

Title: *The Evolution and Role of the YMPG within ISSMGE*

Prepared by: Ashe Cooper [Beca PTY Limited, New Zealand Geotechnical Society] and Judy Eid [Tony Gee and Partners LLP, YMPG Core Team Member, British Geotechnical Association]

1. Introduction

The brainchild of 2009-2013 ISSMGE President, Professor Jean-Louis Briaud, the Young Members Presidential Group (YMPG) was born out of necessity to foster the next generation of Geotechnical Engineers for the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ISSMGE). Created to represent the voices and ideas of young geotechnical professionals, the YMPG has transformed from a nascent group into a thriving community over the years

The group is for Geotechnical Engineers who are 35 years of age and under. People can be at any career stage including studying at university and college as well. The group's inception was in 2009 and comprised regional representatives mirroring that of the ISSMGE board regions. The pie-in-the-sky idea was that this committee would be the voice of the young members globally and mimic the ISSMGE in growing, showcasing and developing Geotechnical Engineers. This group would follow a similar succession planning to that of the ISSMGE board with the chair sitting for four years as a term with eligibility to sit for one further term with core team members sitting for two years as a term with eligibility to sit for a further two terms following this. Within the group itself, the succession planning for chairing the committee is a passing of the batten to someone who has served on the core committee group. This is a key measure to further implement.

The mission of the YMPG is to engage the next generation of geotechnical engineers in the ISSMGE. This is accomplished through a wide network of liaisons and corresponding members around the world. The YMPG will act as the nexus of this network by:

1. Enabling the sharing of knowledge and ideas
2. Connecting groups with each other, and
3. Facilitating communication between younger members and ISSMGE leadership.



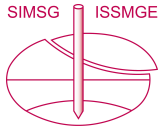
Figure 1 - YMPG Liaison coverage across the regions as at May 2025

This paper explores the development of the YMPG over time, paints a picture of the pivotal role of the YMPG over time and how continuation of connectivity between young members globally is essential to the progression of Geotechnical Engineering.

2. Inception and Purpose

The YMPG was established to address a clear need: the connectivity of young geotechnical engineers with the ISSMGE. The formation of YMPG marked a pivotal moment, giving young geotechnical engineers a voice in member society's activities at a global level. The most compelling aspect of the YMPG's history is its success in bridging the generational divide within ISSMGE. By creating opportunities for collaboration between established experts and emerging professionals, the YMPG has fostered a culture of continuous learning and innovation. By-products of this connectivity are mentorships, opportunities globally for young engineers and life long friendships.

This initiative has allowed young professionals to gain valuable insights and guidance from seasoned engineers while contributing fresh ideas and perspectives. The YMPG's emphasis on collaboration across generations has not only strengthened the geotechnical community. It is also to ensure knowledge and experience of older generations are passed down effectively.



3. Timeline and Evolution of YMPG

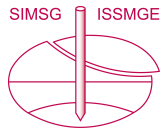
The ISSMGE Young Members Presidential Group (YMPG) has a relatively recent but impactful history, reflecting the ISSMGE's commitment to nurturing future leaders in geotechnical engineering. Here's a breakdown of its origins and key developments:

Establishment and Early Years (2009-2013) as the Student and Young Members Presidential Group (SYMPG)

- **Founded in 2009:** The SYMPG was officially established as a Board Level Committee (BLC) within the ISSMGE during the presidency of **Professor Jean-Louis Briaud (2009-2013)**. His vision was to actively involve students and younger members (typically under 35 years old) in the society and gather their input and ideas from around the globe.
- **Initial Structure:** The group initially consisted of 18 members (3 from each of the 6 ISSMGE regions), nominated by their respective regional Vice Presidents and approved by the President.
- **First Mandate and Key Ideas:** The very first task assigned to the newly formed SYMPG was to brainstorm ways to make the ISSMGE more attractive to young professionals and encourage their involvement. This led to four core ideas:
 - Continue to develop the ISSMGE Website.
 - Improve communication between the ISSMGE and S/YM.
 - Increase YM involvement in Technical Committees.
 - Develop and increase S/YM Membership in ISSMGE.
- **Subgroup Formation:** Four Task Forces were created within the SYMPG, each tasked with developing implementation strategies.

