

Leon Thomsen

Resume

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Education:

Ph.D. (1969) Columbia University (geophysics)

B.S. (1964) California Institute of Technology (geophysics)

Experience:

Delta Geophysics: (2008-) Chief Scientist

University of Houston: (2008-) Research Professor

Lawrence Berkley National Laboratory: (2008-) Visiting Scientist

SEG Advanced Modeling Corporation: (2015- 2018) Board of Directors
(2017-2018) Chair

KMS Technologies (2008-2010) Executive Advisor

Amoco → BP :

(2001-2008) Senior Advisor, Exploration and Production Technology

(1999-2008) Principal Geophysicist, Upstream Technology, Houston

(1998-1998) Principal Geophysicist, Strategic Exploration, Houston

(1995-1998) Senior Geophysical Associate, Strategic Exploration, Houston

(1991-1995) Special Research Associate, Tulsa Research Center

(1986-1991) Research Associate, Tulsa Research Center

(1982-1986) Staff Research Scientist, Tulsa Research Center

(1980-1982) Senior Research Scientist, Tulsa Research Center

State University of New York, Binghamton

(1977-1980) Associate Professor of Geophysics (with academic tenure)

(1972-1977) Assistant Professor of Geophysics

Temporary appointments:

(1970-1972) Research Fellow, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena

(1969-1970) Chargé de Recherche, Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique,
Paris

Accomplishments

The challenge of an *industrial scientist* is to find and develop ideas that are useful to corporate strategy. During my industry career, I helped to lead 4 major paradigm-shifts in exploration geophysics. In chronological order:

Polar anisotropy. When I joined Amoco in 1980, seismic anisotropy was hardly recognized in exploration (despite the obvious anisotropy of all sedimentary rocks), due to its mathematical complexity. The appropriate approximation was found in Thomsen (1986a), which has become the most frequently cited paper in the history of **Geophysics**. The parameterization established there has become the universal basis for analysis of seismic anisotropy; a typical Google search of the term “Thomsen parameter” returns hundreds of thousands of hits. Now, 20+% of the presentations at SEG meetings involve seismic anisotropy.

As a late outgrowth of these ideas, I and a colleague found (Thomsen and Dellinger, 2003) the approximation needed to solve an exotic anisotropic problem first posed over 100 years ago. This discovery may turn out someday to be actually useful.

Azimuthal anisotropy. In 1980, most geophysicists understood the term “anisotropy”, to mean *polar* anisotropy, because of the layered structure of sedimentary rocks. But the presence of oriented fractures in the subsurface removes the azimuthal symmetry, and invalidates the assumption. Such fractured reservoirs may be detected from the surface using the seismic signatures of azimuthal anisotropy: P-wave AVOAz and S-wave splitting. We discovered these in early 1981, but kept them secret until we introduced the critical concepts to the industry in a now-famous “Amoco Anisotropy Session” at the SEG convention (*c.f.* Thomsen, 1986b). Now, these ideas have become implemented throughout the industry, especially since wide-azimuth marine acquisition has become feasible. Further, these ideas lie at the heart of current research on shale gas prospects, since the shales are seismically and hydraulically anisotropic, fractured or not.

In 1981, I was the Amoco inventor of using isotropic (and polar anisotropic) P-AVO to detect hydrocarbons directly. This work has underlain countless Amoco/BP discoveries since then. But, this was research inspired by rumors that Mobil had discovered this phenomenon, so I don't count this among my own inventions.

Converted-Wave imaging. In 1995, I left Amoco's Research center to join its worldwide Exploration department, to better *implement* these ideas. However, I and a few colleagues quickly fell upon new ideas, utilizing converted waves (from the newly-invented 4C Ocean Bottom Seismometers) in novel ways to image, for the first time, Amoco's Valhall reservoir through the cloud of gas in the overburden which had long precluded conventional P-wave imaging. Anisotropy turned out to be crucially important to this advance; and all previous converted-wave analysis had been isotropic. The ideas that I developed in Thomsen (1999) (C-waves, γ_{eff} , diodic velocity, vector fidelity, vector reciprocity) are now the universal basis for analysis of converted-wave seismics.

