

Rift2Ridge 2021 Mini-Whitepaper: U.S. InterRidge Membership

Ross Parnell-Turner, Jessica Warren, Shi J. Sim, Zachary Eilon, Laurent Montesi

Scientific and community justification for the U.S. Rift2Ridge community to rejoin InterRidge as a 'Regular' member, at a cost of \$5k per year.

Background and Previous U.S. Participation

InterRidge is an international, non-profit organization concerned with promoting all aspects of ocean floor research (its study, use, and protection), founded in 1992 as a partnership between the U.S. and France. InterRidge is currently supported by four 'principal' member nations (Korea, China, France, and Norway; each paying \$25k per year) and six 'regular' member nations (Canada, Germany, Italy, India, Japan, and the U.K.; each paying \$5k per year). There are 20 non-fee paying 'corresponding' nations, including the U.S.

The U.S. was a founding principal member of InterRidge and hosted the InterRidge Office in 1992-1993 and in 2007-2009. In 2014, the U.S. switched to 'corresponding' membership status, coincident with the termination of NSF support for the Ridge2000 program. Despite the ending of formal membership, US scientists still comprise 45% of the InterRidge mailing list (Figure 1), and are actively engaged in working groups and in offering spare cruise berths. However, the switch to 'corresponding' nation membership means that U.S. scientists are excluded from InterRidge initiatives such as cruise bursaries, fellowships, and support for meetings and workshops. In addition, they do not have a voice on the InterRidge Steering Committee.

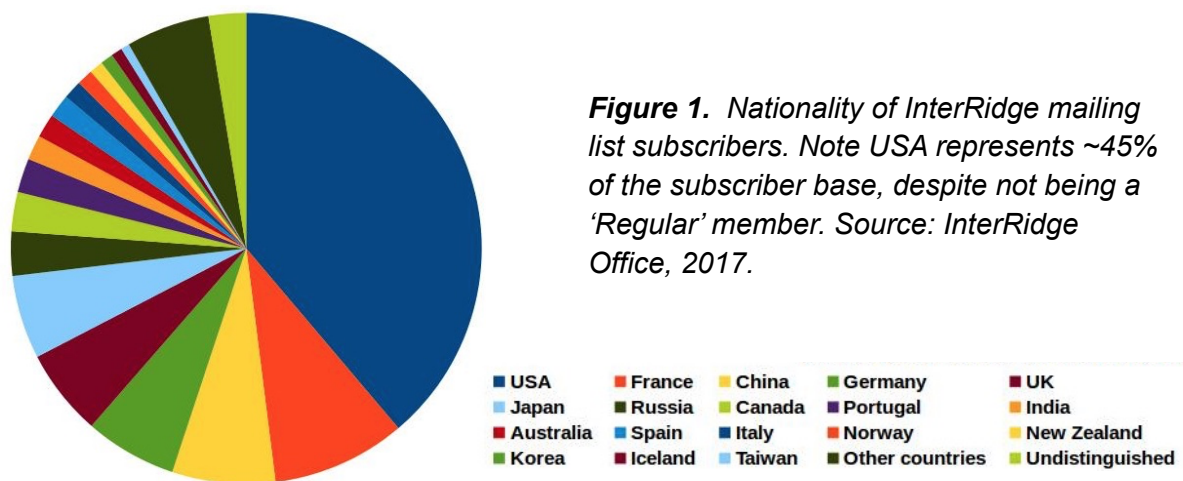


Figure 1. Nationality of InterRidge mailing list subscribers. Note USA represents ~45% of the subscriber base, despite not being a 'Regular' member. Source: InterRidge Office, 2017.

Benefits of InterRidge Membership

- As the U.S. ridge and rift geoscience communities are moving towards forming new research coordination network(s), or other community governance and collaboration organizations,, access to resources through InterRidge will assist in training the next generation of U.S. Rift2Ridge scientists.
- 'Regular' InterRidge membership would give the U.S. community greater access to, and leadership of, the meetings, workshops, and working groups supported by InterRidge.

- InterRidge-sponsored Cruise Bursaries (up to \$2k each) and Fellowships (up to \$5k each) would provide networking and funding support for U.S. students and postdocs to participate in international expeditions and post-cruise research. These awards provide rare and valuable opportunities for early-career scientists to obtain sea-going experiences and engage with the international community, which can be transformational for careers in research. These programs are particularly valuable for students from non-R1 institutions, where funds for participation may not regularly be available.
- U.S. institutions and PIs regularly host InterRidge fellows and offer spare berths for InterRidge Cruise Bursary recipients, but U.S. students are not eligible to apply for support in return.
- 'Regular' membership would allow scientists from less developed countries to obtain fellowships to visit the U.S., leading to new collaborations and helping to diversify the community.
- U.S. membership would lead to more prominent international communication of U.S. scientific contributions via InterRidge News, where cutting-edge results and operational outcomes from recent scientific expeditions are shared.
- Through InterRidge membership, the U.S. Rift2Ridge community would become more cognizant of new focus areas for other countries, which would help to identify research priorities and enable efficiencies in planning large-scale experiments and cruises (e.g. community efforts such as PacificArray).
- Scientifically exciting questions about ridges require access to remote locations (e.g. Arctic, southern oceans), which would benefit from international cooperation enhanced by InterRidge membership, such as sharing ships, equipment, vehicles, and knowledge.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the U.S. re-joins InterRidge as a regular member nation, at a cost of \$5k annually.
2. We recommend that InterRidge opportunities be better advertised within the U.S., which would increase awareness of the benefits provided by InterRidge membership. If the U.S. Rift2Ridge community were to coalesce around a new RCN program, a mailing list associated with that effort would provide a mechanism to foster community and highlight InterRidge opportunities.
3. We recommend a long-term plan for the U.S. to return to principal membership and host the InterRidge office again. This plan should include:
 - Developing mechanisms within the U.S. Rift2Ridge community for electing U.S. InterRidge representatives, defining term limits, and reporting requirements for disseminating information across a broad spectrum of the U.S. community.
 - Assisting InterRidge as it develops a more robust and equitable governance structure, transparent annual reporting of finances, and improved administration that provides continuity as the office moves locations.