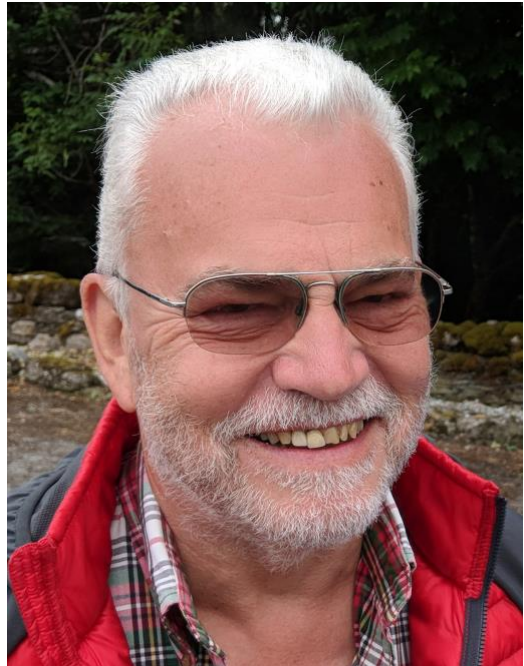


2021 MGPV Division Distinguished Geological Career Award to Michael Brown: Acceptance

*Michael Brown, University of Maryland
October 11, 2021*

To begin, I thank the MGPV division of GSA for this Distinguished Geological Career Award. I am fully aware that there are many worth candidates for the limited number of awards in the geosciences, and I am humbled to receive this honor from my peer division in one of the oldest geological societies. In accepting the award, I acknowledge my nominator Chris Yakymchuk, the support group of Julie Baldwin, Tim Johnson and Dick White, and Donna Whitney for nudging Chris in the first place. My thanks go to Chris, Julie and Mark Caddick for organizing a full-day session in my honor, and to the participants, especially the invited speakers. Also, I appreciate Chris' generous citation; although I continue to interact with students at CUG Wuhan, China, Chris was my last graduate student at Maryland. Finally, I thank my family who have supported me throughout my career, especially my wife Jenny—without her support the travel and fieldwork would have been impossible.



I began my career in the UK in 1972 as a Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, where I rose to Acting Head of Department, before moving in 1984 to Kingston University as Head of School. Then, in 1990, I moved laterally to become Chair of the Department of Geology in the University of Maryland, and, in doing so, successfully avoided becoming a Dean. In the end, I was a head or chair for 29 consecutive years. The job comprises interesting, less interesting and darn right tedious tasks, so the secret to success is to complete each efficiently and professionally; but the downside of success is reappointment after reappointment! Deans often remark that the job of chair is the worst of all in a university, because the chair gets s--- from both the bottom up and top down. However, unlike a dean, it is possible as chair to continue a program of research, even if the time for it is more limited. My solution was simply to have a smaller research group, so that my time with individual students, post-docs and long-term visitors was not compromised.

Metrics such as citations and h-indices are useful, but they cannot give the full measure of a person—that requires an evaluation of the content and significance of their publications, and of their other contributions. However, research articles have (mostly) fleeting value, not because they were not necessarily good in their time, but because science advances, leaving (most of) them behind by career's end. By contrast, human capital and, maybe, institutions that have benefitted from leadership should have lasting value. I am proud that my students and post-docs have successful careers, and the Department of Geology at Maryland has a firm foundation for continued success. These are my legacy!

To finish, this award is meaningful to those of us fortunate enough to receive it because it places an emphasis on multidisciplinary, field-based contributions—these have been the hallmark of my research. I have done fieldwork on every continent and worked in countless different countries with many diverse colleagues and students. I thank them all for helping to make my career so enjoyable.