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by *Cindy Yeilding*
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The May General Meeting is back to the regular dinner format with standard set-up and standard prices (\$25/\$30).

Is the Workstation “Killing” Geology?

What a question! Of course, the resounding answer to this question is “NO.” Access to digital data, visualization tools and interpretation software provides the geoscientist with the ability to visualize, display and capture interpretations faster and more robustly than ever before. We can optimize and enhance display parameters, store and scroll through multiple datasets, transfer large volumes of data in seconds and “share” interpretations across sites in ways we could only dream of a decade ago.

But you’re still reading this overview, so perhaps we have touched a sensitive element here. With the plethora of tools and views available for geoscientists, might we sometimes lose track of some of the basics? A few questions for us to explore...

- Today’s mapping packages can create aesthetically pleasing, yet occasionally inaccurate, maps more quickly and than ever before—how do we test accuracy before we drill a “dumb” well?
- Are all geologic views best displayed on a 20-inch monitor? Might there be situations where the geology does not lend itself readily to only a workstation view?
- Has PowerPoint become the interpretation tool of choice—might we sometimes spend more time displaying than we do thinking/interpreting?
- Are there flaws in the philosophies such as “seismic to simulator”? Until we can “image” reservoir characteristics like grain size, pore shape and connectivity, fluid type and properties and bed length and shape, we must always remember that seismic does not reflect (no pun intended) all the characteristics of a reservoir and its producibility.
- Are we able to make robust stratigraphic interpretations in most

workstation environments? All conventional software packages allow for structural interpretation, but stratigraphic interpretation can be quite tricky and require “fooling” the mapping software, or sometimes resorting to colored pencils and Mylar to capture interpretations. We spend quite a bit of time mapping horizons, but it is much more difficult to capture observations and interpretations of strata between these horizons.

So, what can we do to assure that we are honoring our data appropriately and accurately reflecting data and uncertainty?

Reminding ourselves of a few simple practices can make a huge difference in underpinning the highest quality integration and interpretations.

- Know your data quality: Constantly ask yourself how good is the data you are working with? In a world where “sidebars” and “headers” are often de-coupled from the digital data, it is vital to understand the acquisition and processing of all seismic data and understand the quality and condition of all well (log, biostratigraphic, pressure) data. Making confidence maps of interpretations (overlays) and maps of data quality can be extremely enlightening.
- Don’t be afraid of paper, pencils. A wall papered with regional seismic lines can create an invigorating work environment. Posting values may make a map messy but provide more confidence in interpretations and lead you to alternatives.
- Ask for ideas, ask for help. Learn from the experience around you. Explore the analogies; capture the experiences of your colleagues. Ask for peer assistance and challenge.
- Develop multiple models: It is critical that colleagues and stakeholders understand the

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realistic range of possibilities; the challenge is to explain the possibilities without creating confusion and instilling a lack of confidence.

- **Good geology:** Most importantly, always return to first principles of geoscience and challenge how well the interpretations fit. Keep training up to date, and keep some of those classic texts nearby. Don't overlook the training needs for new employees and for experienced geos as well. An occasional trip to the outcrop will keep geologists humble, invigorated and open-minded to new ideas as well.

Digital data and software/hardware available today are more powerful and provocative than ever before. By combining the best-quality data (or understanding of the data quality and its limitations) and the best knowledge, we can do better geoscience than ever. ■

Biographical Sketch

CINDY YEILDING earned her MSc in 1984 from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill after receiving a BS in geology from SMU. She has worked as an exploration, production, appraisal and well site operations geoscientist and is currently the Global Geoscience Technology Manager for BP. She has developed and led short courses and field seminars, and in 2002–2003 she served as an AAPG Distinguished Lecturer. She has also chaired numerous AAPG sessions, presented over 20 AAPG/SPE/GCSSEPM talks and participated in Hedberg conferences. Her primary research has been in salt sediment interactions and her recent focus has been in exploration of deepwater clastic deposystems, with development, access and testing of new plays.





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