



ISSMGE Bulletin

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International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering

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A Note from the Secretariat of ISSMGE

Professor Neil Taylor

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I have now been Secretary General for thirteen years, and it has been a great pleasure to support the Society and to work with a wide range of organisations, associations and individuals who are all enthusiastic about the international community of geotechnical engineers represented by ISSMGE. For the most part, the people involved are contributing to the ISSMGE on a voluntary basis and it is great to see such keenness and dedication focused on the enhancement of our profession. The Secretariat of ISSMGE is the administrative hub of the society and our aim has always been to satisfy the needs and requirements of its Members and to keep the society in good financial shape. We operate from a small office in London, and communicate with our members almost entirely by e-mail and internet. The ISSMGE budget is mainly administrative and supports me in my role as Secretary General and the Administrative Officer (currently Paloma Peers).



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In some respects, the ISSMGE is a slightly odd association. From the outset, the intention was to create a means by which representatives of National Committees could meet, exchange opinions and ideas and generally advance the knowledge, understanding and application of soil mechanics. This was stated clearly in reports from the 1948 International Conference in Rotterdam and the position has not changed significantly since. What were once called National Committees and are now commonly known as Geotechnical Societies of this or that country or group of countries and we refer to them as our Member Societies. These Member Societies are all important to the success and development of ISSMGE and represent its life blood.

Not only do Member Societies and their representatives have a vital role in the Council Meetings held every two years, but also they are essential in giving purpose to the ISSMGE: they nominate individuals who provide valuable input to our 30 Technical Committees, each engaged on important aspects of soil mechanics and geotechnical engineering; they organise a wide range of conferences and symposia on all aspects of geotechnical topics, including the major quadrennial Regional and International conferences which provide excellent opportunities for networking as well as advancing our profession; they provide the key officers comprising the Board of ISSMGE.

A Note from the Secretariat of ISSMGE (Continued)

Professor Neil Taylor

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The officers of Member Societies have a very privileged position as the key intermediaries between their individual members and ISSMGE. The ISSMGE operates as an unincorporated membership association and individuals are members of ISSMGE via their Member Society. Quite obviously, the small secretariat office here in London is never going to be able to communicate individually with the 19000 or so members that belong to ISSMGE and for this we rely on the cooperation and administration of our 85 active Member Societies. This system has worked reasonably well until now and I hope it continues to support our members.

The general trend in membership over the years has been one of growth. The Society gains one or two Member Societies per year with each representing about 30 or 40 individuals. We have a strong core of members from the developed parts of the world and we are continuously encouraging new and developing countries to join and participate in our activities.

As the ISSMGE continues to develop and grow, we see an increasing number of members from a practitioner base getting involved in the society, and also many companies interested in the activities of our Society. The net effect of this has been an expansion of the number of Corporate Associates supporting the ISSMGE and we are very grateful for their contributions both financially and in the advice and suggestions for future developments.

Technical Committees deserve a special mention. These comprise groups of enthusiastic specialists keen to advance the science and technology of specific areas of soil mechanics and geotechnical engineering. They organise important workshops and conferences, and contribute extensively to the technical output of the ISSMGE. Their significance cannot be understated.

In order to reach out effectively to our members, the ISSMGE Bulletin has evolved to include news from the ISSMGE Board, Member Societies, Technical Committees and conferences as well as technical articles on case histories. The bulletin is circulated to all Member Societies who in turn pass it on to the individual membership. The bulletin has grown significantly in size and for simplicity is best viewed by downloading from our website.

As in any organisation, the website becomes an important focus of information. The sharp-eyed among you will have noticed subtle changes to our website and there will be many more changes coming in the future. The website provider is now Geoengineer.org and the underlying architecture of the website has been changed to allow extensive use of databases. This should allow much simpler data entry and storage (such as, for example, named individuals involved in Member Societies and Technical Committees) and provide a structured archive of documents and articles related to the ISSMGE.

The achievements and advances in the geotechnical community are generally presented and discussed at conferences. The Society grew from the idea of organising such a meeting of key representatives of national groups and this has developed into our ongoing quadrennial International Conference that provides our members with a valuable opportunity to network and catch up on recent advances in geotechnical engineering.

A Note from the Secretariat of ISSMGE (Continued)

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Conferences have become hugely popular over the past decade or so and in general terms there is a geotechnical conference somewhere in the world every 2 weeks. There seems to be an insatiable desire to organise conferences and I am sure you regularly receive requests to submit abstracts to many different types of meetings. I should here put out a word of caution to those keen to organise such events. The present financial climate has resulted in a general reduction in conference attendees and I am aware of a number of organisers that have made a financial loss. To reduce the financial risk, sponsorship is becoming increasingly more important as is keeping fixed costs down to a minimum.

The range of conferences is very wide and the subject of any event may be specialist or general depending on the type of event. To my mind, the Young Geotechnical Engineers' Conferences are perhaps the most important for the future of the Society. These events get young geotechnical engineers involved in conferences and in meeting and networking with their peers and contemporaries from around world. Delegates at these often quite small events have often developed to become important individuals within Member Societies and Technical Committees and they represent the future of ISSMGE. It has been particularly pleasing to be able to support these events and to see them flourish.

The last decade or so has seen many changes both in geotechnical engineering and the way the ISSMGE functions. Serving as the Secretary General has been a most enjoyable experience and I hope I can continue to meet the expectations and demands of you, the members of the ISSMGE community.