



THE SOCIETY FOR ORGANIC PETROLOGY



NEWSLETTER

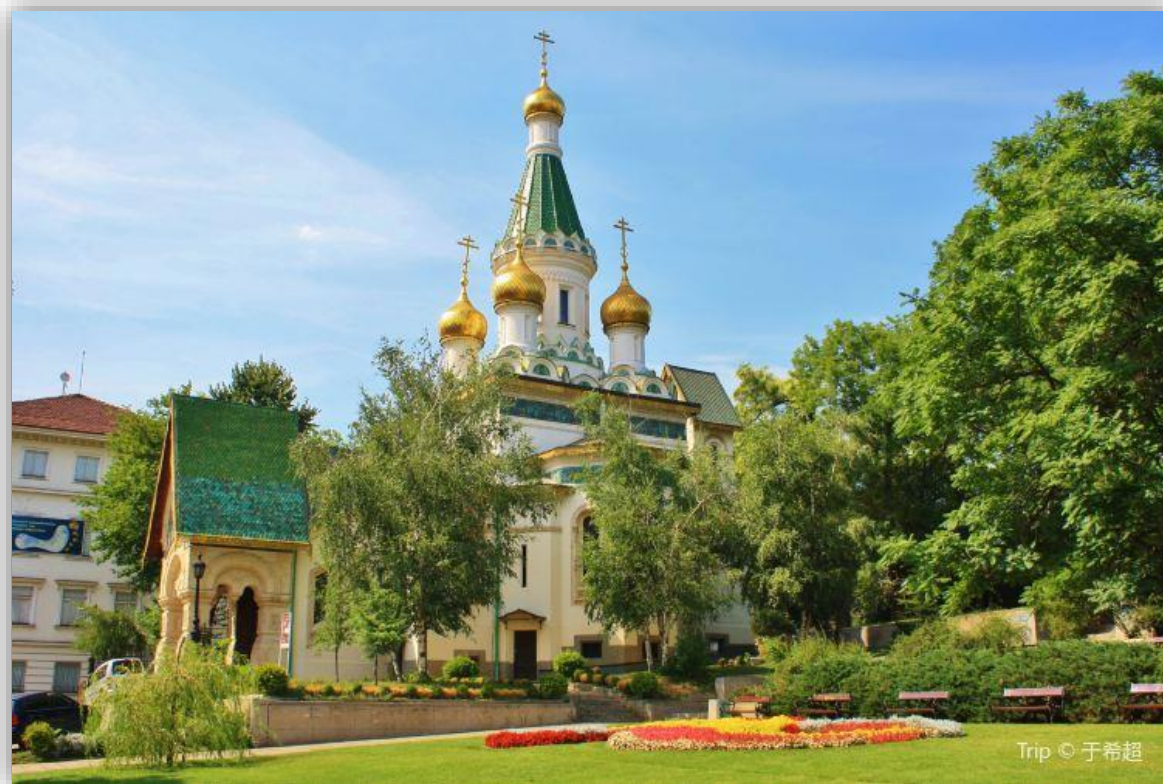
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The 37th Annual TSOP Meeting

Sofia, Bulgaria, 2021



The Sveti Nikolai Russian Church in Sofia, Bulgaria (photo from Trip.com)

The 37th Annual TSOP Meeting will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2021.

Stay tuned for more details!



The Society for Organic Petrology

TSOP is a society for scientists and engineers involved in coal petrology, kerogen petrology, organic geochemistry and related disciplines. The Society organizes an annual technical meeting and field trips; sponsors research projects; provides funding for graduate students, and publishes a website, Facebook Page, quarterly newsletter, annual meeting program and abstracts and special publications. Members are eligible for discounted subscriptions to Elsevier journals *International Journal of Coal Geology* and *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology*.

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GUIDELINES:

The TSOP Newsletter welcomes contributions from members and non-members alike. Readers are invited to submit items pertinent to TSOP members' fields of study. These might include meeting reports and reviews, book reviews, short technical contributions including those on geologic localities or laboratory methods, as well as creative works such as poems, cartoons and works of fiction. Photos, graphs and other illustrations are welcomed. Low-resolution images are discouraged, as they cannot be reproduced well in print. Articles are preferred in Microsoft Word, RTF or plain text formats.

