



"Our environment is our future"

RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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Friday

Jan. 22, 2010

3:30 - 4:30

LECTURE THEATRE

7 - 152

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
SERVED AT 3:20 PM

Glaciers as Complex Earth Surface Systems

Glaciers are an important natural resource, and they also faithfully respond to changes in climate. At seasonal to annual time scales, the health of a glacier is controlled by winter snowfall and summer melt. An imbalance between winter accumulation and summer ablation at time scales of decades to centuries causes glaciers to adjust their dimensions to reach a new equilibrium state with climate. Temperate glaciers are also remarkably effective in their ability to erode substrates and are thus, effective geomorphic agents. Yet despite decades of glaciological research many links between climate, glaciers, and glacier erosion are complex and remain poorly understood. This complexity provides stimulating research opportunities to study an earth surface system that is important for both pure and applied research. I review some of the intriguing aspects of glaciers as studied by myself, my students, and my colleagues. I also identify major deficits in our understanding of glacier behaviour and where more research is required.