

VIPS NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER 2020

WELCOME

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Virtual Palaeosciences project! It was clear at the August meeting that one area we didn't do well at so far was communication with our wider membership, so we've decided to try moving to a single newsletter, to be sent out roughly monthly, with news from all the different bits of the project. I hope you're all keeping well despite the craziness all around.

The new academic year is now just about underway, and a very strange and busy one it is. We hope that the ViPs resource collation is of some use to the wider community, and working group 5 is arranging some opportunities for community, commiseration and consolidation of learning from this teaching term which can hopefully inform those preparing to teach palaeoscience after Christmas (see their report below). Sign up for the first "coffee morning" on 30th October (Working Group 1 section below).

I'm pleased to announce that we have just secured some formal support for the project – ViPs will become a Research Group of the QRA at the Annual Meeting in January (this comes with a little money which we intend to use to get a paid for website with custom domain and more features/more storage for resources).

An updated spreadsheet with another c. 100 resources will be out soon – please keep sharing your contributions!

Jane Bunting, Coordinating Group Coordinator, on behalf of the Coordinating Group

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HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

Our spreadsheet is frequently updated and freely available to all. If you wish to contribute resources to our spreadsheet, join the project mailing list or contribute to future newsletters, please use the links below. We can be found on Twitter [@palaeosci_ViPs](#).

Reminder that you can download the spreadsheet of resources from [here](#)

And submit resources [here](#)

And join the mailing list [here](#)

And send items for future newsletters to ViPsNewsletter@gmail.com

MEET THE PROJECT INTERNS

Hello, we are Elizabeth and Harry the interns for the ViPs project. We have both recently graduated from the University of Hull with a BSc Geography degree. Throughout our final semester we studied a module based on the Quaternary which fuelled our interest for this project. Over the last six weeks we have been helping working groups 1 and 5 with various tasks. One of the major contributions we have made is the update of the original spreadsheet of resources, where we resorted the document and then added columns for the geographic location and a review of each resource. Currently we are working on bringing new webpages to the ViPs website.

WORKING GROUP 1 – COLLATION AND WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

Over summer we collated all the resources that were sent to us and compiled them into the spreadsheet on the [ViPs resources webpage](#). Thank you for all your contributions so far! If you notice your favourite set of resources are missing, please head to the [contributions page](#).

Collation and website development are still ongoing tasks. We are very keen to get the community involved. Currently there are two tasks that you can help us with.

- 1) The ViPs interns have assessed the coverage of our resources so far. This has resulted in the identification of several gaps as list below.

Aeolian	Soil	Coleoptera	Pigments
Cave/speleothem	Ar-Ar	Foraminifera	Radio-isotopes
Desert	Age-modelling	Lichenometry	Testate amoebae
Glacial/Periglacial	Biomarkers	Luminescence	Varves
River	Cladocera	Palaeomag	210-Pb

If you know of any existing useful resources that address these gaps please let us know via the [contributions page](#) by the **end of October**.

- 2) There are a lot of resources and some may be more useful for teaching than others. We therefore think it would be helpful to the community, and in terms of website development, to have a ranking system. If you would like to rank a set of resources for us (for example, rank all the pollen resources) then please get in touch specifying your preferred specialism.

WORKING GROUP 2 – FIELDWORK AND WORKING GROUP 3 – DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

After a successful collaborative action of many of the participants in WG2 (Field) and WG3 (Lab), these working groups are now merged into WG2.5, virtual field trip and associated activities, collecting resources. This WG2.5 will provide a platform to post information about resources that are currently being produced (with contact details and an estimated date for availability of the resource). This will be partly based on particular gaps identified from the list of resources collated by WG1, partly just because people are preparing teaching materials anyway. For the moment an online “sticky note” forum to share this might be the easiest way, and we’ve started this here: <https://pinup.com/WkRC4nwaO>

Anyone interested in using the current version of the electronic slide system, Co-Pol (British pollen image set only – comes with some example practical exercises) please contact Jane for a copy m.j.bunting@hull.ac.uk

Steve Juggins has been putting in a lot of work to produce a **new version of Co-Pol**, which will have a desktop-based version (currently for PC, but there will soon also be a Mac version) as well as a web-based version. A beta version for testing will soon be available - watch this space. If you have a set of pictures (ideally, they should be square and all with identical scaling) for other proxies than pollen, or are interested in taking a set of images, please get in touch with Steve.