Continued Development and Evolution (2013-Present):

- **Renewal under President Roger Frank:** The YMPG's importance was recognized, and its mandate was renewed during the presidency of **Professor Roger Frank (2013-2017)**.
- **Growth and development of Corresponding Members:** The YMPG actively worked to expand its reach by establishing a "Corresponding Members" (CMs) list around March 2014. This allowed a broader base of young professionals to receive updates and learn about opportunities, leading to a significant and linear increase in CMs.
- **Focus on Key Activities:** Over the years, the YMPG solidified its role by focusing on a range of initiatives, including:
 - Promoting academic-industry connections.
 - Encouraging student participation and mentoring.
 - Organizing and supporting the International Young Geotechnical Engineers Conferences (iYGECs).
 - Promoting the "Bright Spark Lecture Award" to recognize young talent.



- Contributing to the ISSMGE Bulletin's "Young Members' Arena."
- Actively participating in the ISSMGE's overall strategic discussions and committees.
- **Transition to a Core Team Structure:** More recently, the YMPG has transitioned from its initial regional representation model to a smaller, more agile **Core Team**. This Core Team consists of globally diverse members (still under 35) who do not represent specific regions, ensuring a broader and more integrated international perspective. Corresponding Members continue to be a crucial part of the YMPG's network.

Year 2013-2015 YMPG Team

The YMPG Membership Task Force (MTF), active from 2013 to 2015, focused on enhancing engagement and creating development opportunities for young geotechnical engineers. Task forces have individual chairs responsible for progress on each of the assigned areas to the groups. Task force chairs also made up part of other task force teams providing cross-pollination in thinking and contribution.

Membership Task Force	Communications and Marketing Task Force	Motivation Mechanisms Task Force	Website Task Force
Chair - Julian McGreevy	Chair - Marcos Montoro	Chair - Mehdi Omidvar	Chair - Lucy Wu
Sherif Adel Yahia Akl	Sherif Adel Yahia Akl	Sherif Adel Yahia Akl	Janaka Kumara
Aleksandra Chepurnova	Sherif Akl	Abdou Xaadir Gaye	Juan Ayala
Felix Jacobs	Juan Ayala	Janaka Kumara	Martin Barrientos
Jennifer Nicks	Martin Barrientos	Julian McGreevy	Marcos Montoro
	Abdou Xaadir Gaye	Lucy Wu	
	Janaka Kumara	Cassandra Rutherford	
	Mehdi Omidvar	Aleksandra Chepurnova	
	Jennifer Nicks	Ilhan Chang	

Table 1 - YMPG task forces for 2013-2015 term

Key achievements are the following:

- **Corresponding Members Networks:** Increase in corresponding Member (CM) network to 350 members by 2015.

- **Mentorship Program:** The MTF created a mentorship program consisting of a “First Contact List” of expert professionals across specialised fields. The aim of this program was to connect young engineers with mentors within the field of geotechnical engineering in an effort to help them achieve their professional and personal growth.
- **Interactive Map:** The MTF developed a membership map using Google Maps to understand the geographical and technical spread across the ISSMGE in general and the YMPG in particular. This map aimed at connecting peers and experts worldwide while offering young members an accessible and easy way to connect to other geotechnical engineering.
- **Young Member Arena:** The MTF focused on increasing the visibility and contribution of the young geotechnical engineer by introducing the Young Member Arena (YMArena) section within the ISSMGE Bulletin, spotlighting selected submissions from young members. These publication venues provided peer-reviewed exposure, increasing the young members’ involvement in the broader ISSMGE community.
- **Young Members Awards:** Another major initiative was revising and updating the structure and award criteria of the young member awards. As of 2013, there were two awards in ISSMGE pertaining to Young Members (YMs): the Outstanding Young Geotechnical Engineer Award, and the Young Member Award. The MTF communicated with the ISSMGE Awards Committee regarding these awards, and made suggestions to consolidate the awards into a single YM award, namely the ISSMGE Outstanding Young Geotechnical Engineer Award (OYGEA).

The team’s focus includes enhancing membership and engagement among younger members in the ISSMGE. The YMPG created four task forces (TFs) focused on Communications, Membership, Outreach, and technical support. Each TF drafted a Statement of Work focusing on specific objectives and deliverables.

