Automating complex 3D modeling
Sandia-developed software could save hours of manual labor

By Manette Newbold Fisher

A team of researchers led by Sandia has invented a first-of-its-kind software for scientists to create accurate digital representations of complex objects.

The new software, VoroCust, offers a novel way to create digital representations, called meshes, used by scientists in many disciplines to create geometric models of all kinds of parts, from rotors to wheels to protective equipment.

Complex meshes often have curves, sharp edges or holes. Once created, they look like 3D images used in computer simulations that incorporate algorithms to determine when parts might fail in extreme conditions. This is a helpful — and often essential — aspect of design that precedes the creation of prototypes and parts for testing.

For example, a scientist in the aerospace industry might make a mesh of an airplane wing and run it through a computer simulation to learn more about what will happen to it in high wind and extreme temperatures. Some scientists also use meshes to model geography to anticipate underground changes, such as subsurface flows of liquids or contaminants.

VoroCust incorporates a special type of 3D polyhedral cells, called Voronoi cells, to create the meshes, said Sandia computer scientist and project lead Mohamed Ebeida. Most other mesh-generation methods use 3D tetrahedral or hexahedral cells that can have low quality or are difficult to automate, he said.

Existing methods for Voronoi meshing don’t always conform to all corners and angles of complex objects. This can be fixed with manual labor, but it is a tedious process that can take a significant number of work hours, Mohamed said.

VoroCust is the first software to generate Voronoi-cell meshes that conform to complex models without needing to be fixed manually.

Mohamed has been working on the software for more than three years and said it could reduce many hours of manual labor that scientists currently spend on 3D modeling.

By Troy Rummel

Sandia has announced a new, fast-track licensing program to rapidly deploy technology to a marketplace reeling from the effects of COVID-19. The move is designed to support businesses facing widespread, often technical challenges resulting from the pandemic.

“In light of the national emergency, we’re making technology transfer as simple as possible,” said Mary Monson, senior manager and chief research officer. “Companies need new ways of doing business. They need cybersecurity tools so they can operate remotely. They need advanced manufacturing techniques to produce goods that are in high demand. If Sandia intellectual property can help, we want to lower barriers to people getting it.”

Under the new program, more than 1,000 Sandia-patented technologies are temporarily eligible for any U.S. person to use commercially for free. People can visit Sandia’s Rapid Technology Deployment Program website to apply for free licenses valid through Dec. 31, 2020. The fast-track licenses are nonexclusive, meaning more than one person can hold a license to use the same technology.

The website contains information on which patents are available to license, as well as information about patents formerly held by Sandia that now are in the public domain and do not require a license to use.

Sandia’s new Rapid Technology Deployment Program will:
• Eliminate financial or contractual barriers to mobilizing technologies.
• Expedite transfer of intellectual property by eliminating fee negotiations, transferring intellectual property in days instead of months.
• Enable licensees to invest their full resources into combating the pandemic and its economic effects.

“This isn’t just a public health crisis; it’s also an economic crisis,” said Susan Seestrom, associate lab director for advanced science and technology and chief research officer. “Companies need new ways of doing business. They need cybersecurity tools so they can operate remotely. They need advanced manufacturing techniques to produce goods that are in high demand. If Sandia intellectual property can help, we want to lower barriers to people getting it.”

Stimulating marketplace recovery
Fast-track program offers free Sandia-patented technology licenses for commercial use during pandemic

Photo by Randy Montoya

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CA volunteers 8

NOVEL PROCESS — Sandia computer scientist Mohamed Ebeida worked with a team to develop VoroCust, a software program that creates meshes using polyhedral cells rather than tetrahedral and hexahedral cells. Photo by Randy Montoya

Photo by Randy Montoya

TECH GIVEAWAY — Sandia developed a pocket-sized anthrax detector later licensed to a New Mexico company. Now, more than 1,000 Sandia technologies and software products can be licensed for free.

By Manette Newbold Fisher

By Troy Rummel

Photo by Randy Montoya
Thunderbird Kudos
New program encourages employees to recognize colleagues’ efforts

By Stephanie Holinka

Earlier this year, Sandia launched Thunderbird Kudos, a program that encourages employees to show their appreciation for the efforts of their co-workers and teams.

Uncertainty teaches us to value our time, resources and relationships. Employees can reinforce their relationships with colleagues by visiting kudos.sandia.gov to complete a Thunderbird Kudos submission, which takes about three minutes. The program was designed to be a simple and quick way to tell co-workers that their accomplishments are important.

“The program allows people to build recognition for peers for everyday kindnesses into their practice, in a way that is quick, easy and seamless,” said health educator Jenn Perez.

The structure and goals also align to the Sandia Behaviors, a key component of the Labs’ performance management system. The giver is not only saying “thank you,” but is highlighting how the efforts of co-workers represent the best of what it means to work at Sandia.

Recipients are displayed on the Kudos Wall of Honor, which is visible to the workforce. A recipient can elect to hide their recognition from the wall, however. Information about recipients can be sorted and queried on the website.

“It’s the corporate tool for sharing recognition and thanks. I’ve been here for 25 years, and I’ve seen many people I know at the Labs move on. My hope is that by increasing recognition, we can keep more of those wonderful people at the Labs,” Jenn said.