WORKING GROUP 4 – EXPERT LECTURES

Next steps:

We have discussed the need to have:

- 1) A clear idea of what is needed in term of guest lectures. Rather than asking colleagues to submit material, **we would prefer to have a clear idea of what is missing and create materials that fills the missing gaps.** → for this would be extremely useful to have an overview of what materials have already been created by the other groups / shared Google doc.
- 2) We identified as a main goal of the guest lectures to give **direct and practical example of specific techniques/ challenges that people come across while working in the field.** For this reason, rather than provide theoretical explanations of specific topics, we aim to provide with the guest lectures concrete experiences of experts that worked in the field in different part of the world, come across specific challenges and solved the problems with using specific tools/ analytical methodologies.
- 3) In order to be sure to provide high quality content displayed in a uniform format (that can be seen as part of a “lecture series”) we agreed to provide each lecturer with:
 1. A PowerPoint Template with a specific design and structure to facilitate the creation of compatible material. The template will also display the logo or the front-page image of VIPs.

- We will ask 2-3 people about providing guest lectures
 - 15 mins long
 - 5 mins on their research area
 - What technique(s) they use
 - Challenges in the field
- 2. A guideline template with specific info about how to record the video from a technical point of view (audio, video, format etc...)

Once the above contact is ready, we will get the template + guidelines checked by the steering group and, once finalised, we can then start contacting suitable lecturers.

WORKING GROUP 5 - PEDAGOGY

Two events are scheduled for the coming semester:

- 1) Our first coffee morning via MS Teams will be held at 11 am on Friday 30th October. The topic will be: multi-method approach to teaching online, led by Dr Elizabeth Hurrell from UCLAN. If you would like to join, please submit your name and email address to the form before 27th October. You will be sent a link to join the session in advance of the coffee morning.

[Registration for ViPs coffee morning 11 am Friday 30th October](#)

Please leave your name and email to be sent the MS Teams link to join the coffee morning by 27th October
forms.gle

Registration: <https://forms.gle/aBsFK6LobfDM4iZx7>

- 2) Our December meeting focusing on how teaching had gone and thinking about improvements for semester 2 will be held on Monday 14th December 10 am - 1 pm. More details to follow soon.

We are also still looking for any pedagogic papers that people found particularly useful to feature on the ViPs web site. Please contact Matt Law (m.law@bathspa.ac.uk) if you would like to suggest a resource.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED (SPECIFIC TASKS NEEDING TO BE ADOPTED BY ONE OR MORE PEOPLE...)

- We'd like to build a creative commons photo gallery of relevant images which we could all freely use. It's popular – but it needs someone to make a decision about platform (e.g. Wikimedia commons, Flickr), tags etc. and to encourage/assist submissions.
- A “toolshed” was proposed by Simon – a location on the website which would collate recommendations of software for smaller issues (anything other than a specific part of a data collected and analysis technique), collections of tips (“this is what worked for me”), work-arounds (“these are issues we know

about with this resource...”) and things not to do (“this doesn’t work on macs...”). Anyone want to plan, set up & coordinate something like this?

- Anyone want to take on the creation of a “People in Palaeoscience” resource?
 - Biographies of diverse palaeoscientists – this was considered especially useful for students, and could be shared via a blog on the website.
 - Similarly, it was suggested that collecting some careers related profiles, interviews etc. which people who trained in the palaeosciences and went on to work outside academia would be very useful.
- Sharing of T resources (handouts, datasets etc.) which don’t really fit with the main collection, e.g. are not something that you want to release as a finished product, but which might be useful for other project members. Jane has made a space (spreadsheet plus box folder) for this, but someone is needed to encourage contributions, keep it tidy etc.
- We could also use an exchange for ideas for use as undergrad placements (especially after Christmas) and projects this year – a virtual placement supervised from another university would at least be better than doing one with staff a student already knows.

Volunteers for any of these ideas, or people with other suggestions, please contact Jane (m.j.bunting@hull.ac.uk)

Remember, you can get in touch with us either through [our website](#) or on Twitter [@palaeosci_ViPs](#).