- **Communication:** A YMPG LinkedIn Group was created. This page was created to serve as an online discussion forum and platform for announcements of activities and events in the geotechnical discipline.
- **Membership:** A new method for CMs to sign up. A form was developed by the Membership TF that allows CMs to include other various details besides just their e-mail address, including title, country, city, field of interest (aligned with the ISSMGE TCs), etc. This allows for (more easily populating the CM map that was developed in the last term as it’s not two separate sign-ups and to gain statistics on our CMs.
- **Outreach:** The YMPG updated the YMPG flyer in 2016-2017. The flyer serves as a brochure outlining opportunities for students and young members. The flyer is posted on the Young Members page of the ISSMGE website. The committee also helped in the review of the ISSMGE website and suggested ideas for improvement and other considerations.
- **Team alignment:** the YMPG configuration changed to become more focused. This encompassed a core team of six people spread across the ISSMGE regions. Task specific teams were set up to support the development and execution of initiatives.

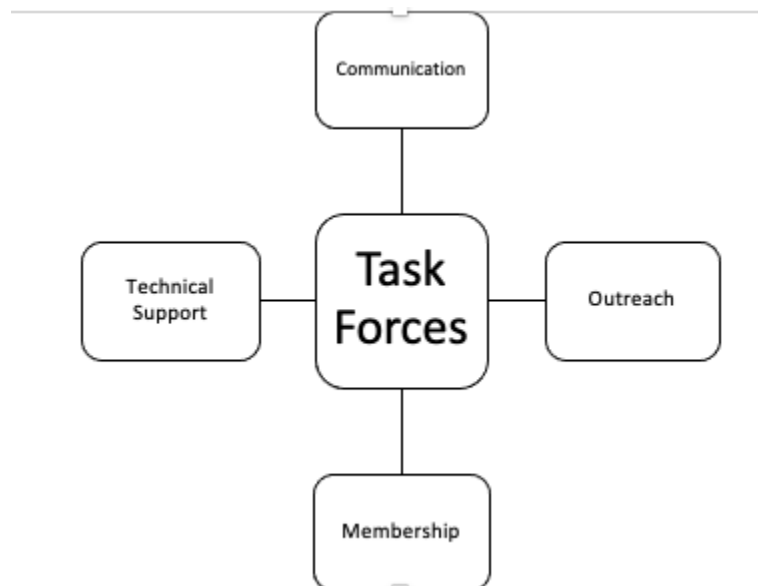


Figure 2 - task forces and their objectives

Year 2016-2020 YMPG Team:

In February 2016, the Young Member Presidential Group (YMPG) began its new term by establishing an Executive Leadership Team. The purpose of the executive leadership team was to instill ownership and accountability in its leaders. This also empowered and enabled leaders to build task specific teams. Regional representation was established for the group to enable those with the best “on the ground” knowledge of their countries and societies to implement activities to best suit their target audiences.

You will note the number of members as part of the core committee with a reshuffle back to regional focus. The larger numbers of the core committee continued throughout both of the following terms, numbering 19 and 20 people for 2016-2017 and 2018-2019, respectively.

Africa Region	Asia Region	Australasia Region	European Region	North America Region	South America Region
Daniel Avutia	Roxana Amini	Riley Gerbrant	Aleksandra Chepurnova	Jennifer Nicks (Chair)	Juan Ayala (Secretary)
Ogbodo Munachiso	Kazunori Fujisawa	Louis King	Will Howlett	Julian T.G. McGreevy	Marcelo Llano Serna
Dalia Ragab	Lucy Wu (Vice-Chair)	Alison McQuillan	Diana Marques	Robert Godinez Alejandro Martinez	Mario Terceros

Table 2 - YMPG team for 2016-2017

Identity

The YMPG group did not have a logo to represent the group. The name was known among the geotechnical engineering community but there was no centralised identity for everyone. A logo competition was launched in 2017 and the below logo became the identity of the YMPG. The logo has geotechnical engineering built into it.



Figure 3 - First YMPG logo providing YMPG with an identity

Africa Region	Asia Region	Australasia Region	European Region	North America Region	South America Region
Daniel Avutia	Ceres Chung (Secretary)	Truong Hoang Minh	Fabio Tradigo	Ezra Yoanes Setiasabda (Tjung)	Mario Terceros
Jean-Timothy Potgieter (Vice Chair)	Fei (Tiffany) Wang	David Buxton	Hong Doan	Tugce Baser	Mauro Giuliano Sottile
Billang Nyogog Serge Aurelien	Aswin Lim	Daniel King	Iulia-Consuel Prodan	Azucena Román	Vitor Pereira Faro
Anas Attaelmanan		Ashe Cooper		Lucy Wu (Chair)	

Table 3 - YMPG team for 2017-2019

In-person Meeting

The YMPG team itself had very little in-person connection as a team. This connectivity to build team cohesion was further pursued and executed marking the first in-person meeting of the committee in 2019 in Singapore in conjunction with the ISSMGE board meeting hosted by the Geotechnical Society of Singapore. The value from connecting the team members was instantly recognised and in-person meetings were marked down as something to continue for the benefit of the YMPG core committee. The intention was to get the core committee together on a biannual basis to connect in new team members to ensure a cohesive leadership group representing YGP globally.

