A Letter from Ireland

Irish Involvement in IODP

In 2005 the Irish government announced that Ireland would affiliate to IODP by joining ECORD *(see http://www.iodp.org/ireland-joins-ecord/)*. Through the agency of the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), scientists of Irish colleges and institutes now have access to the outstanding science that has become a feature of this program. Indeed, 2005 saw the first ODP/IODP expedition to take place entirely in Irish waters. The expedition, 307 (April 26 - May 16, 2005) drilled three sites at Challenger Mound (170m high) in the Porcupine Seabight, west of Ireland *(see http://iodp.tamu.edu/scienceops/expeditions/exp307.html)*. The platform to carry out this ambitious drilling program was the American rig vessel, the *JOIDES Resolution*, which at 143 metres is one of the largest research ships in the world. She successfully drilled 11 holes, of average 200m length, in three target sites, recovering 1400m of sediment core.

Scientific results provided a new age model for the first complete section drilled through a deep-water coral mound. The 155m-log section from Challenger Mound in the Porcupine Seabight, southwest of Ireland, is on Miocene siliciclastics and consists entirely of sediments bearing well-preserved cold-water coral *Lophelia pertusa*. Two Irish based scientists took part in this expedition, Boris Dorschel (University College Cork - UCC) and Xavier Monteys (GSI).

The National Committee for IODP ("IODP Ireland")

The principal aims of the committee are to maximise participation for Irish scientists in IODP and to ensure that Ireland's scientific priorities are considered in developing the IODP science plan. The committee endeavours to encourage and assist Irish scientists to submit drilling proposals and attend workshops on the various themes of the IODP science plan; to encourage and rank applications from Irish scientists and students to sail on IODP expeditions; to nominate and assist students to attend summer schools; to elect delegates to the ECORD and IODP committees. Once demand for participation from Irish scientists is demonstrated, a case can be made for an increase in Ireland's contribution to IODP, which in turn will increase our quota of opportunities.

The committee has supported an Irish scientist (Dr. Peter Haughton, University College Dublin - UCD) in winning a berth on the Canterbury Basin Expedition (Expedition 317 on the *JOIDES Resolution*, originally scheduled for November 2008 but now rescheduled for November 2009. It has also supported the successful application of Kristine Larson of Trinity College for an ECORD Scholarship, as well as awarding two IODP Ireland Scholarships to assist students (Lee Toms, UCD and Billy Wood, National University of Ireland, Galway - UIG) to attend an ECORD sponsored summer school on Palaeoclimate Modelling in Urbino, Italy. Separately, under RTDI funding three Irish universities have been able to purchase a range of marine instrumentation useful in drilling-related scientific analysis. UCD has purchased an Itrax geochemical scanner, Trinity College a laser granulometer and NUI Maynooth an MSCL core logger.

The JOIDES Resolution in Dublin Port, readying for IODP Expedition 307 (photo Integrated Ocean Drilling Program).

Juergen Titschack (Sedimentologist, Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Anneleen Foubert (Paleomagnetist, Universiteit Leuven), and Boris Dorschel (Science Observer/Sedimentologist, University College Cork) discuss some of their findings in the core lab - IODP Expedition 307, (photo Integrated Ocean Drilling Program).

The National Committee membership is: Pat Shannon (University College Dublin - UCD), Robin Edwards (Trinity College Dublin - TCD), Peter Croker (PAD), Andy Wheeler (University College Cork - UCC), Fiona Grant (Marine Institute, MI), Xavier Monteys, Koen Verbruggen and Brian McConnell (Geological Survey of Ireland - GSI). It is intended to co-opt other members to cover expertise gaps in low-temperature geochemistry and geomicrobiology.

Koen Verbruggen, ECORD Council delegate