

3-D Seismic Interpretation

3-D seismic data have become the key tool used in the oil and gas industry to understand the subsurface. In addition to providing excellent structural images, the dense sampling of a 3-D survey can sometimes make it possible to map reservoir quality and the distribution of oil and gas. The aim of this book is to help geophysicists and geologists new to the technique to interpret 3-D data while avoiding common pitfalls.

Topics covered include basic structural interpretation and map-making; the use of 3-D visualisation methods; interpretation of seismic amplitudes, including their relation to rock and fluid properties; and the generation and use of AVO and acoustic impedance datasets. Also included is the increasingly important field of time-lapse seismic mapping, which allows the interpreter to trace the movement of fluids within the reservoir during production. The discussion of the acquisition and processing of 3-D seismic data is intended to promote an understanding of important data quality issues. Extensive mathematics has been avoided, but enough detail is included on the effects of changing rock and fluid properties to allow readers to make their own calculations. This new paperback edition also includes an extra appendix presenting material that brings the book fully up to date – including novel acquisition design, pore pressure prediction from seismic velocity, elastic impedance inversion, and time lapse seismics.

3-D Seismic Interpretation is an indispensable guide for geoscientists learning to use 3-D seismic data, particularly graduate students of geophysics and petroleum geology, and new entrants into the oil and gas industry.

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Seismic data	2
1.2 Migration of seismic data	3
1.3 Data density	7
1.4 Uses of seismic data	9
1.5 Road map	13
1.6 Conventions: seismic display, units	14
1.7 Unit conversions	15
References	16
2 3-D seismic data acquisition and processing	17
2.1 Marine 3-D data acquisition	18
2.2 Marine shear wave acquisition	26
2.3 3-D land acquisition	30
2.4 Other types of seismic survey	34
2.5 3-D data processing	35
2.5.1 Reformat, designation, resampling and gain adjustment	35
2.5.2 Deconvolution	39
2.5.3 Removing multiples	39
2.5.4 Binning	43
2.5.5 Stacking and migration	46
2.5.6 Post-migration processing	53
References	55

vi	Contents	
3	Structural interpretation	57
3.1	Well ties	57
3.1.1	The synthetic seismogram	58
3.1.2	The VSP	66
3.2	Workstation interpretation	71
3.2.1	Display capabilities	72
3.2.2	Manual horizon picking	77
3.2.3	Autotrackers	81
3.2.4	Attributes	84
3.2.5	Viewing data in 3-D	88
3.3	Depth conversion	89
3.3.1	Principles of vertical-stretch methods	89
3.3.2	Use of well velocity information	94
3.3.3	Use of seismic velocities	96
3.3.4	Lateral shifts	98
	References	100
4	Geological interpretation	102
4.1	Seismic resolution	102
4.2	Seismic stratigraphy	106
4.3	Interpretation tools	109
4.4	Some examples	113
4.5	Faults	117
	References	118
5	Interpreting seismic amplitudes	120
5.1	Basic rock properties	120
5.2	Offset reflectivity	121
5.3	Interpreting amplitudes	125
5.4	AVO analysis	130
5.5	Rock physics for seismic modelling	139
5.5.1	Fluid effects	140

vii	Contents	
5.5.1.1	Calculating fluid parameters	143
5.5.1.2	Calculating matrix parameters	144
5.5.1.3	Invasion effects	145
5.5.2	P-wave velocity and porosity	146
5.5.3	P-wave velocity and clay content	146
5.5.4	P-wave velocity and density	146
5.5.5	Shear velocity	148
5.5.6	Dry rock moduli	150
5.6	Assessing significance	151
	References	153
6	Inversion	155
6.1	Principles	155
6.2	Procedures	157
6.2.1	SAIL logs	157
6.2.2	Extending the bandwidth	159
6.3	Benefits of inversion	164
6.3.1	Inferring reservoir quality	164
6.3.2	Stochastic inversion	166
6.4	AVO effects	170
	References	171
7	3-D seismic data visualisation	172
	Reference	179
8	Time-lapse seismic	180
8.1	Rock physics	183
8.2	Seismic measurements	184
8.3	Seismic repeatability	186
8.4	Seismic processing	187
8.5	Examples	188
	References	191

viii	Contents	
	Appendix 1 Workstation issues	193
A1.1	Hardware	193
A1.2	Software	194
A1.3	Data management	194
	Reference	195
	Appendix 2 Glossary	196
	Appendix 3 Recent developments	209
A3.1	Seismic acquisition: multi-azimuth and wide azimuth	209
A3.2	Pore pressure prediction	212
A3.3	Elastic impedance inversion	216
A3.4	Time-lapse seismic	219
	References	220
	<i>Index</i>	222