Electromagnetic exploration. In late 2003, I began to think about using seismic-style impulses of EM energy to directly detect hydrocarbons at depth. In late 2004, it became public knowledge that ExxonMobil and Statoil had built up large staffs of specialists and had spent large sums to successfully use *continuous*-source EM for the same purpose. BP assembled a small “skunk works” EM team, and acquired the world's first successful

field-scale impulsive-source marine EM (“ISEM”) survey in late 2006 (c.f. Thomsen, *et al*, 2007). Since it is clearly better to detect the weak subsurface signal while the source is *off*, it is my prediction that this mode of EM exploration will replace the continuous-source methods, as this technology matures.

The challenge of a *post-industrial scientist* is to continue to make useful contributions, despite the restrictions of ongoing obligations to former employers, and the absence of corporate financial support. I retired from BP in April 30, 2008, and founded **Delta Geophysics**, a consultancy helping clients worldwide to create and apply advanced geophysics (cf. <http://www.deltageophysics.net/>). I also joined the **University of Houston** as Research Professor. In these roles, I have continued to challenge conventional thinking:

Rock Physics: For many years, exploration geophysicists have understood the effects of variable fluid content on seismic velocities through the work of Biot (1941) and Gassmann (1951). Their formulae are applied many times daily, for example to understand the effects of time-lapse changes in seismic data. However, the experimental support for the theory is very thin, and Thomsen (2010, 2018) shows that the theory is not quite correct either, even within its own assumptions. Recently, this discrepancy was traced to a logical error in the work of Gassmann (Thomsen, 2020ab). As a result, every fluid-substitution calculation done in the last 69 years should be re-thought. A new generation of rock physics experimentation will be required to understand the expected values of the new parameter introduced in this refinement.

Anisotropic AVO: Since 1980, AVO has been an important technology for risk reduction in the exploration for hydrocarbons. It is almost universally conducted using the assumption of isotropy. But: does it make sense to analyze the Amplitude Variation with Angle while ignoring the Velocity Variation with Angle? Thomsen (1993) concluded: probably not, since the (neglected) anisotropic term is potentially as large as the (retained) isotropic terms. But for all this time, there has been no feasible method for estimating the required parameter. In 2013, Lin and Thomsen (2013) discovered such a method, implying that every AVO analysis done in the last 35 years should be re-thought. UH has applied for a patent based on this work.

Seismic-style EM exploration: The 2006 survey mentioned above was inconclusive, but the need to respect BP’s proprietary information stymied further progress after I retired. However, in the research environment at UH, Thomsen (2014) and Neese and Thomsen (2014, 2015) showed how to use seismic-style processing to directly estimate apparent resistivity in the subsurface from ISEM moveout, without mathematical inversion of the data. This work will Disrupt the billion-dollar EM exploration industry. UH has received a patent based on this work.

Honors:

Member, National Academy of Engineering, 2022.

Best Paper Award, SEG Annual Meeting, 2020. This award recognized Thomsen (2020a), which had just previously been *rejected for publication* by SEG because it contradicts well-accepted theory. It may be that Thomsen is the oldest recipient of this award.

Maurice Ewing Medal, 2020. This is the highest award given by the Society of Exploration Geophysicists, given for lifetime achievement.

Honoree, SEG-GSH Symposium, March 2015.

President, Society of Exploration Geophysicists, 2006-2007. The SEG is the international society of applied geophysicists, with over 33,000 members in 130 countries; the SEG President is the *defacto* head of the profession, worldwide.

Kapitsa Medal and Foreign Member, Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, 2004.

Honorary Member, European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers, 2003.

AAPG's Beydoun Memorial Award: Best International Poster, Cairo 2002, presented to P. Heppard, D. Ebrom, M. Mueller, T. Harrold, and L. Thomsen

The Milton Dobrin Memorial Lecturer, U. Houston, March 2001.

Thomsen (1999) was selected by **GEOPHYSICS** as one of its best three papers for 1999.

Geophysical Society of Houston, **Honorary Member**, 1999.

