



ISSMGE Bulletin

Volume 2, Issue 4
December 2008

International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering

www.issmge.org

A Message from the Vice President

By Dr. Dennis E. Becker

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It is my distinct honour and privilege to serve as Vice President (VP) North America for one year, with my term ending in 2009. Normally a Vice President's term is for four years. However, as Professor Hachich (VP South America) mentioned in his September 2008 "Message", Mr. John Seychuk, P.Eng. from Canada, who was selected VP North America in 2005, resigned in August 2008 due to health reasons. John Seychuk's enthusiasm, energy and "down to earth" (practical) style contributed significantly to the ISSMGE. It is quite apparent that I have "big shoes to fill" and that John is a "tough act to follow". Therefore, there was also some trepidation, along with honour and privilege, when I accepted the VP North America position. I'm also privileged that I have known John as a close professional colleague, mentor and friend for more than 30 years. This past and continued relationship with

John increases the honour of being selected to replace him. I acknowledge and thank the ISSMGE Board for the warm welcome and vote of confidence that they have extended to me.

The North American Region of ISSMGE consists of the three member (country) societies of Mexico, United States and Canada. It is a tradition that the VP North America be selected, upon agreement from the three countries, on a rotational basis. For the term 2005-2009, the Vice President is from Canada. For the term 2009-2013, the position will be filled by the selected representative from Mexico. As my first formal duty, I'm pleased to announce that Professor Miguel P. Romo has been appointed to serve as VP North America from 2009-2013. Based on his qualifications and track record, I am confident that Professor Romo's contribution as VP North America will be noteworthy. His term will start following the XVII ICSMGE to be held in Alexandria, Egypt in October 2009.

There are approximately 4,000 individual ISSMGE members from North America (Mexico (395), United States (2,924) and Canada (680)), which represents about 23 % of the total individual memberships in ISSMGE. Each of the North American member societies have strong and active national geotechnical societies that serve and provide specific benefits to their members. A description of the three national societies and their activities can be found on their respective websites (Mexican Society for Soil Mechanics (<http://www.smms.org.mx>), Geo-Institute (<http://content.geoinstitute.org>) and Canadian Geotechnical Society (<http://www.cgs.ca>)).

Similar to the Australasian Region of ISSMGE, the North America Region, despite its small number of member (voting) societies and, hence a small regional "voice", contributes significantly and substantially to the international geotechnical community. This is achieved through active participation of individual members who assist in organizing international workshops, symposia and conferences, attend international events, publish papers and books, and participate on the various Technical Committees (TC) and Joint Technical Committees of the ISSMGE and sister societies of ISRM and IAEG. The North America Region has membership in all of the Technical Committees, including the Chair and Core Group members in about a third of the TCs. A complete list of the TCs and their membership can be found on the ISSMGE website.

In addition to annual conferences, specialty workshops, symposia, seminars and lecture series are organized each year by the respective member societies. As recent examples, the Mexican Society for Soil Mechanics held their XXIV National Conference in Aguascalientes City, Mexico in late November 2008. A Mexican National Conference of Soil Mechanics is held every two years, and includes special events such as the Nabor Carrillo Lecture, Manual Gonzales Flores Award and General Assembly Meeting. In Canada, the Canadian Geotechnical Society (CGS) held their 61st annual conference in Edmonton, Alberta, in September 2008.

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A Message from the Vice President (continued)

By Dr. Dennis E. Becker

The Geo-Institute of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) represents a key ISSMGE member society from the United States. The Geo-Institute is very active and serves well its members by providing numerous activities each year on a variety of issues and topics that are timely and highly relevant to academia, research and industry. Each year, the Geo-Institute holds its Geo-Congress series of key annual conferences in different major cities across the United States. The Geo-Congress series of annual conferences are always well attended (of the order of 1,000 or more registrants) including a relatively high percentage of international delegates. Highlights of the conferences include the Terzaghi and Peck award lectures, as well as other prominent national and international keynote speakers. The most recent of these conferences was held in New Orleans in March 2008. The next conference will be in Orlando, Florida, which is a collaborative effort with many other national and international societies. The ISSMGE also plan to hold a Board Meeting in conjunction with the Orlando Conference.