Preface

Applied geophysics uses a large number of methods to investigate the subsurface. Because of its ability to produce images down to depths of thousands of metres with a resolution of tens of metres, the seismic method has become by far the most commonly used geophysical method in the oil and gas industry. In the past 20 years, the quality of seismic information has been greatly improved by the use of 3-D seismic methods. However, extracting useful information from seismic images remains the interpreter's craft skill, in which elements of geological and geophysical knowledge are combined in varying proportions. This book is intended for people beginning to develop that skill, either as part of a University course or at the beginning of a career in the oil and gas industry. It assumes that the reader has some general background knowledge of the seismic method. There are several excellent texts that cover the whole range of theory and practice (for example, R. E. Sheriff & L. P. Geldart, *Exploration Seismology* (2nd edn, 1995), Cambridge University Press). Our intention is not to replace these volumes, but rather to concentrate on the techniques of interpretation that are specific to 3-D seismic, or are greatly improved in usefulness by applying them to 3-D datasets (such as amplitude studies, AVO analysis, inversion and time-lapse seismic). However, there is enough explanation of the underlying principles to make the book fairly self-contained. In particular, the acquisition and processing of 3-D seismic data are described in some detail. This is partly because the interpreter needs to understand the limitations of his or her data, and whether misleading artefacts are likely to exist in the images that reach his or her desk. Also, he or she will sometimes need to interact with specialists in acquisition and processing, so should understand something of their specialised language. Bearing in mind the diversity of academic background among potential readers, we have avoided any extensive use of mathematics.

The range of topics that might be included is large, and we have tried to concentrate on those that are of most practical application in the authors' experience. There have been rapid advances in interpretation techniques over the past decade. In part this reflects the availability of more computer power at the desktop, so that first-pass interpretations can now often be made in days rather than months. At the same time, data quality has been improving, so that a wealth of detailed subsurface information can be extracted if the right methods are used. We have tried to portray the current state of the art in both

these respects. The combination of the interpreter’s ingenuity with even more computer power will surely lead to further developments in the future.

We have included a number of examples of seismic displays to illustrate the various interpretation techniques, and to give the reader a feeling for the typical quality of modern seismic data. We are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce proprietary or copyright material: BP Exploration for figs. 2.2, 2.8, 2.16, 2.23–2.24, 2.27, 2.30, 2.34–2.37, 8.3 and 8.7–8.8; ChevronTexaco and Statoil for fig. 5.12; Shell UK Exploration and Production for figs. 3.1, 3.3, 3.5–3.6, 3.8–3.13, 3.17–3.18, 3.20–3.24, 4.4, 4.6, 5.6, 6.2–6.8 and 6.10; the Wytch Farm partnership (BP Exploration Operating Co Ltd, Premier Oil plc, Kerr McGee Resources (UK) Ltd, ONEPM Ltd and Talisman North Sea Ltd) for figs. 7.1–7.6; the Geological Society of London and Dr R. Demyttenaere for fig. 1.6(b); the McGraw-Hill Companies for fig. 5.3; the European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers (EAGE) and Dr J. Hendrickson for fig. 5.16; the EAGE and Dr P. Hatchell for figs. 8.4–8.5; the EAGE and Dr J. Stammeijer for fig. 8.6; the Society of Exploration Geophysicists (SEG) for fig. 4.1, the SEG and Dr S. M. Greenlee for fig. 1.6(a), the SEG and Professor G. H. F. Gardner for fig. 5.1, the SEG and Dr H. Zeng for fig. 4.7, the SEG and Dr W. Wescott for fig. 4.8, and the SEG and Dr L. J. Wood for fig. 4.9. Figures 3.1, 3.3 and 3.24 were created using Landmark Graphics software, fig. 4.6 using Stratimagic software (Paradigm Geophysical), fig. 5.15(b) using Hampson–Russell software and fig. 6.3 using Jason Geosystems software.

The text is intended as an aid in developing understanding of the techniques of 3-D interpretation. We have not been able to include all the possible limitations on applicability and accuracy of the methods described. Care is needed in applying them in the real world. If in doubt, the advice of an experienced geophysicist or geologist should always be sought.