

# UUVS: It's all About Networking

The Unmanned Underwater Vehicle Showcase (UUVS) 2009, took place in Southampton (UK) on 22 and 23 September 2009. The number of attendees was reasonable, the presentations were well attended and the exhibitors were able to have "a good chat"™ with delegates. As committee chairman Cliff Funnell put it: "It's all about networking."

Delegates of the conference (81) could enjoy two days of updates on AUV and ROV techniques, business opportunities, business cases and practical survey management. BP, for example, has chosen AUVs: not needing to be launched from a large vessel, they are a tool that can save them millions of pounds a year. John Westwood of Douglas Westwood predicted that the market, having experienced a decline last year, will be restored to its original growth. "Especially in the ROV market. We forget that these machines are to be replaced every five to seven years, if not completely new then at least in part." In addition, an overview of available trainings was given by the International Maritime Contractors Association.

On the 22nd, three presentations gave an insight into AUV pipeline surveying in Azerbaijan from different perspectives: BP as the oil company choosing AUVs for their operational benefits and attractive costs compared with vessel operations; NCS Survey from a practical, operational point of view; and Gavia, which is actually providing the AUVs and sensors. All three emphasised the flexibility of the AUV, illustrating this by a port survey for entry of a rig with one days' notice. The multi-beam mapping operation took place even when the regular vessel operations continued.

## Optional Courses

In the programme, two optional courses were reserved for AUVs (on 22 September) and ROVs (23 September). They were well attended and the ROV training in particular attracted several dedicated participants. The AUV course had a very practical and operational perspective, with an interesting introduction on operational risks of the machine. The ROV course took more of an introductory approach, where the delegates could enjoy learning about the history of the ROV and saw different types of ROV passing by, with their characteristics explained.

The delegates were invited to join the organisers on the evening of the 22nd for the Gala Dinner at the Dockgate 4 restaurant in Southampton, where the guests took the opportunity to network. After thanking the organisation for their work, chief executive of the Society for Underwater Technology Ian Gallett announced he would be stepping down after 14 years of office.

The exhibitors contributed by showing their knowledge and products, and took the time to explain to visitors of their stand how their products could help them improve their business. The Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology was represented at the show, giving visitors the opportunity to play with cleverly engineered toy ROVs, for which some delegates had suggestions to enhance them with improved motors, sonar and other equipment. At the same time, they were able to gain attention for their research - surveying of underwater landscapes throughout western Europe.