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Our 'International year of Earth science educator stories' project

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The author together with other Earth science educators around the world, many of whom are doing excellent and sometimes truly amazing work supporting Earth science education, are at or near retirement age or have already retired. As they retire there is a real danger that all their good work, wisdom and enthusiasm will be lost, if we can't find a way of passing these on to the next generation.

With this in mind, the author was inspired by a talk by Marina Cantacuzino on her '*Forgiveness project*' work, ^[1] (where people who have been dreadfully wronged are greatly helped by telling their own stories of forgiveness), to realise the power of people telling their own stories. A strategy for disseminating Earth science educator stories was suggested by the Earthlearningidea experience, where a new Earth science teaching idea is currently being published every two weeks, and these are being widely downloaded by a worldwide audience (in December 2015, at a rate of nearly 50,000 per month across 198 countries). A focus for the idea was also provided by the 'International Year of Planet Earth' (IYPE) experience where a new Earthlearningidea was published every week during 2008. The objective of writing these stories was specifically to inform and inspire the next generation, encouraging even those of a modest disposition to contribute. Anybody who felt he/she had contributed something to Earth science education was regarded as an 'Earth science educator'.

The idea was floated with the International Geoscience Education Organisation (IGEO) Senior Officers, who not only approved the project, but the IGEO webmaster also agreed to make the regular postings on the IGEO website ^[2]. With this backing, the idea was broadcast widely and enough people had responded positively by the end of 2015 to allow weekly publication.

Each 'storyteller' has been invited to suggest the names and contact details of others who might be invited too, so that a personal invitation can be sent to them. No offers of stories have been refused. Suggestions of the names and contact details of other potential 'storytellers' are welcome. Each story is a maximum of 1000 words long, with photographs of the 'storyteller' 'doing something'. At the time of writing (mid-January 2016), 70 people from 22 countries had offered their stories, four had been published and 20 others had been written and edited ready for publication.



The stories received so far give fascinating insights into the factors that have caused people to become Earth science educators of note. There is a future prospect of analysing

the stories for common threads, for guidance to the coming generation. This work should allow the baton to be passed on to those who will follow, allowing them to achieve even greater things.

References:

[1] Cantacuzino, M. (2015) *'The forgiveness project; stories for a vengeful age'*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

[2] The 'My Earth Science Educator Story' webpage on the International Geoscience Education Organisation (IGEO) website: http://www.igeosied.org/?page_id=396

