

News

SEG Annual Meeting, Dallas, October 2016

Dallas, Texas, is known to me as the place where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963. I clearly remember this because it is also the day of the first satellite relay television broadcast across the Pacific. That broadcast was made in preparation for the Olympic Games in Tokyo the following year. On the morning of 23 November (in Japan), I got up early especially to watch the experiment on a 14-inch black-and-white cathode tube television. The news of the assassination was conveyed during that broadcast. The historical success of this experiment with a new communication technology was overshadowed by the historical news carried over the airwaves. Now Dallas can be reached by a direct Qantas flight from Australia.

In 2016, the SEG Annual Meeting was held in Dallas amidst the US Presidential election. On the flat screen colour LCD television in the hotel room, news, debates and comments, some serious and others joking, about the election were very frequently broadcast. In another hotel the SEG conference organisers were worried that the number of delegates and exhibitors at the Annual Meeting might not be as high as usual due to the downturn of the petroleum industry prompted by the low price of oil. The SEG conference usually attracts about 8000 delegates, and as many as 10000 delegates if held in Houston in a good industrial climate. Only three years ago the SEG conference in Houston was held in a bullish atmosphere, prompted by the increase of shale gas production and the expansion of Texas port facilities for gas export. At the opening ceremony the then Governor of Texas said: 'If you come to Texas with a truck license, we will find a job for you in a week'.

The Dallas conference was different. The SEG feared that the number of delegates might not reach 4000 and it would make loss. The SEG had already been suffering from the industry downturn and had laid off a quarter of their staff in the earlier part of 2016. We could see their cost saving efforts in the conference as well: the proceedings were all online - not even available on a USB drive; the conference bag was pretty modest with fewer sponsor logos; the end-of-conference party was not included in the registration fee; the frequency of shuttle buses between hotels and the convention centre was reduced;

regional luncheons were reduced from four to two by combining large areas – the Americas and Europe/FSU were combined, so were Asia/Pacific and Africa/Middle East. These combinations blurred regional focus.

At the end of the day the number of delegates was 5560, which was a relief to the Society as they made a surplus of around \$450000. The exhibition hall was filled with 251 exhibitors, but we noticed some regular exhibitors were missing. Delegates were talking about how long the low oil price would continue. Despite the downturn in the industry it was apparent that research activities are growing strongly in geophysics. About 1100 papers were presented in the three-day conference. There were 25 parallel sessions, nine of which were posters and e-posters. If you are a petroleum geophysicist, it would have been very hard to choose which session to go. Fortunately the convention centre was well laid out and it was easy to move from session to session. Nineteen workshops were held after the conference. SEG sold 675 tickets but 572 attended. Somehow 100 registrants did not show up! This may be a reflection of the downturn.

The ASEG has three seats in the SEG Council. These seats are filled by the President and two conference delegates. The role of the Council is to advise the SEG Board of Directors. This is usually done through amendments of By-Laws. Once the Council approves an



Incoming SEG President, Bill Abriel, addresses the SEG Council meeting.



Voting taking place in the SEG Council meeting.

amendment it will go to the Members for consideration via a referendum. The major issue in front of this year's Council meeting was a motion to remove the membership category of Associate Member. The argument for was that it would encourage young Members to participate in SEG activities including voting and Committee membership



Koya, Tineka and Mr and Mrs Irwan Djamaludin in the ASEG booth.

and that it would reduce administrative chores. The argument against was that it would jeopardise the prestige of the Active Membership class and expose the SEG to risk of dominance by groups of particular interest. The motion was defeated and this issue will not go to a Members' referendum.

One important task associated with representing the ASEG at a SEG conference is meeting with SEG Executives and Officers to discuss future cooperation. In past years the SEG has organised a separate meeting with representatives of each associated society, but the number of associated societies seems to have become too large and this year they decided to have one combined meeting. The meeting seemed rather crowded with nearly 100 people in the room, but the atmosphere was more relaxed than in an individual meeting. I managed to talk to the outgoing and incoming presidents, and the SEG officers for publication, conferences, exhibitions and education - all of them have dealings with ASEG. During a chat with the incoming SEG President, Bill Abriel, I found that he would be in Australia for three weeks in May and June as his wife teaches part-time at the University of Technology in Sydney. I asked if he would be interested in running an OzStep course during his stay. He was agreeable and the course will be held during his visit in late May to early June.

The next AEGC Conference (equivalent of ASEG's 26th Conference and Exhibition) was promoted at the ASEG booth and in the Exhibition Hall. The ASEG booth was located in a well exposed corner position in the Exhibition Hall. We usually have blow-up kangaroos at the booth, which attract eyes of passers-by. Unfortunately the kangaroos were punctured at the Adelaide conference in August and we could not get replacements. Many visitors came to look at the posters of geophysical maps of Australia. I saw some friends from Australia, many of whom I have not seen for some time.

At the 'wrap-up' meeting after the conference the SEG Officer reported that 215 out of the 251 exhibitors (86%) re-booked their booths for next conference. This sounded an optimistic note for the future. The next SEG Annual Meeting will be held in Houston from 14 to 19 October 2017.

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