A couple of issues ago I discussed how the Houston Section is using teleconferencing to include off-site students in its meetings. Now I’d like to focus on how four other STLE groups have increased the value of their section meetings and education events by holding them at sites other than the traditional restaurant or hotel venue.

By holding their monthly meetings in such novel locales as national labs, corporate-member facilities and state universities, these groups are utilizing expanded meeting technologies, attracting new members, grabbing the interest of students and strengthening the ties between the national organization and its corporate members. Let’s take a look at how these groups are using this approach.

DETROIT SECTION
This section holds its monthly meetings at the Engineering Society of Detroit’s (ESD) spacious new facility in Southfield, Mich. ESD’s Charlie Bender with NSK Corp. in Ann Arbor, Mich., says ESD has 77 affiliate member societies and organizations, several hundred corporate members and several thousand individual members throughout the Great Lakes region. ESD unites engineers, scientists, architects and those in related technical fields in a common goal—the advancement and promotion of the profession.

Each meeting room is equipped with a podium, various sized tables, a ceiling-mounted AV projector, a projection screen and microphone. The ESD staff is professional, knowledgeable and helpful. The cost is reasonable, and affiliate members of the ESD (STLE being one) receive a discounted rate.

CHICAGO SECTION
This group conducts some of its education events at Argonne National Laboratory in Argonne, Ill., a Chicago suburb. “The setup is first class,” says section chair Ted McClure with TribSys LLC in Valparaiso, Ind. “The meeting rooms have built-in screens and projectors. There’s also a guest house on-site that provides low-cost lodging.”

The restaurant site where the section holds its monthly meetings is close to Argonne, making it easy for program attendees to also attend. The cost is minimal, with only a small AV setup fee and no additional fee for the room. In addition, the building where the classes are held is housed within the Advanced Photon Source building.

“We have had several opportunities to tour the APS over the years as part of the program,” adds Ted, “and Argonne has provided many interesting speakers for the program.”

CANTON SECTION
For the past five years this section has held its meetings at the University Center at Kent State Stark in North Canton, Ohio, at a modern facility that includes VCR, DVD, computer, printer, LCD projector and screen capabilities.

“The price is all-inclusive and is charged on a per-person basis with no contractual minimum,” says Peter Drechsler with The Timken Co. in Canton. “We’ve had as many as 70 and as few as 19. The non-profit rate is $56 per person.”

Peter adds that the center offers videoconferencing with satellite uplink and downlink availability.

ATLANTA SECTION
This section holds its two-day Lube School at Atlanta’s Wildwood Complex in a building where Chevron has its Southeast Division offices. Chevron allows the section to hold the meeting at no cost for the room and setup. Lunch is out of the section budget at a cafe’ located on the first floor. The section also holds 4–5 meetings a year at the Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) conference center in Marietta, Ga. Section chair Art Vogel notes that SPSU and Georgia Tech students often are candidates for section scholarships.

If your section holds meetings in “novel” venues, please send me an e-mail at the address below. This is an idea STLE would like to build on.

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Novel section meetings tell a different story
Some STLE local groups are reaping big rewards by holding meetings at sites other than restaurants.

National labs, corporate-member facilities and state universities are venues that offer unique benefits for STLE local group meetings.