It was not the first time I was attending a conference as a speaker, or even my first time in Montana. It just seemed to be the proper combination of environment and company allowing me to get involved and further develop as a scientist.

There, I learned about exciting technical advances in my field and more in fields I am less familiar. The workshops, plenary session, and social events were an added bonus. After presenting my own work, I enjoyed getting feedback from other fellow scientists. Almost everyone I met had a positive attitude and had interesting and encouraging things to contribute. Being a student, I really could tell that most people were concerned with my future.

In the end, the most rewarding part of the conference for me was to finally feel like I am part of a community. I thank the organizing committee for putting together a great conference and giving me this opportunity. I will be back.



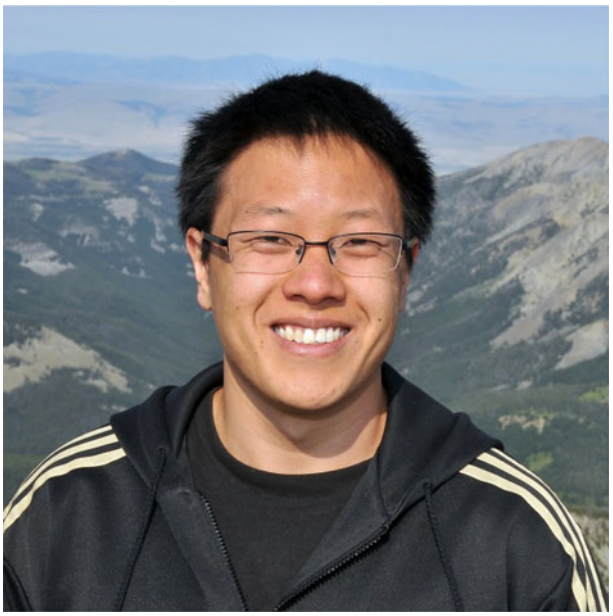
Nathan Nagle
Macquarie University, Australia

The Denver X-ray Conference provided me with a great opportunity to see new developments in XRD and XRF as well as being able to meet other students, academics, and people from industry. The workshops at the beginning of the week were extremely informative, and the large number of sessions meant that there was always a presentation that was relevant to my research.

For me, the best part of the conference was the networking aspect. The free student lunch on the first day of the conference allowed the students to get to know one another as well as giving us the opportunity to meet some experts in XRF and XRD who shared advice about getting a job after university. There were many other networking opportunities throughout the conference including the poster sessions which were run in conjunction with a wine and cheese reception. Towards the end of the conference, the Oktoberfest in July event sponsored by Bruker provided a relaxing atmosphere to mingle with delegates who we might not have met earlier while enjoying some German food!

Overall, the conference was a great experience, and I would highly recommend it to students either at the start of their research who are looking to increase their understanding of XRD and XRF, or to students near the end of their research who are looking at future employment.

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Samuel Liu
The University of Sydney, Australia

The conference was held at the beautiful location of Big Sky, basecamp to Lone Peak (an altitude of 11 166 ft). Although this location may change, it is the organizing committee that really made this conference run as smooth as it did.

The conference consisted mainly of X-ray diffraction and fluorescent techniques, with a skew to their applications in industry. Coming from an academic background, I greatly appreciated the exposure in that aspect. I met several professors, those that did related work to mine and those that did not. The networking in these events is crucial, and I am happy to say that there were plenty of breaks and free time within the conference schedule to casually discuss your own work and hear others. This is made easier over drinks and snacks at poster sessions or just after an oral presentation session.

The workshops fell into two main streams, diffraction and fluorescence. These are a series of lectures presented by experts in the field designed to capture the very basics of the technique at the beginning, and to show new innovations and designs with complex solutions by the end. I attended the X-ray fluorescence workshops, which I thoroughly enjoyed, especially learning about it from the basics (photoelectric effect) to advanced techniques (e.g. TXRF and 3D modeling) in the workshops. After the workshops, the seminars are split into appropriate streams based on topic so one could chose to attend the sessions that most interest them.

As a materials chemist usin X-ray diffraction as one of my main techniques in material characterization, it was a great experience overall and highly relevant to the pursuit of my Ph.D., and undoubtedly to the other students attending.

Also, do not forget to take a few days extra before/after to explore this amazing side of the USA!

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