Year 2020-2021 YMPG Team:

During the 2020-2021 term, the YMPG committee refined its mission to better engage young geotechnical engineers in the ISSMGE by fostering knowledge-sharing, intergroup connections, and communication with ISSMGE leadership. With COVID-19 lockdown and travel restriction, the importance of the corresponding members and liaison network came to the centre of attention.

2020-2021 YMPG



Figure 4 - YMPG team for 2020-2021 term

Africa Region	Asia Region	Australasia Region	European Region	North America Region	South America Region
Jean-Timothy Potgieter (Vice Chair)	Ezra Yoanes Setiasabda (Tjung)	Ashe Cooper	Iulia-Consuel Prodan Marco Terzari	Lucy Wu (Chair)	Mario Terceros

Table 4 - YMPG team for 2020-2021

Key achievements:

- Liaison Network:** The YMPG created a liaison program to connect member societies directly with the YMPG. This initiative expanded significantly with Liaisons from 33 Member Societies by year-end. After creating the liaison program, the liaison network was used to develop and organise the Overdesign Survey and a series of virtual Geotechnical Design Challenges. In these virtual events, regional teams were also encouraged to participate. Countries in Africa and Latin America, organised challenges in their local languages, facilitating broader participation.
- Awards:** YMPG also promoted the Bright Spark Lecture Award to spotlight young engineers as keynote speakers, surpassing its nomination goals with 45 applications from 22 societies.
- Future of Geotechnics Event:** a landmark event spanning all timezones, all topics and over several days, we explored the future of geotechnics and what our industry might

look like in 2050. Presentations from both young members and more experienced engineers were given to a fully online audience. The event was very well received and it cemented the importance of YGP connecting globally to share and learn.

- **Identity:** In 2021, the YMPG logo was refreshed to further cement the identity of the group and to better symbolise the groups global nature. This logo remains in circulation and use today for the group.



Figure 5 - updated YMPG logo to better reflect the global nature of the group (as of November 2026)

Once travel restrictions had somewhat eased in different parts of the world, 7iYGEC took place in Sydney in Australia, March 2022. Due to travel restrictions, there was no planned in-person meeting for the group in this period; however, members of the core committee did attend the conference to represent the group.

Year 2022-2023 YMPG Team:

The Young Members' Presidential Group (YMPG) report for May 2022 - April 2023 highlights their initiatives aimed at empowering young professionals within the ISSMGE.