European Association of Exploration Geoscientists, **Best Paper**, 1997 Annual Meeting.

Reginald Fessenden Award, SEG, 1993.

Lynn and Thomsen (1990) was selected by **GEOPHYSICS** as one of its best eleven papers for 1990.

Thomsen (1988) was selected by **GEOPHYSICS** as one of its best eight papers for 1988.

Thomsen (1986a) was elected by **GEOPHYSICS** as one of its best eight papers for 1986. (This paper was identified in 2004 as the single most-cited manuscript in the history of **GEOPHYSICS**.)

GEOPHYSICS Golden Anniversary issue: Thomsen (1985) (the first of my work released for publication by Amoco).

SEG Foundation Scholarship (1960-64); partial tuition at Caltech.

Patents

Neese, J. W. and L. Thomsen, System and method for processing electromagnetic survey data, filed U.S. Pat. Off. October 2014, issued July 30 2019 (U.S. Patent 10,365,390 B2).

Thomsen, L. and R. Lin, System and method for estimating seismic anisotropy with high resolution, filed U.S. Pat. Off. September 2013, issued Sept. 2016 (U.S. Patent 9,488,744).

Martinez Y.; N. Allegar]; L. Thomsen; C. Stoyer, Method for Determining Electromagnetic Survey Sensor Orientation , filed February 2009, issued April 2010 (US 2010102820, WO 2010047885).

Thomsen, L. A., Allegar, N. C., Dellinger, J. A., Jilek, P., Johnson, D. T., Xia, G., System and Method for Using Time-Distance Characteristics in Acquisition, Processing, and Imaging of t-CSEM Data, issued February 18, 2009 (U.S. Patent 7,502,690, 7941273).

Smith, M. J., B. D. Ritchie, and L. Thomsen, System and Method for CSEM exploration in polar regions, filed July 2005, issued May 2008 (U.S. Patent 7,376,515).

Strack, Kurt M.; Reuter, H., and Thomsen, Leon A.; Integrated earth formation evaluation method using controlled source electromagnetic survey data and seismic data, filed 2006, issued February 5, 2008 (U.S. Patent 7328107).

Strack, Kurt M.; Thomsen, Leon A.; Reuter, H., Method for acquiring transient electromagnetic survey data, filed 2005, issued April 10, 2007 (U.S. Patent 7203599)

Strack, Kurt M.; L. A. Thomsen, and C. H. Stoyer., Method for identifying subsurface features from marine transient controlled source electromagnetic surveys, filed 2005, issued 2006 (U. S. Pat. 11,064,063).

Thomsen, L. and J. A. Delinger, High resolution determination of polar anisotropy, issued 2005 (U.S. Patent 6,944,094).

Thomsen, L., Vector Recomposition of Seismic 3D Converted-Wave Data, filed 1999, issued 2001 (U. S. Pat. 6,292,754) (Azeri Pat. i2003 0239).

Crider, R. and L. Thomsen, Selection of Seismic Modes through Amplitude Characteristics, filed 1999, issued 2001 (U. S. Pat. 6,263,284).

Thomsen, L. Converted-Wave Processing in Many-layered Anisotropic Media, filed 1998, issued 2000 (U. S. Pat. 6,128,580).

Mueller, M. C., L. A. Thomsen, and I. Tsvankin Reflected Shear Wave Seismic Processes, filed 1995, issued 1998 (U. S. Pat. 5,835,452).

Thomsen, L., K. E. Hanson, and M. V. Brumbaugh, Detecting and Resolving Azimuthal Anisotropy from Nonpolarized Sources (Method of Geophysical Exploration), issued 1992 (U.S. Pat. 5,136,554).

Scott, D. R. and L. Thomsen, Methods for Estimating Burial Conditions of Sedimentary Materials, filed 1988, issued 1992 (U. S. Pat. 5,081,612).

Thomsen, L., Detecting and Resolving Formation Anisotropy from Seismic Data, filed 1986, issued 1990 (U.S. Pats. 4,888,743, and 4,933,913).

