

Some parting remarks by John Dunicliff, Editor

Introduction

For this 93rd and last episode of GIN I decided to write about a few of my pet subjects, mostly to do with communication among us. But first, John Gadsby, Publisher of Geotechnical News, asked me whether I'd be willing to identify 'best' GIN articles among the 160 or so that are available on www.geotechnicalnews.com/instrumentation_news.php.

'Best' GIN Articles

I was initially uncomfortable about this, because I don't want to imply that any author was 'second best'. However, based on my 'Golden Rule Number 2' for articles in GIN (I'll identify Number 1 later):

The goal of articles in GIN is to provide information that will be useful to readers in their engineering practices. This is a different goal from "I want to share with you what I did". The latter goal is not acceptable.

and feedback from readers, I zeroed in on these four:

- **The Use of the Fully-grouted Method for Piezometer Installation, Parts 1 and 2** by Ivan Contreras, Aaron Grosser and Richard Ver Strate of Barr Engineering in Minneapolis, June 2008. These authors have been leaders in the campaign to convince the rest of us that the fully-grouted method provides better quality, lower cost, as well as easier and faster installation than the "traditional" method of sand, bentonite chips/pellets/balls and grout.

- **Update of the Fully-grouted Method for Piezometer Installation** by the same authors as the above article, June 2012.
- **Remote monitoring of deformation. An overview of the seven methods described in previous GINs** by Paolo Mazzanti of NHAZCA in Rome, Italy, December 2012. I'd been very impressed by the number of papers about remote methods for monitoring deformation at the 2011 International Symposium on Field Measurements in GeoMechanics (FMGM) in Berlin. Because I knew almost nothing about several of these, with their multiple acronyms, I decided to find knowledgeable people and ask each to write a brief article for GIN. These seven articles were in GIN in March and June 2012. Paolo Mazzanti (the organizer of our annual monitoring courses in Italy) agreed to write this concluding article, with a comparative analysis of the various techniques.
- **Eight Common Sense Rules for Successful Monitoring** by Martin Beth of Sixence Soldata, in Paris, France, June 2016. Those of you who know me will be aware of my focus on 'human factors' as opposed to 'technical factors'. This article follows that focus. When I told Martin Beth how useful I thought this was, he replied, "But everyone knows these rules". Not true!

Suggestions for Content of Professional Lectures at Courses

Having directed many Continuing Education Courses (that's a North American term; elsewhere they're usually called Continuing Professional

Development Courses) about geotechnical and structural monitoring, I've learned a few lessons about content of lectures during these courses.

1. The basic basic aspect is to be clear in your own mind about your objective, which seems to me to be "To provide clear guidelines for my audience on how to improve their professional practices".
2. And then the follow-up basic question. "Will my planned presentation keep my focus on those 'clear guidelines' so that my audience will understand and remember them?"
3. Inherent in this question is "Will I be attempting too much?" i.e. "Am I planning to present so much information that the 'clear guidelines' will be obscured?"
4. I suggest that you think of your primary theme as 'Main Street'. During your presentation define Main Street and stay on Main Street! Turning left or right will detract from your primary theme.
5. This is my Golden Rule Number 1 for articles in GIN - a quotation by Joseph Pulitzer, which in my view applies both to the written word and to the spoken word at courses:

Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so that they will remember it and, above all, accurately so that they will be guided by its light.

Wonderful!

I have a story about when this quotation came in very handy. The US

National Science Foundation has a practice of assembling teams of individuals to review various technical activities. The teams are usually made up of three federal employees, three from academia and three from private practice. I was on one of those teams assigned to review plans for long-term deep disposal of high level nuclear waste. We sat through two days (or was it three? It felt like a week!) of presentations by scientists, with PowerPoint slides with bullet points, flow charts and other gobbledegook. We understood only some of the technical stuff and found ourselves getting more and more aggravated by their inability to communicate with us. "How do you think that the folks out there are going to allow you to do this potentially dangerous thing unless you improve your communication skills?" We wrote a technical review, as best we could, and included our concerns about communication by quoting Joseph Pulitzer!