Contact the Editor:

Rachel Walker editor@tsop.org

Membership Information:

Please report any changes in address or contact information to Brett Valentine, TSOP Membership Chair:

bvalentine@usgs.gov

Members can also update their own information by logging into the secure TSOP website:

www.tsop.org/mbrsonly/

The TSOP Newsletter is published quarterly by The Society for Organic Petrology and is distributed to all Society members as a benefit of membership.

Membership in the Society is open to all individuals involved in the fields of organic petrology and organic geochemistry. For more information on membership and Society activities, please see: www.tsop.org

For purposes of registration of the TSOP Newsletter, a permanent address is:

The Society for Organic Petrology
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4220 King St., Alexandria,
VA 22302-1520 USA

Newsletter Submission Deadlines

March Issue: March 10th, 2021
June Issue: June 10th, 2021
September Issue: Sept. 10th, 2021
December Issue: Dec. 10th, 2021

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President's Letter

Dear TSOP Members,

I hope all are well and having fun and finding inventive new ways to continue being productive organic petrologists in this challenging time. I did hear some good news this morning – the first person to be vaccinated outside of drug trials got their 'jab' today in the UK and here in the US we can expect a vaccine to be licensed by the end of the week. So, keep your fingers crossed for more good news!

At USGS, the Organic Petrology Laboratory was getting adjusted to a new normal - each of the lab team was allowed one entry per week for ½ day. Only one person in the lab at a time with at least a 15-minute buffer scheduled between individual visitors. Off-hours access was also allowed for nights and weekends on an ad hoc basis. But then, the Thanksgiving holiday came and some of us (including myself) visited family outside of our normal safety bubbles, and so were asked to quarantine out of the building for two weeks. The Christmas holiday is coming soon, and we'll have another round of quarantining after that I'm sure. But then in the new year, let's hope for good news and better health and getting back in the lab! It felt invigorating to finally sit down at the microscope and make data again.

TSOP Councilor Irena Kostova and the organizing committee for the TSOP 2021 Annual Meeting in Sofia are hard at work planning for next year's gathering. Let's hope by September 2021 we are all vaccinated, and the world is open to travel again. With the organizing committee, the TSOP Council will take a final decision at the mid-year meeting sometime around March 2021 on whether the TSOP 2021 Annual Meeting will be held in person or virtually. The organizing committee also has been planning for the potential of a hybrid meeting, combining face-to-face with virtual events to give more attendees the opportunity to participate.

The meeting website should be launching this month (December 2020) so keep your eyes on the TSOP webpages for more news related to the structure and events surrounding the TSOP 2021 Annual Meeting in Sofia.

TSOP Student Affairs Committee Chair Dane Synnott has been hard at work organizing the Student Research Exchange, a monthly seminar series providing opportunities for students to showcase their organic petrology-related research to our community, through a virtual presentation format. The first talk will be given by Biao Fu on 'Speciation transformation of arsenic during high-As coal combustion: The key roles of Fe-bearing minerals members' on December 17th – be sure to tune in and help inaugurate the Student Research Exchange as further dates are announced. Thanks, Dane, for taking advantage of our new virtual world to launch this great idea, which I'm sure will be a big success.

Please continue to stay well and stay safe in this challenging time,



Paul Hackley, TSOP President 2019-2021



www.facebook.com/OrganicPetrology



TSOP is an AAPG Affiliated Society.
Abstracts from annual meetings are available through [AAPG Datapages](#).

Join or Renew Your Membership



TSOP Membership Dues

TSOP dues payments are due on or before **December 31st each year**. We encourage you to check your dues status and make your payment so that you can continue your TSOP membership and support the society and its work.

TSOP dues are currently set at:

Individuals:

- \$25 per year or
- \$100 for 5 years (5 years for the price of 4!)

Students:

- \$15 per year

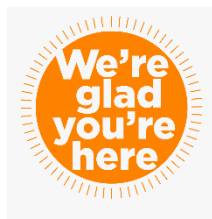
Institutional/Corporate:

- \$75 per year

You can use our convenient online dues payment system to pay dues by credit card.

You can login at the [Members Only TSOP](#) website and select 'Online dues payment' or go to www.tsop.org/dues and access the online form without logging in.

Thank you for your interest and support of TSOP and we look forward to a renewal of your TSOP membership.



