
An Overview of American Association of Petroleum Geologists at its Centennial with a focus on the Gulf Coast Section

Douglas Carlson

Louisiana Geological Survey, Louisiana State University,
3079 Energy, Coastal and Environment Bldg., Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

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ABSTRACT

American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) grew from a society of 123 members who lived mainly in Oklahoma and Texas to a premier geological society having members in all 50 states and over 100 of foreign countries. AAPG has reflected the condition of the energy industry as it grew from being located largely in the United States to a presence throughout dozens of countries. AAPG throughout the past century has not only grown in size and spread out through world but also has become more diverse as expressed in the classification of members from an initial two classes in 1920 (active and associate) to seven classes in the 1980s (active, junior, associate, emeritus, student, life, and honorary). The last two are very select and are a recognition of a life time of achievement for great geologists who have contributed greatly to the field of geology and AAPG. The latter two categories were added by the early 1930s, the junior category by 1950, the student class by 1966, and the emeritus by 1970.

AAPG has also experienced the ups-and-downs of the energy industry as reflected in its membership rolls and in its finances. Membership growth occurred between 1917 and 1931, 1939 to 1961, 1974 to 1985, and 2008 to 2013. The last two of these periods match closely with eras of rapid increase in the real price of petroleum (1973 to 1985 and 2007 to 2011). The only major decline in membership is between 1986 and 1995 during an era when the real price of petroleum collapsed, a decrease of 70% between 1985 and 1998. The Gulf Coast Section has the largest membership of all sections due to Houston being by far home to the largest number of AAPG members among major cities in the oil patch.

AAPG has always promoted the field of geology and disseminating knowledge through annual meetings, regional meetings, and various publications. The first annual meeting was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1917 and the *AAPG Bulletin* was first published in 1917. As AAPG membership expanded beyond Oklahoma and Texas, sectional meetings were started (Pacific in 1925, Mid-Continent, Gulf Coast, Rocky Mountain, and Southwest in the 1940s and 1950s, and the Eastern in 1972). In the 1990s, meetings were offered outside the United States and Canada as a service to a growing portion of membership outside the United States and Canada.