

New Technical Sections Progress Goals

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Recognizing a need to address technology advances and gaps in the areas of drilling systems automation and production and operations, the SPE Board Committee on Membership approved two new technical sections in 2008. Both sections have made significant progress in advancing their agendas, and all indications point to greater activity in the year ahead.

Drilling Systems Automation

The Drilling Systems Automation Technical Section had its origins in a panel discussion called "Drilling Automation: Where Are the Game Changers?" at SPE's 2007 Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition. The discussion focused on the significance of automation game-changing technologies related to the overall drilling process. After the panel discussion, a group of drilling engineers consisting of panelists David Reid (Vice President of Products, National Oilwell Varco), Fionn Iverson (Research Adviser for Drilling and Well Modeling, International Research Institute of Stavanger), and John Thorogood (Drilling Engineering Adviser for Drilling Global Consultant); Walt Aldred (Research Director and Science Adviser for Schlumberger); Fred Florence (Product Manager for MD Totco); and session Cochairs Geoffrey Downton (Drilling Discipline Manager for Schlumberger) and Mario Zamora (Manager of Applied Engineering, M-I SWACO) discussed the possibility of creating a technical section to get automated drilling systems moving into the mainstream more quickly.

The SPE Board approved the Drilling Systems Automation Technical Section in May 2008, with the following set of objectives:

- Accelerate the development and implementation of drilling systems automation technology
- Facilitate the organization of and provide support to appropriate SPE program activities in this technology area
- Support initiatives to communicate the technology, standardize its nomenclature, and help define its value proposition
- Assist in developing links between key stakeholders and other players, including those outside the petroleum industry
- Identify lessons learned and best practices associated with the uptake of new technology

"An important task for the section will be to bust the myth that drillers don't trust new technology," said Section Chairperson Thorogood. "Our long-term goal is to act as a forum where issues can be aired, misconceptions banished, and people can become more comfortable with the technology. After all, they've been flying around on airplanes that use the same type of technology as an integral part of the control systems for more than 20 years, without giving it a second thought.

"In essence, our role is to elevate public knowledge of drilling systems automation and to act as advocates for the technology," Thorogood continued. "In this way we will be able to better identify, and move, the mostly psychological barriers to the uptake." Some of the ways in which the technical section will help ensure greater exposure for drilling systems automation include getting more technical papers into conferences and more articles published in journals. "Where appropriate, we should also organize forum meetings and workshops around the lat-

est drilling automation technologies," he added.

The section is currently a small steering group of approximately a dozen people, although the goal is to add more members by holding meetings at key SPE conferences. The section's first official meeting will take place during the 2009 SPE/International Association of Drilling Contractors Drilling Conference and Exhibition, to be held in March in Amsterdam. "We will hold a meeting on Monday, 16 March starting at 1:00 p.m. and focused on inviting people to join the section and help develop a roadmap for the automation of drilling," Thorogood said.

The meeting will begin with an introductory message from National Oilwell Varco's Reid, who will state the case for automation, the objectives and motivation for the meeting, and the expected outcomes. Next, a panel of invited speakers from StatoilHydro, Shell, BP, and Aerospace will discuss several key ideas, including the current state of drilling systems automation, the benefits of automation, frustrations with the status quo, how drilling systems automation should progress in a market downturn, and the barriers preventing this progression.

On Wednesday, 18 March, a follow-up meeting will take place immediately after the drilling conference, which will be designed to stimulate discussion among attendees and to develop the future direction of drilling automation technology. The goal is to bring a slightly different perspective based on new information obtained during the conference to create action items and offer direction for progressing automation. To find out more about these meetings, visit www.spe.org/events/dc/Pages/dsa.html.

More information on the section, including how to join, can be found at its website <http://communities.spe.org/TechSections/drlgauto/default.aspx>.