First Draft: Reflections on the culture of organic petrology

Jim Hower

University of Kentucky Center for Applied Energy Research

When I started my PhD program at Penn State in 1976, coal was the hot topic. This was the time between the oil crises of the 1970's; high gasoline prices and cold classrooms in the winter months were a recent memory and coal held the promise, just as it had many times in the past, of providing an alternative to petroleum-based fuels. For a kid who grew up playing, and later working, in limestone quarries and was familiar with the anthracite mining history of my home county, the prospect of entering a field in which I could be immersed in the geology of a resource AND its mining and utilization was too good to pass up.

As I approach the end of my career, coal is a pariah fuel. Mines are closing, power plants are switching to gas, and the economy of many former mining regions has been devastated. My colleagues in industry and academia are vanishing from the scene and the time is approaching when I will join them.

More than most geology disciplines, coal geology is intertwined with the history and culture of the people in the mining region. In visiting the mines, we hear the stories of the mines and the towns. The history of the coalfields, both tragic and colorful, will remain. Memories of the culture will remain, but the continued evolution of the coalfield culture is in jeopardy of being lost.

Much is already lost . . . but some of what is lost is for the good because the culture based on company towns and, even earlier, slave and indentured labor should not endure. The economic exploitation based in those earlier times never truly goes away, though, when companies can pull up stakes and leave their employees with no pay for the work they have done. Aspects of the culture live on, such as in the music and literature and in the natural comradery of the people from the region, whether they are still in the Appalachian coalfields or were displaced along the "roads to the north" in the search for jobs in the rust-belt cities of Ohio and Michigan.

What about our culture, not just as a discipline within geology, but as a unique discipline that interacts with botanical interests at one end and engineering fundamentals at the other? As the North American and western European coal industries fade (granted, the projected 2020 US coal production of 500 Mt is still a big number, but it is less than half of what it was barely a decade ago and, according to the US Energy Information Administration, it will be the lowest production in almost six decades), so do the opportunities for coal geologists, petrographers, and chemists in those regions.

So far, though, the industry is holding on in China and India. Therefore, our academic culture will lose its European and US/Canadian accents in exchange for the accents of the newer generation. As with my generation, the current and future generations of coal scientists will not be re-inventing an entire science from the ground up. Each decade of research and publications is the best and most advanced; that was just as true for someone working in the 1970's when I started as it is for someone starting their career in the 2020's and, we can only hope, that it will be true for someone starting in the 2070's.

Individuals come and go, but the knowledge that they generated lives on in the scientific literature; in the students, now professionals, that they helped to educate; and in the generations of students that will be mentored by the upcoming generations.

In that sense, then, the accent is just a small, secondary aspect of our culture; the fundamental knowledge of the discipline, both as it exists now and as it will continue to grow through the coming years, is what really matters.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, a Lexington writer wrote a weekly column titled Waiting for the Apocalypse. Although she did not continue the column long enough to see 2020; between catastrophic fires in Australia and California, plagues of locusts in Africa, a record hurricane season in North America, near misses by asteroids, and a global pandemic, perhaps she would have considered the wait to be over.

In our small and secluded part of the world, do we consider the fate of coal mining and coal research to be another apocalypse? Or is this the beginning of research on new materials from coal; the extraction of critical elements from coal, coal-mining wastes, and coal-combustion products; or something else we cannot imagine at this time?