Canadian Geotechnical Society (CGS) represents Canada in the ISSMGE. More than 100 lectures, short courses, symposia and conferences are provided by CGS to local sections across Canada each year. The Cross-Canada Lecture Tour series is also provided each year and presented in about 15 cities across Canada. The annual tour consists of a Spring and Fall Lecture, one given by a prominent Canadian speaker and one by a prominent international guest speaker. The Cross-Canada Lecture Tour was started in 1966. The CGS also recently published the 4th Edition of the Canadian Foundation Engineering Manual (CFEM 2006) that is recognized as the national authoritative reference on foundation engineering practice in Canada. CFEM is also referenced and used by other countries.

The CGS consists of seven Technical Divisions (Soil Mechanics and Foundations, Rock Mechanics, Geo-Environmental, Hydrogeology, Engineering Geology, Geosynthetics and Cold Region Geotechnology). Therefore, in addition to the ISSMGE, the CGS has ties to many other international learned societies. The Soil Mechanics and Foundations Division members and members who claim ISSMGE as their choice for an international society comprise individual ISSMGE members. In essence, the CGS provides a unifying society for all geo-professionals in Canada. In this regard, it extends the concept of Federation of International Geo-Engineering Societies (FIGS) that was initiated in 2007, but covering only the geo-engineering disciplines of Soil Mechanics and Foundations, Rock Mechanics and Engineering Geology (i.e. ISSMGE, ISRM and IAEG). The concept of FIGS should embrace all geo-professional international societies. The interested reader is referred to the ISSMGE website and the President's Message from Professor Pedro Seco e Pinto in the ISSMGE Bulletin (Volume 2, Issue 1, March 2008) for more information on FIGS.

The Geo-Institute and CGS, in particular, encourage and provide significant collaboration with other geotechnical learned societies, such as Deep Foundations Institute (DFI), International Association of Foundation Drilling (ADSC), American and International Geotechnical Society (NAGS and IGS), American, Canadian and International Rock Mechanics (ARMA, CARMA and ISRM), Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), International Society for Micropiles (ISM), Association of Engineering Geologists (AEG), and International Permafrost Association (IPA). This collaboration provides significant benefits to the respective societies as well as the international geotechnical community. In addition to technical exchange, CGS and the Geo-Institute invite each other to have guest representation at annual Board Meetings of the respective societies. This interaction provides a sharing of insight, vision and best practices to enhance the operations and effectiveness of each society.

One of the duties of VP North America and VP South America is to serve on the Advisory Committee for the Pan-American Conference that is held every four years and hosted by ISSMGE member societies, alternating between South America and North America. The Pan-American Conference is the only common conference organized and hosted by two ISSMGE Regions. The last Pan-American Conference was held in Venezuela in 2007. Plans are now underway for the 2011 Conference to be hosted by Canada in Toronto. A Local Organizing Committee has been established and a meeting is planned to be held in Toronto in March 2009. I look forward to continued involvement on the Advisory Committee and working with the Local Organizing Committee members for the 2011 Pan-American Conference.

The above sections have described briefly some of the activities of the North America Region. Please accept my apologies if it is perceived that I have given too much emphasis to Canada and the CGS, given my past involvement as immediate Past-President of CGS and being a CGS member for 35 years. Based on the above summary, it is anticipated that the participation from the North America Region in the XVII ICSMGE in Alexandria, Egypt in October 2009 will be strong and significant. To sum up in the words of John Seychuk: "Business is as usual in the North America Region; the three member societies keep moving full steam ahead".

I take the opportunity (and perhaps liberty) of concluding this article with some thoughts about the important role and contribution that industry can provide to learned societies. The important relationship and interaction between learned societies and professional development is also discussed. It is noted that John Seychuk and I are one of the few (current and past) ISSMGE Board members from industry. I say this in a positive sense. ISSMGE has made substantial progress over the last few years to engage practitioners and increase its relevance to industry. Harry Poulos, Vic Milligan, John Seychuk, Suzanne Lacasse, Max Ervin (who I know personally) and others from industry have played a key role in raising the contribution and importance of industry participation in ISSMGE in recent years. The recognition of and support for the input and contribution by industry, by past and current ISSMGE Presidents, is acknowledged. Examples of this include special plenary sessions at ICSMGE and the Task Force on Industrial Liaison and Professional Practice.

I believe strongly that industry can, and does, contribute significantly to the success and sustainability of learned societies. In addition, learned societies provide meaningful benefits and services to professionals, as part of their career and professional development. In my experience, a positive, complementary relationship exists with learned societies that is needed for enhancing career and professional development, and personal growth. However, in order to make this relationship work, one must participate. I have always been encouraged to participate and to contribute. I extend the same invitation to you.