

Developing Middle East Petroleum Geoscience

Dr. Moujahed Al-Husseini is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Middle East Petroleum Geosciences, GeoArabia, and for many years was involved with the organisation of the important GEO oil industry conference, held every two years in Bahrain. We met up with him to hear his views on the value of this meeting to the development of the Middle East oil industry.

You have been heavily involved with the GEO conference organisation over the years. What place do you see for conferences like this in the modern hydrocarbon industry?

The world oil industry has become more geographically specialised, so regional conferences and exhibitions serve an increasingly important purpose. In the Middle East most countries now have an event every year or two, each bringing together different national and international decision-makers, professionals and academics. These events provide a great place to meet people and to learn about the latest developments in the region.

How important is GEO 2008 to the Middle East oil industry?

Very important. The Middle East oil industry is dominated by its national oil companies and GEO's location in Bahrain is very convenient. Bahrain's hospitality and excellent facilities make the event very pleasant to attend. Bahrain is the home of Bapco headquarters and a short drive across the causeway for Saudi Aramco's employees, who contribute some 20% of the program and delegates. With strong participation by most of the other national and international oil and service companies, surveys, academics and consultancies, it is undoubtedly one of the best places to learn about developments in the Middle East petroleum geosciences.

You were instrumental in founding GeoArabia in 1996. Why did you start the magazine and can you tell us how you see it progressing in the future?

For the first GEO 1994 Conference my company, Gulf PetroLink, edited and published 78 papers in the highly referenced conference proceedings. Based on this success, the journal GeoArabia was launched at GEO '96 and since then it has become internationally recognised as the leading Middle East petroleum geoscience journal.

The future of the journal largely depends on wider participation by authors and editors, from both industry and academia. Many local geoscientists have important stories to tell but do not have enough experience in scientific writing in English, and I think that this is a major obstacle to scientific advances in the Gulf region.

You published a paper on Hubbert's Peak a few years ago. What is your current view on the subject?

Peak Oil is a controversial subject. Unfortunately there is insufficient technical data about oil resources in the public domain to pinpoint a particular peak-oil-year or to conclude no-peak-in-sight. The raging Peak Oil debate fails to consider the price of oil, let alone other important and unpredictable issues like global warming, environmental pollution, wars, revolutions and hurricanes. OPEC countries have a need to save their resources for future generations, but are expected to meet the rapidly growing demand for oil from countries like China and India. We need to put all these factors into objective debate based on hard data.

Can you briefly give us an idea of how you see the industry developing in the future, particularly in the Middle East?

Most analysts have concluded that high oil prices are here to stay. The international industry will therefore have the incentive to invest in complex projects that were not on the drawing board a few years ago, including ultra-deep-water oil fields, oil sands, heavy oils, coal-to-oil, oil shales and so forth. In the Middle East we are making huge investments in more aggressive exploration, developing non-associated gas fields, and in enhanced recovery in maturing giant fields.

Finally, what is your advice to young geoscientists from the Middle East?

Geology, geophysics and reservoir engineering are rapidly evolving sciences with a vast array of techniques available. Young



Photo: Jane Whaley

After obtaining a PhD in Earth Sciences from Brown University, USA, Moujahed Al-Husseini worked for Saudi Aramco, where he was Exploration Manager from 1989 to 1992. In 1993 he founded Gulf PetroLink, a consultancy aimed at transferring technology to the Middle East petroleum industry. In 1996, Gulf PetroLink launched the Journal of Middle East Petroleum Geosciences, GeoArabia, with Dr. Al-Husseini as Editor-in-Chief. He represented the GEO Conference Secretariat in Bahrain from 1999-2004.

geoscientists should strive to understand many aspects of these interrelated disciplines, so they understand which tool to use to solve which subsurface challenge. My advice is to take as many courses and gain as much experience as possible while they are young.

Jane Whaley
Associate Editor