Preparation for TSOP in Bogotá, Colombia, September 2022

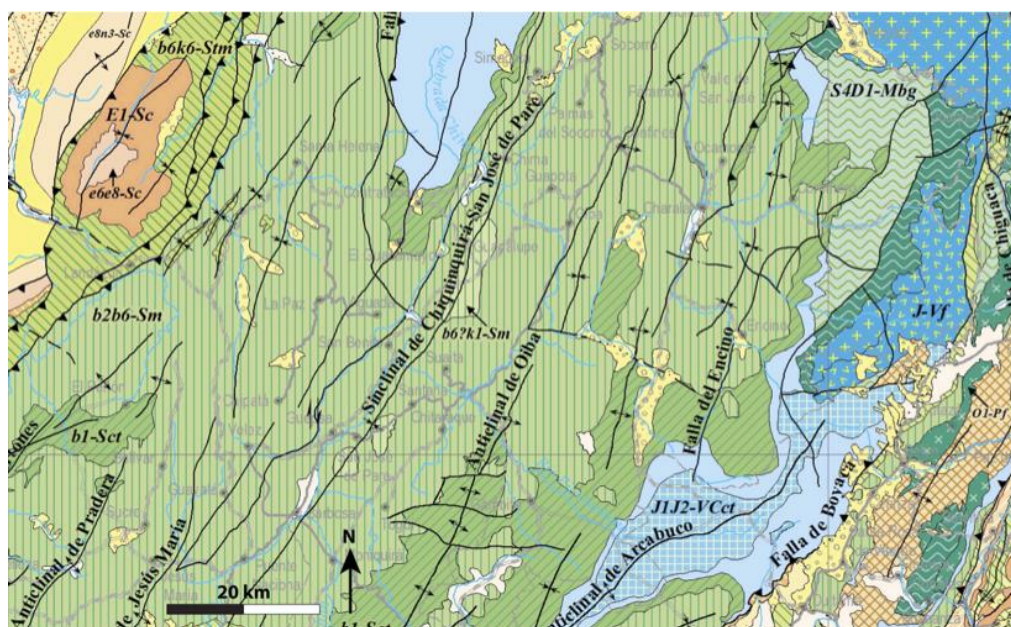
The world may be uncertain at the moment, but we are certain delegates to the annual conference of The Society for Organic Petrology in September 2022 will be thrilled with Bogotá and the luxuriant surroundings of the Colombian Andes.

With a population of 7.5 million, Bogotá is not small, but even in the centre of this Latin American metropolis you feel like it's all small neighbourhoods - just smashed together in a pleasing mosaic of colours and angles. An evening stroll after a dinner in one of the thousands of restaurants - encompassing cuisine from native Colombian to French, from Argentinian to Italian – is a perfect way to work off those calories. And at an elevation of 2640 m (8,660 ft) you will definitely work off a slice of pie or two! Or take the Teleférico (cable car) up to Mt Monserrate, directly behind Universidad de los Andes, and you will be over 3,150 m (10,340 ft) high. The views will leave you breathless.

The geology is no less spectacular. The post conference field trip will concentrate on the Cretaceous-Paleocene age Guaduas Formation, but the real showstopper is the structure. The Middle Magdalena Basin of the Colombian Andes is like an old, age-hardened rug: crumpled and split; fibers overthrust by other fibers. It is not geology for the faint hearted and if you are interested in the organics or the stratigraphy, there is no getting around getting your head around the structure first. Perhaps this is why Colombian geologists are some of the best in the world.



Chicamocha Canyon, Colombia (Photo by Carme Huguet).



Detail of geology of Boyaca region, north of Bogotá, Colombia.

Keep September 2022 clear in your calendars and book those post-pandemic airline tickets - we have a lot planned for you!

Tim A Moore, Carme Huguet and Jill Pearce.

COLIN WARD EMERGING STUDENT RESEARCHER AWARD

The award is funded by Kathie Ward and named after Colin Ward (1945-2018) in recognition of his outstanding academic and research career, contributions to coal science, and service to TSOP. One monetary award of \$700 (US) will be granted each year.

The Colin Ward Emerging Student Researcher Award is designed to support a PhD students' first attendance at the annual TSOP meeting. The award is also designed to help introduce the PhD student into the TSOP community.

The Award is open to PhD students in the field of organic petrology who have never previously attended a TSOP Annual Meeting. Priority will be given to students who are early in their research and reside in countries with low TSOP membership. Making a presentation (oral or poster) at the TSOP meeting is optional for the winner.

The award includes a 'meeting mentor' to help introduce the student to the TSOP community. The appointed meeting mentor will be a long-time TSOP member who will serve as the social liaison for the awardee during the meeting.

After the meeting has concluded the student will be required to submit a short article to the TSOP newsletter about their experience attending the TSOP meeting.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2021

Please send in meeting, short course and special event announcements to the Editor
<http://www.tsop.org/events.html>



May 23-26, 2021

AAPG 2021 Annual Convention & Exhibition
Denver, Colorado, USA

[Visit the ACE 2021 website](#)



June 21-15, 2021

14th ICCP Course: General Coal Geology & Organic Petrology
Potsdam, Germany

[Visit the ICCP website](#)



August 16-21, 2021

36th International Geological Congress
Delhi, India

[Visit the IGC website](#)



September 11-16, 2021

37th TSOP Annual Meeting
Sofia, Bulgaria

Watch for the meeting website!