ISC-GEM catalogue used and supported

The ISC-GEM Global Instrumental Earthquake Catalogue remains popular among researchers working on the assessment of seismic hazard and risk modeling on a regional and global basis. We were very pleased to learn that the 2016 Eastern Asia Earthquake and Volcanic Hazard Information Map published by the National Institute of Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) of the Geological Survey of Japan is based on the earthquake data from the ISC-GEM catalogue. The map is a collaborative product of AIST and several geological institutes in Southeast Asia. The map contains information on geohazards, geology and tectonics, such as active faults, earthquake hypocentres and source areas, Holocene volcanoes, calderas, large-scale ignimbrites and ash falls, fatalities in major volcanic events, earthquakes and tsunami hazards.

The figure below demonstrates a steady daily stream of ISC-GEM catalogue downloads with peak times during major version releases.

We are also happy to acknowledge the financial help given to the ISC-GEM Extension project by Aspen Re, a growing force in the global reinsurance industry, bringing an innovative approach, deep expertise and fresh thinking to markets and operations. The members of Research and Development (R&D) staff there have used the ISC-GEM catalogue in their project work and recommended this product for support. We are also grateful to Malcolm Haylock and Kirsty Styles in Catastrophe Risk Management in Zurich for their recognition of the ISC work at a time when R&D budgets are fairly stretched.

New ISC Member

The Seismological Observatory of the Institute of Geosciences of the University of Brasilia has become a new Member-Institution of the ISC. We are grateful to Prof. Dra. Mônica G. Von Huelsen, Prof. George Araújo de França and Prof. Lucas Barros for their recognition of the ISC’s long-term international mission.

The Seismological Observatory is responsible for teaching both undergraduate and graduate students and performing research on the Earth’s structure and seismicity in Brazil. The Observatory also operates the large network of stations at 32 sites around the territory of Brazil, especially near dams.

The Seismological Observatory has had several links with the ISC. Vasile Marza, a former Analyst at the ISC, worked at the Observatory during the 1996-2006 period. For several years, the ISC has also been engaged with Lucas Barros through the CTBTO-related work on the Ground Truth events in Brazil and South America.

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BSM2017

For the first time in its history, the ISC is organising a scientific conference, the British Seismology Meeting (BSM). It will take place between 5th and 7th April, 2017 in Reading Town Hall and Museum. We are expecting to see well over 100 participants, from both the UK and Europe and the Mediterranean area. Approximately ~40 oral and ~40 poster presentations are included in the programme, as well as an exhibition by Guralp, BGS, AWE and the ISC. The meeting is kindly sponsored by the British Geophysical Association (BGA), AWE and Guralp Systems.
September 2016 marked the end of the 30th year of employment at the ISC for Maureen Aspinwall. She joined almost concurrently with the ISC buying and moving into its first owned building, in Thatcham, Berkshire. Maureen worked as a Secretary under Anthony Hughes, as the Administration Officer – under Raymond Willemann; as a Do-it-Yourself Officer – under Avi Shapira, and, finally, as a mother for many members of staff. In the last nine years of Maureen’s career, under the current Director, Dmitry Storchak, the staff numbers have almost doubled. It is true – she was like a caring parent to all those demanding people at the ISC. She met them at the airport when they first arrived, brought them to Thatcham, helped to find good accommodation, often playing the role of guarantor, both with the estate agents and at the bank. She gave them valuable day-to-day advice and even took them on trips to see the English countryside and heritage. Maureen of course looked after the ISC itself by running all bank accounts, ordering and receiving necessary day-to-day items, assisting Dmitry in his building advancement plans, dealing with the auditors, Tax and VAT men, insurers, postmen, firemen, gasmen and electricians and ensuring that the salaries were paid. She ran all HR matters and answered the phone often telling an ever-so-slightly concerned member of public that, yes, they can go on holiday to XYZ provided that they watch out and stay under a desk if an earthquake happens.

One has to have a lot of patience when dealing with all the currencies in the world when receiving the ISC membership fees and dealing with the expenses of ISC staff returning from yet another international destination. Her signature was very valuable, as the Russian Academy of Sciences would refuse outright to pay their annual dues unless Maureen had signed the invoice.

She ‘taught’ English to many ISC staff members, including the last two Directors, well, three actually, as American isn’t the same kind of English. She also had to learn ‘American’ herself whilst preparing the budgets for the regular ISC proposals to the US National Science Foundation.

Maureen ... well, there was really little that she didn’t do, but there definitely was something that one couldn’t do to her – wear shorts in the office, unless, of course, you were a good looking rugby player.

It was several years ago, when Maureen first indicated to Dmitry that she would like to retire. For all these years Dmitry’s reply was “Wait a moment, it is a bit too early just yet”. When things took an unexpected turn, an additional staircase rail was installed, then a lift, but nature was taking its course. Having completed 30 years at the ISC, Maureen decided that she wanted to have a bit of time to spend with her husband and family, for some international travel and, of course, uninterrupted attendance of cricket matches.