2022+ YMPG

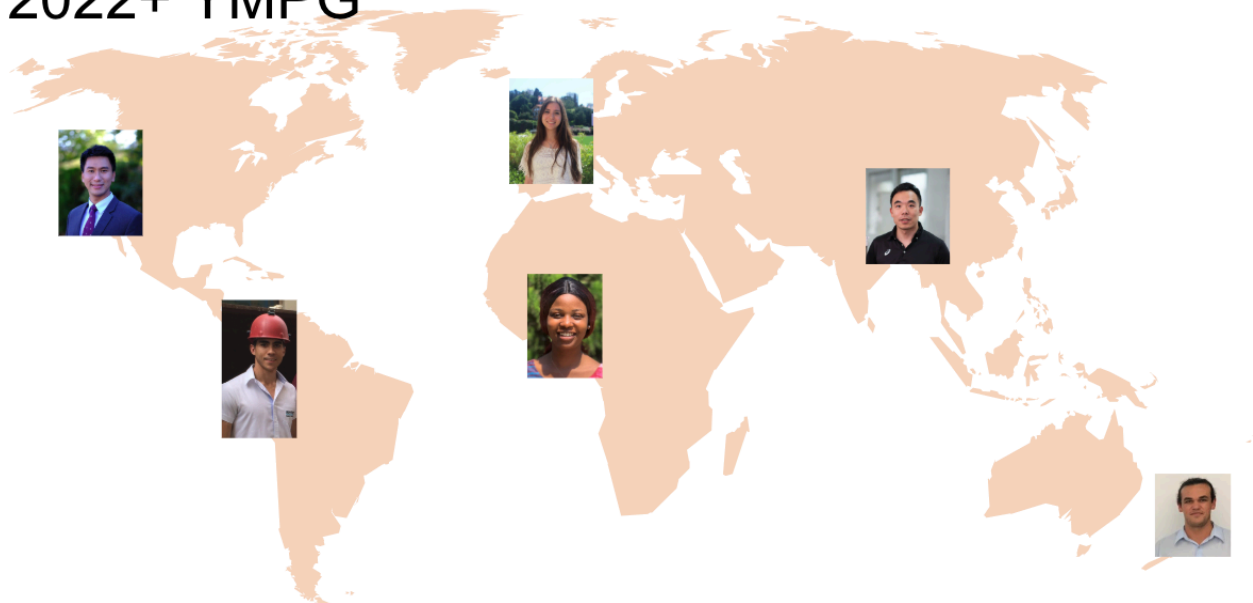


Figure 6 - core team members for the 2022-2023 term

Africa Region	Asia Region	Australasia Region	European Region	North America Region	South America Region
Bridget Lokoe	Mingliang Zhou	Ashe Cooper (Chair)	Judy Eid	Ezra Yoanes Setiasabda (Tjung)	Mario Terceros

Table 5 - YMPG team for 2022-2023

The committee members are each accountable for specific work streams within the YMPG. Utilising Liaisons of the YMPG helps free up core committee members to work on multiple tasks and provides international experience for Liaisons and their teams within Member Societies. Major achievements are highlighted below:

- Awards:** The Bright Spark Lecture (BSL) award remains one of the most impactful initiatives for the YMPG and ISSMGE for young people. It is an opportunity for young engineers to showcase themselves at conferences in an international light. Key activity on the BSL over the last two years of the YMPG is: (1) Brand recognition - specific logo for the award, (2) 37 BSL awardees between May 2022 - May 2024, (3) 11 member societies represented by awardees (USA, UK, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, China, Italy, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Singapore, India) (4) 15 conferences where BSL have been awarded.



Figure 7 - Bright Spark Lecture logo to give the award an identity and brand recognition

- Liaison Network:** The Liaison network, an essential YMPG communication tool with 51 active members, connects young members to ISSMGE societies and fosters collaboration. Additionally, the YMPG has supported the ISSMGE Interactive Technical Talks (IITT) series, engaging young members in knowledge-sharing discussions.