Production and Operations

At the behest of a recommendation by Syed Ali, Research Adviser for Schlumberger, to James Pappas, Technical Director of SPE's Production and Operations discipline, the SPE Board Committee on Membership approved the creation of the Production and Operations Technical Section in June 2008. According to Francois Auzeais, Chairperson of the section and Technical Adviser in Schlumberger's Well Services Segment, the overall objective of the section is similar to that of other sections, namely to expedite, facilitate, and provide a forum for discussion and cooperation in various aspects of the technology discipline. "However, we wanted to achieve this objective by taking full advantage of the latest interactive and dynamic web-based tools," he said.

Auzeais and Peter Photos, Section Secretary/Webmaster and Senior Engineer in Product Development for Schlumberger, created the section's website (which can be found at <http://communities.spe.org/TechSections/po/default.aspx>) to be a comprehensive repository and resource for engineers interested in learning about and sharing the latest technology news related to production and operations activities. Features of the website were designed to help the section achieve its many goals, which are described below.

Provide a Means for Effective Communication Among the Production and Operations Community. In an effort to adjust to the demographic shift toward greater numbers of younger and overseas members within SPE, Auzeais and Photos incorporated dynamic web tools such as blogs, podcasts, and RSS feeds to provide easier access to timely and relevant information.

"The way younger members such as Peter want to receive information is not the way in which I've been trained during my longer career at Schlumberger," said Auzeais. "That's why we set up these more modern means of communicating, and we need to do more of

this to attract the younger generation of scientists and engineers."

"Technologies such as email lists and traditional web pages are already considered old fashioned," said Photos. "People tend to put web pages or discussion lists into an archive that they never check. With RSS feeds, you can access information without actually visiting the page. You can access only the information you want, when you want it, and how you want it."

Identify Major Issues and Technology Areas on Which to Focus Cooperation and Discussions.

In an effort to better capture technology needs and issues, the technical section will monitor relevant SPE Technical Interest Groups (TIGs) and provide updates on newly uploaded SPE papers, patents, and industry news feeds. Clicking a large button called "Patents, Papers, and News" on the section homepage takes the user to a page with Google news feeds on the oil industry, search engines for the US and European patent offices, a technology search for SPE papers, and podcasts that can be downloaded to a computer on an application such as iTunes.

"The RSS feed feature allows me to see on my own desktop what has been changed or updated on this page," Photos said. "I can also access and download this information onto a cell phone, an MP3 player, or a personal digital assistant."

Encourage and Engage Young Professionals.

The technical section's website includes several features designed to appeal to young practicing engineers or engineering students who have yet to fully enter the industry.

"The homepage features a section called 'Technology Showcase,'" said Auzeais. "This is a page within a page that highlights new technologies and includes links to more information on a subject and visual representations of technology in the form of photos and animations."

Future plans include uploading video clips to the page which would demonstrate how a technology works in the field. "We have found many good video clips from various service companies that demonstrate either basic oilfield techniques or the operation of a specific tool, and we are work-

ing to consolidate these on the site," said Auzeais. "Once again, younger engineers who are familiar with video-sharing websites are driving this kind of information exchange."

Anyone interested in showcasing a new technology is encouraged to email Auzeais or Photos through the section website. They will read the accompanying information on the technology and make a decision on it. If it is outside of their specialty, it is passed on to one of the section's officers, including Program Chairperson Shauna Noonan and Membership Chairperson Jennifer Miskimins—and a diverse group of industry professionals, men and women, from each continent who are serving as board members—for review. "If they say yes, then I authorize Pete to post it to the site," said Auzeais.

"There are many technology companies that have training material in the public domain that we plan to put on our website," said Photos. "This would be for the engineer like me who is relatively new—I've been in the industry for only four years and have a background in well services, pumping, and fluids. If I wanted to learn about drilling, I will be able to go to that area of our site and learn the basics of drilling. From there, I can go to a drilling expert to learn more specifics, but at least I will be able to speak the language."

Another service for young professionals is the "Ask the Expert" link on the homepage, which is designed to put newer engineers in direct contact with experienced mentors who can share their expertise in a given technical field. Auzeais admits that this application has not picked up with the speed he had hoped. "We are having a problem with mentorship, which I think is related to the current economic crisis. Rightly so, people may be more concerned with keeping their own jobs than mentoring others. I think more mentors will volunteer once the economy turns around, and I hope this situation reverses itself soon. It is not a good thing to find such a gap between people with seniority and young engineers. It hurts the entire industry."