Hanson, K., L. Thomsen, C. Sondergeld, and C. Rai, Means for Obtaining Shear-wave Velocities, filed 1986, issued 1988 (U.S. Pat. 4,754,439).

Hanson, K., and L. Thomsen, A Method of Seismic Exploration Including Processing and Displaying Shear Wave Seismic Data, issued 1988 (U.S. Pat. 4,755,972).

Hanson, K. E., T. J. Taylor, and L. Thomsen, Shear Wave Velocity Estimation, filed 1989, issued 1993 (U. S. Pat. 5,265,016).

Hanson, K., C. Crowe, A. Frisillo, C. Sondergeld, and L. Thomsen, A Method for Identifying and Separating the Effects of Elastic and Anelastic Formation Properties in Seismic Data, filed 1985, issued 1988 (U.S. Pat. 4,729,101).

Bodine, J. H., J. Bork, R. Alford, H. Wright, and L. Thomsen, A Method of Seismic Exploration including Processing and Displaying Seismic Data to Quantitatively Distinguish among Seismic Events, filed 1984, issued 1987 (U.S. Pat. 4,646,239).

Alford R., H. B. Lynn, and L. Thomsen, Seismic Surveying Technique for the Detection of Azimuthal Variations in the Earth's Subsurface, filed 1984, issued 1989 (U.S. Pat. 4,817,061).

Books

- Thomsen, L., 2014. Seismic Anisotropy in Exploration and Exploitation, the SEG/EAGE Distinguished Instructor Short Course #5 Lecture Notes, 2nd Edition, Soc. Expl. Geoph., Tulsa.
- Committee on Fracture Characterization and Fluid Flow, National Research Council, Rock Fractures and Fluid Flow: Contemporary Understanding and applications, Nat. Acad. Press, Washington, D. C., 1996.
- Thomsen, L., On the Fourth-Order Anharmonic Equation of State of Solids, Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, 1969.

Refereed Publications (not including numerous Amoco/BP proprietary publications) **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5093-0498 .

- Thomsen, L., 2021a. The Logical Error in Gassmann Poroelasticity: Consistency with Effective Medium Theory, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Expnd. Absts.**, **91**, 2303-2307.
- Thomsen, L., 2021b. The Logical Error in Gassmann Poroelasticity: Derivations and Data, **Europ. Assoc. Geosci. Engrs. Conv. Expnd. Absts.**, **82**.
- Thomsen, L., 2020a. A Logical Error in Gassmann Poroelasticity, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Expnd. Absts.**, **90**, 2429-2933.
- Thomsen, L., 2020b. A Logical Error in Gassmann Poroelasticity, **Europ. Assoc. Geosci. Engrs. Conv. Expnd. Absts.**, **81**. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3997/2214-4609.202010055>
- Lin, R. and L. Thomsen, 2019. Validation of Digital Rock Physics Algorithms, **Minerals**, **9**, 669; doi:10.3390/min9110669. <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-163X/9/11/669>.
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- Li, J., Y. Zheng, L. Thomsen, T. J. Lapen, and X. Fang, 2018. Deep earthquakes in subducting slabs hosted in highly anisotropic rock fabric, **Nature Geoscience** **11**, 696–700. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41561-018-0188-3>
- Hu, B., L. Thomsen, and D. Reynolds, 2017. Statistical analysis of the parameterization in azimuthal anisotropic seismic processing, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Annl. Mtg. Expnd. Absts.**, **87**, 416-420. <https://doi.org/10.1190/segam2017-17749210.1>
- Thomsen, L., 2017. On the Fluid Dependence of Rock Compressibility: Beyond Biot-Gassmann, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Annl. Mtg. Expnd. Absts.**, **87**, pp. 3690-3694.
- Li, J., Y. Zheng, and L. Thomsen, 2017. In situ seismic anisotropy around deep earthquakes in Japan subduction slabs using Japan Meteorological Agency moment tensors, **Am. Geoph. Union Fall Meeting**, abstract #DI43B-0360.

