

Brief Biography

Maria Richards is a researcher, project coordinator, and fundraiser for the SMU Geothermal Laboratory. She works directly with faculty and students overseeing related research as an Investigator on grants/contracts from initial application, management of budget, to final report with primary funding from companies, State Agencies (e.g., TXSECO), and Federal Agencies (e.g., Dept. of Energy; National Laboratories). She coordinates outreach programs on geothermal energy, speaks locally to internationally, developed and oversees the lab website, facilitates operations and training of oil/gas software, and develops learning activities between SMU and community programs. Research projects vary from temperature-depth maps for Google.org to on-site geothermal exploration in the Northern Mariana Islands, Peru, and Montana. Current concentration is on use of temperature well logs for understanding climate change, the transition of oil fields into geothermal production, and low temperature geothermal applications such as district heating for commercial buildings. She coordinated ten conferences focused on developing geothermal energy in oil and gas fields, building a network of individuals, companies, and government agencies from all aspects of development with cross-over between many related industries. Sponsorships from the conference help fund the lab outreach and student projects. Through the SMU Geothermal Lab outreach efforts Maria assists numerous companies and students world-wide to disseminate information on geothermal energy and resources. With colleagues, she coordinated the design, population, and ongoing dissemination of data for the SMU Node of the National Geothermal Database System. Highlights of research with Dr. David Blackwell include the Geothermal Map of North America, Dixie Valley Synthesis, Eastern Texas Geothermal Assessment, and the Report on the Future of Geothermal Energy; with Dr. Matthew Hornbach the Climate Impact of Northern Rocky Mountains. Maria holds a Master of Science degree in Physical Geography from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and a B.S. in Environmental Geography from Michigan State University.