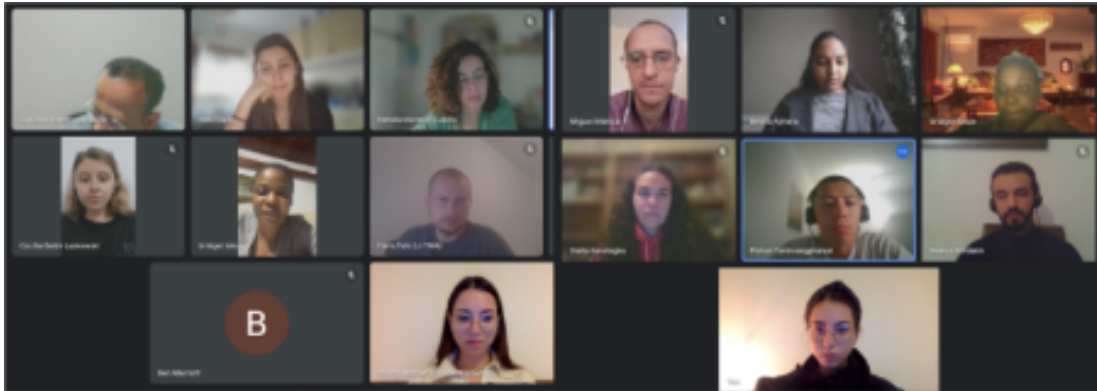
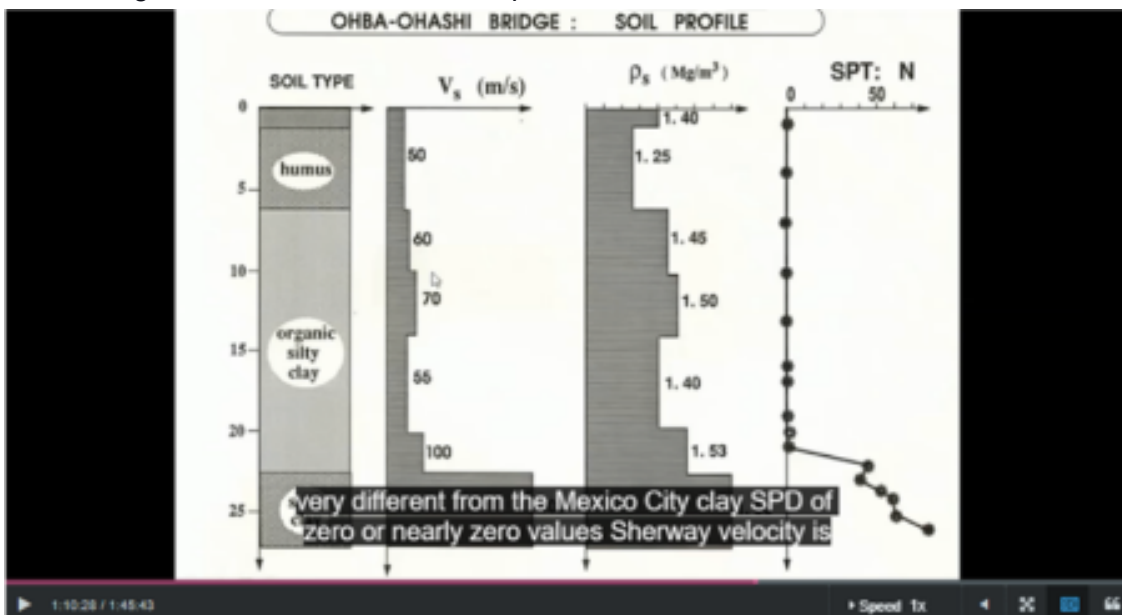


Figure 8 - screen grab during one of the liaison online meetings (2024)

- **Outreach:** The YMPG engage with YGP globally through four key social media platforms (1) Google Groups, (2) LinkedIn, and (3) GeoWorld.
- **Promotional Videos:** the YMPG have utilised outside expertise to create a promotional video as a tool to be used at conferences, talks and the like. This is intended to be a supporting piece to the team enabling YGP to get a snapshot about what the YMPG is, does and why it is important for YGP globally to engage.
- **Closed Captioning on Videos for ISSMGE Website:** The content library on the ISSMGE website is very impressive to say the least. With the ISSMGE spanning 90 countries, having the content in 90 languages is not practical (well not yet anyway). Helping break the language barrier is something the YMPG have started tackling this term. The team has been working to put closed captions onto the learning videos on the ISSMGE website. This has been done utilising a variety of technology tools while still maintaining the videos on the ISSMGE platform rather than YouTube or similar.



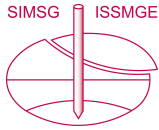


Figure 9 - snippet of the closed captioning from the videos on the ISSMGE website

- **ISSMGE Interactive Technical Talks:** Since its inception in 2022, the ISSMGE Interactive Technical Talks (IITT) has served as an opportunity for young members within the global geotechnical community to get involved in technical discussions and showcases with industry experts. Encouragement from the YMPG core committee via social network channels has been pushed out to YGP globally to get engagement as well as participation from YGP in the IITT.
Up to May 2024, the YMPG has showcased eleven young members in the IITT from nine different Member Societies around the globe. The YMPG is looking forward to continuing to support and grow this ISSMGE initiative.
- **In-person Meeting:** the second in-person meeting was scheduled and took place in Shanghai in May 2024. The in-person meeting was (similar to 2019) in conjunction with an ISSMGE board meeting, hosted by the Chinese Institution of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (CISMGE).

Year 2024-2026 YMPG Team:

The most recent term of the YMPG has seen the team continue to build on core initiatives and getting the basics right. Creating space and airtime for our YGP globally to collaborate, contribute and connect remains paramount. Core initiatives below continue to be front and centre of the YMPG mission:

- Bright Spark Lectures
- Liaison network development
 - As of May 2025, there are 60 out of the 90 ISSMGE member societies who have young member liaison representation.
- Outreach

The core team for the term 2024-2026 have not had the opportunity to meet in person to date.