- Neese, J. W. and L. Thomsen, 2015. Robustness of the EM-Radon Transform, **Europ. Assoc. Geosci. Engrs. Conv. Expnd. Absts.**, **76**, Madrid.
- Thomsen, L. and D. L. Anderson, 2015. Weak elastic anisotropy in global seismology, *The Interdisciplinary Earth: A Volume in Honor of Don L. Anderson*, Eds. G. R. Foulger, M. Lustrino, and S. King, Geol. Soc. Am. Spec. Paper 514 and Am. Geophys. Union Spec. Pub. 71, pp. 39-50.
- Neese, J. W. and L. Thomsen, 2014. Seismic processing of numerical EM data, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Annl. Mtg. Expnd. Absts.**, **84**.
- Thomsen, L., 2014. Electromagnetics and seismics: the deep connections, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Annl. Mtg. Expnd. Absts.**, **84**.
- Thomsen, L., and R. Lin, 2014. High-Resolution Anisotropy from AVO, **Europ. Assoc. Geosci. Engrs. Conv. Expnd. Absts.**, **75**, We102-15. Also presented at Stanford, TUDelft.
- Lin, R. and L. Thomsen, 2013d. Extracting Polar Anisotropy Parameters From Seismic Data And Well Logs, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Annl. Mtg. Expnd. Absts.**, **83**, 310-314.
- Thomsen L., 2013b. Can we use Conventional Seismics in Unconventional Resource Plays?. **ASEG Extended Abstracts**, 1–2, dx.doi.org/10.1071/ASEG2013ab363
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- Far, M. E., L. Thomsen, and C. M. Sayers, 2012b. Inversion of asymmetric fracture parameters using synthetic AVOA data, **Soc. Expl. Geoph. Annl. Mtg. Expnd. Absts.**, **82**, 1-5.
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Thomsen to Lead Ever More Global Society, E&P Daily News, Oct. 2, 2006.

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Student Theses Advised, University of Houston:

2015 John W. Neese M.S. Thesis: Seismic-Style Processing of Numerical EM Data (U.S. Patent 10,365,390 B2).

2013 Rongrong Lin M.S. Thesis: Extracting polar anisotropy parameters from seismic data and well logs (U.S. Patent 9,488,744). 2012

Mehdi Eftekhari Far Ph.D. Thesis: Seismic Characterization of Naturally Fractured Reservoirs

Courses Taught:

Seismic Waves and Rays in Hydrocarbon Exploration (UH)

Seismic Waves in Hydrocarbon Exploration (SEG-online course)

Understanding Seismic Anisotropy in Exploration and Exploitation: *Hands On* (AAPG, BGP, BHPB, CGG, CNOOC, CSEG, EAGE, GSH, Noble, NTNU, SEG, Shell, SPG India, TGS, UH)

Electromagnetic methods for Exploration & Production (w/ K. Strack, KMST) (UH, Saudi Aramco)

Modern Seismic Reservoir Characterization (KAUST, GSH)

Professional Society Affiliations:

American Geophysical Union (Lifetime Member)

American Physical Society (Lifetime Member)

European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers (Honorary Member)

Geophysical Society of Houston (Honorary Member)

Sigma Xi

Society of Exploration Geophysicists (Lifetime Member)

Professional Service (partial listing):

2015-18 Board of Directors, SEAM Inc. (Chair, 2017-2018)

2008-10 Advisory Board to Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, UH

2008-10 Board of Directors, SEG Global, Inc. (Treasurer, 2010-11)

2006-07 SEG President

2005-06 SEG President-Elect

2004-08 Advisory Board to Director, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory

2004- SEG Foundation Trustee Associate

- 2003-04 SEG Vice President
- 2002-05 American Geophysical Union Development Committee
- 2002 SEG/EAGE Distinguished Instructor
- 2001-04 National Science Foundation Geosciences Advisory Board
- 1998- SEG Research Committee. (Chair, 1998-2000)
- 1997 SEG Distinguished Lecturer
- 1991- Editorial Board, **Journal of Seismic Exploration**.
- 1991-96 National Academy of Sciences Committee on Fracture Characterization and Fracture Flow.
- 1986-88 External Evaluation Committee (Chair, '87), Division of Earth Science, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory