

Editor's desk



This issue of *Preview* features an article written by Ben Witten and Jeffrey Shragge on 'Wave equation imaging and adjoint-state inversion for micro-seismic monitoring'. Ben recently completed his PhD thesis on 3D micro-seismic velocity analysis under the supervision of Professor Shragge. This work, which was supported by the ASEG Research Foundation, has been very well received and has already resulted in the publication of three papers in *Geophysics*. Ben and Jeffrey's article takes *Preview* readers right to the cutting edge of this subject.

This issue also features reflections on the first Australasian Exploration Geoscience Conference 2018 (AEGC 2018) by the Conference Organising Committee and also a number of our regular commentators. In addition, we honour the recipients of the ASEG awards that were made at the conference.

The decision by ASEG, PESA and AIG to create the AEGC by amalgamating the ASEG International Geophysical Conference and Exhibition, various PESA Basins Symposia and AIG meetings, is a reflection of the debate that has been going on for some years about the future of geoscience conferences nationally and

globally (cf <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/aug/30/expensive-academic-conferences-give-us-old-ideas-and-no-new-faces>).

It has been argued that, as the costs of mounting a conference have ballooned, conferences have to get bigger in order to survive. The conference 'industry' is partly responsible for these ballooning costs, and the offerings of this industry can be seductive – slick advertising, glittering venues, gourmet food and conference apps to personalise your conference experience (and the use of the data gleaned by those apps for future conference planning!). There is, however, a sting in the tail of many of these offerings. If a conference app is to be effective, for example, a high speed high capacity internet service is required, entailing more cost and limiting suitable venues, thereby driving up registration fees and, inevitably, resulting in further calls to broaden the conference appeal in order to increase the number of registrations etc.

Is bigger better? Apart from supporting the conference industry (a laudable objective but not necessarily the first priority of many ASEG Members) are big multi-disciplinary conferences effective at promoting cross-fertilisation between related disciplines (or sub-disciplines)?

I have found that this question keeps coming up amongst my friends and colleagues. We have all been to many (perhaps far too many) big multi-disciplinary conferences. The European Geosciences Union conference (EGU), for example, regularly attracts over 14000 participants and can have over 50 parallel scientific sessions. Unfortunately, the number of parallel sessions and the geographic spread of those sessions over a large venue means that most participants are forced to narrow their focus on sessions within their area of

expertise, and they do not stray into related sessions – however exciting and interesting they might sound.

Occasionally I have strayed and found myself listening to a fascinating talk by a speaker who is alone in a huge theatre with me, the Chair, the AV aide and maybe a couple of the other scheduled speakers for that session. Hardly worth that speaker's time and effort in getting to the conference.

On the other hand, we have all found that the most exciting conferences in terms of fostering interactions between disciplines and/or sub disciplines and challenging the thinking of everyone involved (students and hardened professionals alike) are small conferences run on shoestring budgets in regional towns that may only be able to offer the equivalent of an RSL hall and catering by the CWA – Kalgoorlie for example (although the School of Mines does have a lovely conference venue) or Broken Hill. A single session forces all participants to sit through talks that they may have overlooked at a bigger conference, and the small town venue means that there are only a small number of places (pubs) in which conference participants can socialise – meaning that there is no excuse not to follow up on those burning questions!

The European Union has recognised the real value of these smaller scientific gatherings through its support of the COST Program (<http://www.cost.eu/> – see also the Editor's Desk in *Preview* 185), as has the American Geophysical Union through its support of the AGU Chapman Conferences (<https://chapman.agu.org/>).

Something for the Federal Executive to consider as it plans for the future of the ASEG.

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