Suggestions for Content of Other Professional Lectures

Meaning conferences, symposia, local professional society meetings et al. It seems to me that the above suggestions 3, 4 and 5 apply to all professional lectures.

Suggestions for Preparation of PowerPoint Slides

At the top of this I wrote "I decided to write about a few of my pet subjects, mostly to do with communication among us". When watching (enduring!) PowerPoint slides I've often wanted to shout out "Your slides are terrible!" Here are my suggestions:

1. Use light colours on a dark background. Dark on light causes glare. The worst is non-bold black on a white background, and this seems to be highly popular, hence my stifled shouting! Consider using yellow, white and/or very light blue on a black background.
2. Use a clear font. Verdana bold is good. Large enough to be seen clearly at the back of the room.

I like to use Verdana 28 bold for titles and Verdana 20 bold for text on the slides.

3. This follows up on the above "Will I be attempting too much?" I suggest that you limit your number of slides to about one per minute. If you have substantially more than this, you may well get into time trouble or you may speak too quickly. The 'bottom line' is: are you comfortable with presenting your slides within your allotted time without speaking quickly?
4. Avoid a lot of words on a slide. If you have too many words this tends to work in opposition to slides acting as visual aids. It is better just to have a few words on a slide to remind you what to say, and to speak a brief number of words to elaborate.
5. Simple title of six words or less
6. This is related to #4: Avoid the trap of having words on the screen, hoping that your audience will read those words, while at the same time you're speaking different words – this tends to happen when the slides are too wordy.
7. If you have multiple graphics on a slide, consider whether explaining each might cause time problems.
8. No busy slides. Pictures and clear concise schematics rather than detailed drawings and graphs.
9. Keep the flow of slides simple. I like to use "Appear" for any animations, and to select "None" on the Transitions tab.
10. Unless yours is publicized as a commercial presentation, avoid any commercialization, except perhaps for your company logo on the first slide.

Suggestion for Microphone at Professional Meetings

Try to arrange for a 'Lavalier-type' microphone at the podium. This is the type that has a small microphone attached to the front of clothing or hung from a ribbon around the neck,

together with a transmitter that goes in the pocket. This is far preferable to a conventional microphone because if one of those is used speakers tend to position their mouths too near or too far, with distortion or low volume respectively.

Suggestions for Discussions During Professional Meetings

These excellent suggestions have been written for this article by John Burland, Emeritus Professor and Senior Research Investigator at Imperial College London. He calls them 'The Grand Inquisitor Method'.

"I've used The Grand Inquisitor Method a couple of times in the past with some success. I dreamed it up because I got tired of attending conferences where members of expert panels came with bland pre-prepared responses to pre-notified questions. I felt that, provided the panel members were told only of the general area of discussion, the responses were much more likely to be lively and animated if they had no notice of the questions. This often leads on to greater audience participation.

"The way I've run them in the past has been for the chairperson of the session to have a few prepared (unseen) questions. The session could begin with one of the questions just to get things going, the panellists answering first. The audience is then invited to ask questions and respond to what the panellists have said. Depending on how the discussion goes, the chairperson might then move on to another prepared (but unseen) question and hopefully the panel responses will open up another set of audience questions and comments. The aim of all this is to get the panellists to say what they really think rather than carefully honed and rather bland responses, and in this way provoke the audience to engage more. It can be like riding a tiger but in my experience it can lead to some interesting and animated discussions that continue in the bar after the session!"

And I Can't Resist Including This

This year is the 100th anniversary of the Amritsar Massacre, in which the British army in India opened fire on unarmed Indian civilians, killing hundreds. A recent documentary on our TV interviewed the grandchildren of the British general who gave the order to fire. They were in denial, claiming that the army acted in self-defence: clearly this is untrue. The interviewer responded with what I think is a classic quote, one that we could use in future when a professional lecturer uses outrageous logic.