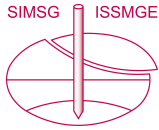
2024+ YMPG



Figure 10 - core team members for the 2024-2026 term

Africa Region	Asia Region	Australasia Region	European Region	North America Region	South America Region
Bridget Lokoe	Tong Zhu	Ashe Cooper (Chair)	Judy Eid	Jhieh-Rou Huang	Max Gabriel Barbosa

Table 6 - YMPG team for 2022-2023



Changes in the Role of the YMPG Overtime:

With an ever globalising world and technology enabling connectivity depths to deepen, the role and value of the YMPG has changed significantly since its inception. Over the last five years, it has had incremental rather than step changes. This is largely due to technology platforms which enable connectivity between YGP globally. Even conferences being offered in hybrid in-person and online format is a testament to change which has occurred in this space. Technology has been our friend, not only for solving problems but also for making knowledge and sharing available for people in places which may have previously struggled to get this connection.

With the continuing rise in technology as well, keeping geotechnical engineers interested and engaged in their careers is an increasingly difficult task. Technology is catching up with industry generally and having a skillset in the technology space is highly attractive. How does one do this while having a skillset in geotechnical engineering as well? Competing interests. Maintaining the attractiveness of geotechnical engineering as a career for young people will become further into focus than it already is for the YMPG.

Within social media, the popularity of platforms is ever changing and the YMPG has changed with it. Core platforms for the group to connect with YGP globally are:

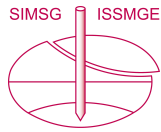
- Google groups for corresponding members
- LinkedIn for everyone
- Geoworld

Over time, the connectivity and reach through these platforms have changed. With multiple options of connectivity now available, it is difficult to measure the engagement people have with each of the platforms. Broad trends are as follows:

- Google groups was the inception, grew enormously in the 2010's and has flattened off in the 2020's
- The LinkedIn group was launched in 2016 grew 50% year on year through 2018-2021 and has since largely grown at approximately 10% each year following
- GeoWorld was launched in 2011 and has largely not been utilised to its full potential. In 2022, it was reinvigorated and saw greater than 50% year on year growth from 2022 to 2024.

It is anticipated that this will continue to be a changing landscape over time and something the YMPG will need to adopt to. Fast social media such as Tiktok, Instagram and Treads all hold a large share of the social media market at the writing of this paper.

Following on from above, transferring knowledge from the generation of geotechnical engineers who have niche older experiences, track record and knowledge from the forebearers of our industry is a hill which will only get steeper to climb. There is highly likely to be gaps appear in our industry from missed opportunities for knowledge transfer. YGP need to be engaged and interested in their careers for both personal growth and professional growth to get the most out of the current knowledge holders. This will help support the sharing of knowledge and reduce



the chances of gaps getting missed. Initiatives such as the IITT, having both older engineers and YGP involved demonstrates this transfer of knowledge on a common topic.

Thoughts on the role of the YMPG into the Future:

- The initial purpose of creating a voice for young members globally and connecting them with the ISSMGE will never change, only the way in which it does it
- Connectivity is going to be increasingly more difficult with competing online platforms for people's attention. Likewise with people's attention spans for consumption of content online.
- Continuing to build the liaison network is critical to maintaining connectivity. As outlined above, there are only just over half of the ISSMGE member societies with liaison representation. It sounds easy right - email the president/chair of societies with a request to nominate a representative. This has not been the case. Over the 2022-2026 period as a whole, increasing liaison representation has been a core goal. Many approaches have been tried but few have been successful:
 - Calls on social media for liaisons resulting in emails to the YMPG, then the YMPG connecting these people with society presidents and chairs to confirm if they are able to be the liaison for their respective societies
 - Emails to presidents and chairs of societies
 - Outreach at conferences and events
 - Shoulder tapping of people in our network to see who they know
- In-person events are likely to reduce but maintain high value due to the human to human engagement required when people meet in-person.
- The integrity and authenticity of information available online is likely to increase causing potential misinformation into the industry to increase. The common “googling” of a problem rather than asking experienced colleagues who have first hand experience is increasing for problem solving. In turn, is this creating more problems in our industry?
- Geotechnical engineering is for everyone - the YMPG will continue to support diversity in the industry across all fronts.
- Growing young members across every ISSMGE member society is a future aspiration of the ISSMGE and the YMPG.
- The long term vision for the YMPG is to be a trusted “home” for information and belonging for young geotechnical engineers globally.