

2012 WWAC Symposium Planning Update

By Graham Nasby, 2012 WWAC Symposium Chair

It is both an honor and a pleasure to be named as the General Symposium Chair for the 2012 ISA Water/Wastewater and Automatic Controls Symposium. In the past several weeks I have been hard at work putting together a symposium committee and beginning the year-long process of planning that precedes the actual symposium.

One of my first tasks after being asked to head up the 2012 symposium was to reflect on why we have a WWAC symposium. In other words, I had to ask myself the question of whether our symposium is still relevant for today's water/wastewater automation professional. For me the answer is an unequivocal "yes." From my experiences at the 2011 WWAC symposium in St. Louis, I recommend that anyone involved with automation, instrumentation, and/or SCADA in our sector should seriously consider attending.

The 2011 WWAC symposium was my first time attending an ISA technical symposium, and I had the good fortune to present a paper on SCADA Standardization with a friend of mine from the City of Guelph. The value of this event was surprising. The feeling of being in a room with peers who truly understood and appreciated the challenge of doing automation in the water/wastewater field was something I had never experienced before. This is something you can't get at the general-themed AWWA and WEF events. *The WWAC symposium is our symposium because it caters to our specialized needs of automation, instrumentation and SCADA, and our specialized needs alone.* This is something special that we need to cherish, build and support.

The challenge for me as general symposium chair is to not only build upon past successes, but to also introduce the symposium to our up-and-coming automation professionals and to continue to grow/develop the symposium with new technologies. Let me brief you on some of the initiatives that this year's symposium committee is currently working on.

This year is going to be one of changes. In 2011, we tried something new by co-locating the symposium in St. Louis, Missouri with another ISA event in June. We are not going to do that again. The St. Louis location was too far away from our traditional attendees in the South-Eastern USA and it also conflicted with a major AWWA conference that was held earlier that month. So for 2012, we be moving back to our traditional timeslot of August, and we are hoping to locate it in the Orlando, FL area. We will be a making an announcement regarding the 2012 WWAC Symposium dates/location shortly.

Part of the 2012 symposium date/location announcement will also be the launch of a new WWAC Symposium website, thanks to our new symposium marketing chair Jon DiPietro. The new website will be the spring board for information about the conference, calls for papers, keynote/plenary speakers, and other events associated with the symposium.

Additional website features will include interviews with key symposium partners, videos of past symposium presentations, and sample papers/presentations in order to make it easier for employers to see the value of our symposium. The website will also serve as a gateway for symposium registration and for interacting with other symposium attendees.

One area I will be working on will be to improve the overall experience for our vendor exhibitors and sponsors. I personally really like vendors. They are the folks that provide me with the tools (hardware, software, and services) that I use to solve automation challenges at my day-job. The WWAC symposium needs to have a multi-faceted role of providing high quality technical talks and training, as well as information about new products and services – and this is where we need to rely on our vendors. At the end of the day our vendors are looking for the same thing as all of us end users – to effectively harness technology to get the job done. I am looking forward to working with our vendor partners to do exactly that.

Another area I aim to focus more on is promoting the PDHs (professional development hours) and CEUs (credit equivalent units) that the WWAC symposium can offer attendee. Many of us in our plants have continuing education and professional development requirements. Attending the WWAC Symposium is a natural fit to satisfy these requirements in a cost-effective way. In the marketing materials for the 2012 symposium I will be making sure we emphasize the PDHs and CEUs that attendees can get from attending. This will be yet another reason for employers to see value in sending their employees to the symposium.

Lastly, the symposium committee and I are currently looking into a theme for this year's WWAC symposium. Three possible areas we are looking at are Using SCADA for Energy Management, Designing High Performance HMIs, and Effective Alarming Techniques. If you have any other theme ideas, or any suggestions for the symposium, you are always welcome to contact me and share your ideas.

An announcement regarding the date/location of the 2012 WWAC symposium will be made shortly, along with the first round call for papers. This year's symposium format will include the traditional presentations and papers, as well as a new category for posters. We have exciting plans and we are looking forward to announcing them in the near future.

I am looking forward to the upcoming 2012 WWAC Symposium. I hope to see you there!

Yours very truly,

Graham Nasby

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