"You have conveniently not sought objectivity".

Another wonderful quote!

Closure

So this closes the door on GIN, after 93 episodes in 25 years. Some regret, some relief! I will miss having an outlet for my blatherings, but I will NOT miss all the editing! Most important of all, I will miss the interactions with John Gadsby, Publisher of Geotechnical News and Lynn Pugh, Managing Editor. Thank you to John for allowing me access to your space. Thank you to Lynn for your outstanding cooperation, which has regularly 'gone beyond the call of duty'. It's been a motivating partnership.

Post Script

As explained elsewhere in this issue of Geotechnical News, this is the last issue. Early next year Canadian Geo-

technical Society will initiate a new magazine, *Canadian Geotechnique*, and this will have a section *Instrumentation and Monitoring*, edited by Pierre Chouquet of RST Instruments. Following these parting remarks of mine, Pierre shares with us his plans for future articles. Thank you, Pierre, for keeping the tradition alive.

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A word from the next editor

Pierre Choquet

I am truly happy and honoured to become the new editor of the column on Instrumentation and Monitoring, starting in the first issue of the new *Canadian Geotechnique* magazine in early 2020.

I have read John's episodes of GIN for as long as I can remember and always with such great interest. I have always thought that these quarterly updates, articles and discussions on geotechnical instrumentation were very pertinent and very original in the variety of topics that were covered. I know that I have always looked forward to the next magazine to find out what John had dug out for us in our wide world of instrumentation.

I wish to thank John a lot for all that he has done for the geotechnical instrumentation community and geotechnical community at large as well,

and I will elaborate on this in a future column.

I hope to continue the tradition of great insights in this field of instrumentation and I have suggested to the editors of *Canadian Geotechnique* to name the column "Instrumentation and Monitoring" in order to reflect not only the means but also the objectives of our geotechnical instrumentation programs.

For my first column, I am thinking of offering the opportunity to GIN readers to send tributes for John's efforts over the years to write so many episodes and how it has been instrumental (yes!) to foster so much improvement and progression in our community and how the state of the practice has improved so much under his guidance.

Can you email me your contributions, especially the tributes, prior to January 15, 2020 (as my deadline for the first magazine issue will be January 18, 2020)? I will be very glad to publish them in the first edition of my column in early 2020.

I'm also very open to your suggestions on what you would find useful to include in future columns. Of course, if you have already an article to send to me, please do so. I have not yet prepared my own publishing guidelines, but they should be very similar to John's guidelines. Please email if you need them.

On a legacy theme, I would like to assure you that all GIN episodes will remain available online. The exact form has not yet been finalized as we are still working on the details with the editor of *Canadian Geotechnique*

(Karma-Link), but you can be assured that this wealth of information will not be lost. I understand also that Karma-Link will have a great online companion to the new magazine.

I really look forward to the opportunity of doing my own part to help

spread technical knowledge on geotechnical instrumentation and monitoring, and I truly believe that it will be even more an integral part of proper designs and the observational method in geotechnical engineering in future years.

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Tribute to John Dunicliff by Barr Engineering in Minneapolis

Aaron Grosser, Ivan Contreras, Joel Swenson

The geotechnical engineering staff at Barr Engineering Co. are eternally grateful to John Dunicliff for the mentoring and enthusiastic support he has provided through training short courses and long distance correspondence. John's excitement and critical eye with respect to the research and publication of the Fully Grouted Method for Piezometer Installations was inspiring for us to continue to build upon work we learned of from him and Erik Mikkelsen at one of the early Geotechnical Instrumentation for Field Measurements short courses. His critical eye for detail, gentle goading and reminders for publications, and email responses at all hours with his typical British humor were well received by all of us. Many thanks to John and the effort he has expended on teaching the geotechnical community the important steps of instrumentation and monitoring.



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