Share Best Practices in Production and Operations.

The section's aim of communicating the latest and best technologies and applications is further satisfied by the "Best Practices"

section of the website. Here, SPE directors and members are encouraged to write and share best practices from their respective fields. The final documents are posted to the website, after which the greater SPE membership can read the best practice, comment, and ask questions.

Auzerais stressed that while the website is set up to run discussion threads, there has been a conscious decision to not do this for now. "Discussion groups are the domain of the TIGs, which are very well designed for this. We have found a great many technical presentations that were recorded and available in podcast form. The concept of setting up portals where people could listen to presentations was more important to us than starting a chat room.

"However, it is very possible that these portals and the TIGs may be converging more toward each other in the future," Auzerais continued. "As a matter of fact, that convergence could be a solution to the current challenge of a shortage of dedicated people who are willing and able to move the industry forward. By converging and regrouping we will get the best of both worlds: a portal of information being used by those who want to chat. Because the portal is rich in information, then the chat could be simplified greatly. The answer in a chat room could simply be to direct the person to a section on the website to view a presentation or download a podcast. It is even possible to foresee a chat resulting in more documentation which could be sent back to the portal."

Annual Technology Meetings to Share Experiences and Best Practices. The final major goal of the technical section will be annual technology-exchange meetings, designed to expand both the technology offerings on the website and the section's membership. The first meeting will be hosted by Schlumberger in Houston later this year.

Auzerais envisions meetings like this as helping to raise both awareness and membership levels. "Going forward, we need to grow the membership, which will give the section greater exposure. More members will translate to more information and best practices being available on the site, which will cause more people to think of us as a definitive resource."

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SPE Membership Recruitment Remains Strong

During the 2008 Build the World of SPE contest, SPE members successfully recruited 479 new members. The Middle East posted the highest number of new members—120—for the second year in a row. The winners are listed below by regions.

Region	Winner	Section	Members Recruited
Africa	Adewale Dosunmu	Port Harcourt Nigeria	49
Central and Southeastern			
North America	Herbert Bell	Dallas	22
Gulf Coast			
North America	Tuan Ma	Gulf Coast	5
Middle East	Marwan Al-Zadjali	Oman	120
North Sea	Anderson Sooklal	Copenhagen	5
Northeastern			
North America	Hitesh Mohan	National Capital	5
Northern Asia Pacific			
	Zou Gang	Beijing China	97
Rocky Mountain			
North America	Helen Chang	Canadian	6
Russia and the Caspian	Mark Langston	Kazakhstan	19
South America and Caribbean			
	Ernesto Durán	Colombian	94
South, Central, and East Europe			
	Constantin Popa	Romanian	14
Southern Asia Pacific			
	Vincent Santostefano	Western Australian	43

In recruiting new members, the SPE Century Club recognizes members who have signed up 100 or more new members. Century Club members receive many benefits for their membership development achievements including life membership, which exempts them from annual dues. New members of the Century Club were inducted during the President's Luncheon at the 2008 SPE Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition in Denver. The members are Marwan Al-Zadjali, Oman Section; Chanchal Dass, India Section Secretary; Santanu Hati, Mumbai Section Secretary; N.K. Mitra, Mumbai Section and SPE India Council Chairperson; Phongsthorn Thavisin, Thailand Section; and Chengjin Xue, Southern China Section.



Hati

Hati, Chief Engineer (Production) for Oil & Natural Gas Corporation, recruited 105 new members by keeping his membership recruitment technique simple. He said he explained to prospective members SPE's benefits for personal and collective growth as well as lifelong learning. Many felt a strong need to be part of a like-minded team, Hati said. "People saw the increased activities of the Mumbai section such as monthly technical presentations by eminent personalities of the country and abroad, in particular the Distinguished Lecture series. The Applied Technology Workshops and conferences