



Sixty years of geotechnical engineering

The laboratories of soil and rock mechanics celebrated 60 years of activity in 1995. This was a good occasion to recall the important stages in its history.

1934 Professor Alfred Stucky proposes the creation of a geotechnical laboratory in addition to the hydraulics laboratory, of which he was already director, at the Engineering school in Lausanne (EIL, prior to the EPFL) to the local authorities (Vaud).

1935 The Department of public instruction and state churches officially creates the **Geotechnical Laboratory** under the direction of Professor Alfred Stucky.

1936 The laboratory organises an updating course in geotechnical knowledge for engineers with degrees.

1941 The laboratory moves into a new location at the route de Genève. The students follow the geotechnical engineering course given by Daniel Bonnard, junior lecturer.

1945 Beginning in this year, L. Bendel gives a course in geophysical prospection methods.

1947 Daniel Bonnard is named professor and deputy director of the Geotechnical Laboratory. The Engineering school of Lausanne (EIL) becomes the Polytechnical School of the University of Lausanne (EPUL).

Since its creation, the laboratory has carried out numerous studies for private engineering practice, especially in the sector of roadway engineering. It has 10 members at this time.

1953 The laboratory participates in the organisation of the third congress of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering, whose president at that time was Karl Terzaghi. The congress was held in Zurich.

1956 Creation of the Swiss Society for Soil Mechanics. its second president will be Daniel Bonnard.

During the period from **1951-1969**, teaching of soil mechanics was strongly fostered and services to third parties was a very important activity while research had a less important role due to lack of funds.

1969 Federalisation of the EPUL which becomes the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL). Resources for personnel and research are substantially increased and research becomes an important activity.

1970 Creation of the Rock mechanics section

1972 Retirement of Professor Daniel Bonnard and nomination of Professors Edouard Recordon (soil mechanics), François Descoedres (rock mechanics) and Richard Sinniger (foundations, part-time)

1973 Separation of the hydraulic and geotechnical laboratories with the transfer of the latter to buildings at the avenue de Provence.

1976 Construction of a hall for large-scale tests at the new EPFL site at Ecublens (Pit hall).

Professor Recordon becomes president of the Swiss Society for Soil and Rock Mechanics and remains president until 1979.

1977 Organisation of a first postgraduate course in soil and rock mechanics and foundation engineering.

1979 Regrouping of the entire Civil Engineering Department at the Ecublens site. In addition to the hall for large-scale tests which is already being used, a hall for model tests in rock mechanics and spacious laboratories are opened. The Geotechnical Laboratory is then divided into a **Laboratory for Soil Mechanics (LSM)** and a **Laboratory for Rock Mechanics (LRM)**.

The LRM organises the Fourth International Congress for Rock Mechanics (Montreux).

During this year, the members of both laboratories together total approximately 40.

1980 The laboratories begin the interdepartmental project "Detection and Use of Landslide-prone Areas" (DUTI) and participate actively in it until 1984.

1981 Organisation of a postgraduate course on underground construction (460 hours).

1982 Professor Descoedres is given the responsibility of teaching foundation design to replace Professor Richard Sinniger.

Professor Recordon is named president of the Union of Swiss Roadway Professionals (VSS) and retains this post until 1985.

1985 The Interdepartmental Centre for the Study of Landslide-prone Areas (CETI) is created as a follow-up to the DUTI study.

1988 Numerous large-scale tests are carried out in the Pit hall at Ecublens which yield interesting results for practical engineering projects, especially in the roadway sector, and become an international reference in this field.

The laboratories participate in the organisation of the Fifth International Symposium on Landslides (Lausanne).

1990 First postgraduate course in urban engineering given with the participation of the LSM and the LRM.

1993 Retirement of Professor Recordon who is replaced by Laurent Vulliet, with a stark reduction in personnel of the LSM. Due to the poor state of federal finances, research funds become more and more difficult to obtain. The CETI becomes a part of the LSM.

1994 Large amount of teaching given by the LSM and the LRM during the postgraduate courses "Geology applied to engineering and the environment" and "Large underground projects".