

Dr Kristján Saemundsson (retired)



Dr Kristján Saemundsson's pioneering research has underpinned our geological understanding of Iceland and mid ocean ridge tectonics. During the past half century he has authored nearly all (more than 100) geological maps of Iceland, including the first modern bedrock, tectonic and geothermal maps of the country.

When he began his work, Iceland's relationship with plate tectonics and sea floor spreading was far less understood, and his early publications resolved key issues and formed the basis for our present understanding of Iceland's geology. He originated the concept of axial rifting zones and showed how ridge-jumps occurred in old crust, synchronous with plume axis shifts.

His work has also had enormous social benefits, with his detailed maps of all significant geothermal areas in Iceland leading to the development of geothermal resources that have transformed the standard of living in Iceland. He has trained multiple generations of staff and students, and has worked with the United Nations to deliver their Geothermal Training Plan, involving over a thousand participants from 36 countries.