On the 1st of October, there was a party in the Royal Box of Newbury Racecourse, where several tens of guests, including some from overseas, and the entire ISC staff turned up to say a big thank you. All of Maureen’s four bosses were present, either in person or with recorded congratulations projected onto a screen. Many former ISC staff members and Exec-Com members also wished her a very happy retirement.

Staff changes

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The Governing Council Chair, John Adams, is delivering his recorded message of thanks to Maureen whilst demonstrating the art of lumberjacking, which is, we believe, very popular in Canada!

In the last two months before she left, Maureen explained the intricacies of her duties and the wealth of information that she has accumulated, to her successor, Mrs Lynn Elms. Lynn has worked for two international companies and ran her own company as well as raising a family. She has a lot to offer the ISC and its staff, who all seem to appreciate her contribution and advice.

In November, we also saw our second System Administrator and Website Developer, Przemek Ozgo leaving after 5 years at the ISC, mostly due to family reasons. Przemek was liked by all staff and his input into the development of the ISC IT systems, security and several websites, including that of ISC, IASPEI and CTBTO Link, was very much appreciated. His calm and friendly approach was always reassuring, as well as his, unparalleled in this day and age, ability to repair the ISC computers by buying just the very small part that had actually broken. For months, it proved very difficult to replace him.
In the summer of 2015, as my MSc. at the University Of Victoria (in Geophysics/Geodynamics, under Dr. Kelin Wang at PGC) was winding down, a colleague who had previously worked at the ISC passed around an email which advertised a new position opening up here. Intrigued, but with a pile of writing to be done, I sent off an application. About two days before I was officially finished, I was offered the position. My wife and I had previously spent time abroad (teaching English in Japan), and, although moving to another country for work was a bit daunting, we were thrilled with the opportunity. Now, at the ISC, I work as a seismologist/analyst on the Bulletin Rebuild project, for which I also serve as team leader. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed my time both in the UK and at the office, where I work with a great bunch of people from wonderfully diverse backgrounds. I’m also quite proud of our work so far, improving and homogenizing the historical bulletins from 1964-2010. When I’m not peering at a screen at work, I can often be found peering at a screen at home! Ha! I tend to enjoy flight simulators on the PC. As you can see, I also have two cats. Both are Canadian. One of them was the most recent winner of a ‘cutest pet’ contest here in Reading. Can you guess which one?

In the summer of 2016, we had the pleasure of providing work experience for Luke Cottell, a student from the Royal School of Mines, Imperial College, London.

During his six weeks at the ISC, Luke received a quick introduction to observational seismology from Domenico Di Giacomo and then worked under the supervision of Elizabeth Entwistle reviewing the waveform data from Cascadia Initiative Community Experiment - a new ocean bottom seismograph deployment off the coast of the NW United States, installed during 2011-2015 at variable depths of 56m-4464m below sea level.

Luke made picks of main body wave arrival times for 99 earthquakes belonging to two categories:

- Worldwide earthquakes with MW≥7.0 July 2011 – July 2013
- Moderate earthquakes at local and regional distances during August 2013 – October 2015

The parametric data obtained from Luke’s work has now been included in the ISC Bulletin. For a fair proportion of events picked by Luke, the accuracy of ISC hypocentre determinations have improved thanks to increased station azimuthal coverage and additional arrival times recorded closer to epicentres. A report on this work is available at ZENODO.

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Luke Cottell making waveform picks from the Cascadia OBS experiment.
**New ISC roof**

This is perhaps a very basic piece of news by some people’s account, but a hugely important one for the ISC because we have to maintain all our facilities from our modest budget.

With the friendly, timely, professional and efficient help of the All Seasons Roofing Group Ltd – the company owned and run by four generations of John-the-builders – we have replaced our old roof that had withstood 30 years worth of British weather. Understandably, it was giving us a lot of headaches recently, mostly concerning the placement of buckets. The ISC Director was happy to climb and inspect the work – a shiny new metal roof that made us feel secure in the building full of people and computers doing important day-to-day work.

**Visitors and Conferences**

During these six months we have been fortunate to receive a number of visitors: Florian Hasslinger from Switzerland, Alice Walker and Chris Browitt from Scotland, Paiboon Nuannin and Sonti Dumrongslip from Thailand and Fuqiong Huang from China.

In the mean time, members of the ISC staff attended conferences and visited local institutions in Australia, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

**Father Domenico and Grandfather Dmitry**

Well, time flies and our Senior Seismologist Domenico Di Giacomo has become a father with his daughter Isabella entering the world at the end of July. Three weeks earlier, in the same maternity ward, Dmitry became a grandfather; not that he felt senior enough though. Unlike Isabella, Leo (nicknamed Tolstoy by his grandfather) was happy to pose for a few pictures whilst on his visit to the ISC a few months later.