climate at various temporal and spatial scales were reported. Runs of coupled ocean-atmosphere models forced by the best available estimates of natural and anthropogenic forcing over recent centuries and even millennia could be very valuable tools for assessing the physical reasonableness of these sets of natural records and for the design of reconstruction strategies.

Great progress has been made since the First International Workshop on Dendroclimatology was convened in 1974 by Harold C. Fritts. His outstanding role in the development of dendroclimatology over the past four decades was honored during the meeting.

The Tree Rings and Climate: Sharpening the Focus Meeting was held in Tucson, Arizona, 6–9 April 2004.

Acknowledgments

The dendroclimatology meeting was supported by the Paleoclimate Program in the Division of Atmospheric Sciences at the U.S. National Science Foundation, the Climate Change Data and Detection Program of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Past Global Changes (PAGES) project of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program, and the University of Arizona.

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FORUM

Comment on "Moving Beyond the IGY: The Electronic Geophysical Year (eGY) Concept"

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In their *Eos* article (16 March 2004), Daniel Baker and his colleagues acknowledged that one of the key achievements of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) was the establishment of data centers. I am sure that the authors are well aware of the importance of these data centers. I am concerned, however, by statements such as: "...researchers can redefine the 'data center' concept...." I am also concerned that some readers may interpret the overall proposed concept as one that is moving beyond the need for data centers, i.e., the concept of "...free access to all available data through the Internet and World Wide Web. That is, all data providers and data users will exchange the data directly, establishing a worldwide fabric (or grid) of geophysical data."

While the article goes on to state that "...the existing World Data System would become a part of that worldwide data source...," it implies that the data centers would be on an equal footing with other data providers.

Here I have a major problem with the concept if it leads to a decreased support for established data centers which, in my opinion, are national treasures. As both a user of archived data from the National Space Science Data Center (NSSDC) and as a provider of spacecraft data to the NSSDC, I am aware of the effort that goes on behind the scene to ensure the availability of quality space science data. As a user, I have benefited from their collection of more than 12,000 rolls of 35-mm microfilm containing a portion of the iono-spheric topside-sounder data from the Alouette/ISIS (International Satellites for Ionospheric Studies) satellites.

As a provider, I have benefited from NSSDC support in making another portion of the ISIS data available to the scientific community via an analog-to-digital conversion effort involving original telemetry tapes (see http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/space/isis/isis-status.html). I also often hear colleagues praise the great effort of Joe King (2004 recipient of the AGU's Edward A. Flinn Award) at the NSSDC for his cross-calibration of data from numerous spacecraft to make data sets such as OMNIWeb and COHOWeb possible, which have proved so valuable for space research. (see http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov to explore the vast array of data sets and services, such as geophysical models, spacecraft trajectories, etc., available from the NSSDC.) Centers such as the NSSDC provide a degree of permanence that survives the waxing and waning funding cycles of individual PIs.

This funding concern is acknowledged by the authors who state: "However, the scale of the eGY enterprise will probably grow beyond what can be handled in what is essentially people's spare time. Therefore, either some benevolent institutions will have to allow their staff to spend time on eGY and fund some travel, or the effort must have more funding."

My experience indicates that, as funding contracts, the portion of an approved project that takes the biggest hit is data analysis. Thus, "spare time" is probably an accurate description of a researcher's dedication to the eGY concept. In addition, some researchers may place a higher priority on analyzing their own data, and publishing the results, than on making their data available to others; particularly after their funding support expires.

Thus, as plans are underway to "redefine the 'data center' concept" by making use of new technology, let's not endanger the existing valuable services of data acquisition, quality control, cross-calibration, archiving, and dissemination provided by dedicated technical personnel at data centers such as the NSSDC.

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Reply

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Robert Benson raises interesting points regarding the eGY and the role of world data centers. We share the belief that the WDC system was one of the great achievements of the IGY. We have also supported the many and varied activities of data centers over the years. The eGY is not intended to replace data centers, but rather to enhance them. We believe that data center holdings should be even more accessible than is presently the case, and that governments should support more, not less, active archiving and tending of data. We sincerely hope that people in the community do not interpret the eGY concept as in any way advocating the disbanding of active data centers.

By the way, Benson mentions the key role played by the NSSDC and Joe King. One of us (D. Baker) led the nomination of King for the AGU's Flinn Award. We appreciate what World Data Centers have done—and can do—in the modern world!

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