

## **Prof. Dr. William Cavazza**

*IUGS Vice-President (2016–2020)*



William obtained a BSc in Geological Sciences in 1983, *summa cum laude*, from the Alma Mater Studiorum, University of Bologna. His thesis involved extensive field mapping in a controversial portion of the Carnic Alps, and resulted in the definitive recognition of the significant effects of the Hercynian orogeny in this area. Supported by grants from the Italian Ministry of Education, Los Alamos National Laboratories, and the industrial sector,

William then moved to the United States where he obtained a MSc in Geology (1985) and a PhD in Geology (1989) from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). His MSc research focused on sediment provenance and dispersal in the Miocene Española rift basin of New Mexico. His PhD dissertation dealt with the analysis of the Ionian forearc basin of southern Italy. Both projects were supervised by Prof. Raymond V. Ingersoll. During his PhD years at UCLA he was involved in other research projects, ending up soon after in the publications of several papers on Laramide syntectonic sedimentation in Montana, supradetachment sedimentation in the Mojave Desert, and the palaeogeography of the Rio Grande rift.

While still studying for his PhD, William was hired as a lecturer at the University of Bologna. This transition marked the beginning of a long standing interest in the geological evolution of the Mediterranean region. A vigorous research program in the area was initiated in 1989, including the award of two NATO Cooperative Research Grants (1991–1994) with Canadian and American institutions.

From 1994 to 1999 he was the leader – along with Alastair Robertson and Peter Ziegler – of IGCP Project no. 369 “Comparative Evolution of Peritethyan Rift Basins”, whose goal was the integrated geological-geophysical study of rift/wrench basins located along the northern and southern Tethyan margins and on the directly adjacent platforms. IGCP 369 was successful in bringing together interested researchers from different backgrounds: universities, oil companies, geological surveys and other research institutions. More than two hundred researchers from thirty-six countries actively took part in the project. This brought together a heterogeneous and creative group of people whose cooperation through the years of the project fostered significant advancements in the geological understanding of large portions of the peritethyan domain. More than 100 publications directly related to the project were published on refereed international journals.

In 1998 William joined the recently founded University of Basilicata (Potenza) in southern Italy as an Associate Professor. He stayed in Potenza for four years during which he held a number of scientific, teaching, and managing capacities, leading to the foundation of both the new Department of Geological Sciences and the Ph.D. Program in Geology.

From 2001 to 2004 he was a member of the Organizing Committee of the 32nd International Geological Congress in Florence, with the task to chair the activity of the Mediterranean Consortium, an association of thirty-one Mediterranean and nearby countries which stimu-

lated the submission of proposals for scientific sessions, short courses, workshops and fieldtrips from their national Earth sciences communities. The Mediterranean Consortium also generated the TRANSMED Project, a scientific research program aimed at developing a number of transects depicting the lithospheric and mantle structure across selected, representative regions of the Mediterranean domain and adjoining areas. This was accomplished integrating surface geology, seismic profiles and mantle tomography, both on land and at sea. The goal was to provide the international geoscientist with the first supranational overview of the geological and geophysical structure of the complex Mediterranean domain. On the occasion of the Florence congress the main results of this project were released by Springer Verlag as the TRANSMED Atlas (edited by W. Cavazza, F. Roure, W. Spakman, G.M. Stampfli, and P.A. Ziegler), which remains the standard reference for the Mediterranean region.

In 2002 William was appointed Professor of Sedimentology and Stratigraphy at the University of Bologna. At this stage, he began a new field of research focused on low-temperature thermochronology [apatite fission tracks and (U-Th)/He] for basin analysis and the study of mountain-building processes. These methods were applied in the Alps (Simplon and Alpine Corsica), the Chilean Andes, and – in more recent times – in several locations in Asia Minor and the Caucasian region.

As member and then chair of the Italian IUGS/IGCP National Committee, William was instrumental in stimulating a substantial improvement of the Italian participation in the IGCP. William’s interest in all things IGCP culminated with his appointment as member (2005–2007) and chair (2008) of the IGCP Scientific Board, a position from which he resigned upon his election as IUGS Treasurer by the joint IUGS-IGC Council during the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Geological Congress in Oslo. His involvement with IUGS includes also having been the chair of the IUGS Finance Committee (2015–16).

William is a member of a range of learned and professional societies. He served as National Correspondant of the International Association of Sedimentologists for several years. He is also a Fellow of the Geological Society of America. Currently he is the Editor-in-Chief of the “Italian Journal of Geosciences” (Rome), Associate Editor of “Basin Research” (Oxford), and a member of the Advisory Board of the “Turkish Journal of Geosciences” (Ankara). He served as Associate Editor of the “Journal of Sedimentary Research” (SEPM) for twelve years (2005–2017).

A curious mind and a keen advocate of multidisciplinary studies, William has published 60+ papers in international journals and four books on varied topics ranging from the Bitlis-Zagros collision to strontium-isotope chronostratigraphy, from Mediterranean palaeogeography to hydrological models for carbonate concretioning. An avid traveller open to cooperation and new ideas, he likes the notion of synthesizing geological and geophysical data across political boundaries. He has authored papers with geoscientists from seventeen countries and worked with several research institutions on all continents (excluding Antarctica). He also has extensive experience with the industrial sector, including scientific consulting for oil and mining companies.

William lives in downtown Bologna with his wife Elisabetta and daughter Ottavia who put up successfully with his presence and absence alike.