Even in this stressful climate, Sandia employees have a lot to be grateful for, and it shows in the more than 1,200 Kudos handed out since the program’s January launch. Nearly 300 have been awarded since the COVID-19 pandemic began changing the Labs’ work environment.

Those Kudos not only brighten the lives of the recipients, they also help the nominators.

“During times of change and uncertainty, gratitude can boost one’s resilience and ability to deal with stress,” Jenn said.

Stephanie Holinka, manager
Darrick Hurst, team lead
Melissae Fellet
Valerie Alba
Troy Rummler
Kristen Meub
Neal Singer
Michelle Fleming
Paul Rhien, California Site Contact
Randy Montoya, Photographer
Angela Barr, Production

The Kudos program came about through ideas and support from the “Future Leaders Pathway” during the 2017 management and operating contract transition. The idea was passed to the division Workplace Enhancement Committees, and Jenn and a small team linked all the groups together to develop the structure and guidance.

Designer Andres Padiella and his team built and launched the tool in January. Stephanie Blackwell and Johann Snyder created the communications and advertising to let people know how it worked and how to participate.

“Doing this in a year is a huge accomplishment,” Jenn said.

Going forward, she said the team is working with other partners to find a sustainable and consistent way to reward recipients.

“At a time when people are struggling to do their best under novel conditions, a little appreciation can go a long way,” she said.
Mark Sellers recognized for diversity leadership

For this year’s award, the journal saluted 17 leaders from a variety of industries and organizational levels worldwide for their diversity efforts.

“Leaders have to be directly involved in advocating for a culture of inclusion and diversity to make an impact,” said Sandia Chief Diversity Officer Esther Hernandez. “Mark is yet another example of Sandia leadership at every level who walk the talk. His commitment to increasing diversity at the Labs in both his course of action and everyday behavior sparks innovation and achieves the mission success that Sandia is known for.”

Mark’s award follows Sandia’s Innovations in Diversity Award presented by the journal last fall. Companies that are diverse leaders utilize the expertise of their diversity team in new ways as strategies for change to help meet the challenges of today’s business environment, according to the journal. Individual recipients of the Diversity Leader Award view challenges and opportunities through the lens of diversity and inclusion to achieve business success.

“Since coming to Sandia, I’ve participated in numerous, intensive Sandia seminars and summits that really have opened my eyes to the privileges enjoyed by white males. These experiences have helped me to better appreciate other perspectives and experiences,” Mark said. “I’ve since become more committed than ever to making Sandia a place where diverse interview panels are universal and hopefully lead to greater demographic diversity.”

Mark leads quality assurance and contractor assurance systems at Sandia, where he directs defenses and mission computing, and surety engineering and weapons quality at Sandia. He sponsors and directly engages in inclusion and diversity events and activities, participates in the corporate reverse-mentoring initiative and implements diverse interview panels for all manager positions.

“Fully expressing and exploring differences of opinion are essential to our success, and that means constantly striving to be more diverse and inclusive,” Mark said. “To the extent that I can influence a premier organization like Sandia in that direction, I’m grateful for the opportunity.”

Now in its 22nd year of publication, Profiles in Diversity Journal focuses on diversity and inclusion in business, government, nonprofit, higher education, and military settings. The journal highlights mission-driven leadership, best practices, workforce strategies, innovative ideas and important individual contributions in diversity and inclusion.
H e’s 100, still going strong and encouraging others around him to do the same.

Friends and family of former Sandia mechanical engineer Larry Johnson say they have no doubt he’ll keep showing up like he has done in many areas throughout his life.

Johnson retired after 38 years at the Labs, and when asked how it was, he said, “I worked until I was 75 years old, so that will tell you something. The boss kept asking me, ‘Why don’t you stay another year?’ I would say, ‘Oh, OK, I’ll stay.’”

Johnson worked for many years in aircraft compatibility, making sure military aircraft could withstand certain environments while carrying nuclear weapons. He worked on dropping test and electrical system controls and completed flights in high temperatures and supersonic conditions, he said.

Johnson traveled to Europe many times for work, and back and forth to Tonopah, Nevada. He participated in development projects that involved analyzing drawings and schematics to see if aircraft would be compatible with weapons.

“We had a lot of good projects, and we did really well,” Johnson said. “I was excited about the job I had.”

From farm to WWII to Sandia

When asked about significant developments and events over the past 100 years, Johnson chuckled and said, “That’s a big story. He grew up on a farm in Ohio where they grew food and raised chickens, cows and horses.

“My dad said the only things that he bought were salt, sugar and coffee,” Johnson said. “We raised everything else at home on the farm.”

Johnson’s family didn’t have electricity until he was in high school, and he remembers riding to his grandma’s house in a horse and buggy until his dad got their first vehicle — a Model T Ford truck that his parents and all six kids would pile into.

“My goodness, the things, the progress we’ve made,” Johnson said. “Telephones, gadgets, cell phones, cars and food.”

World War II took Johnson to Amarillo, Texas, where he was stationed as a mechanics instructor and flight engineer. After the war, he attended Texas Tech University, and then got a job at Sandia where he was stationed as a mechanics instructor and moved to Albuquerque.

Former co-workers said Johnson was a mentor and someone who was always willing to help.

“His type of person who showed up ready to work. He was always willing to do just about any thing,” Donnell said. “He worked hard, he showed up early, he never needed to be told to do anything. He was just one of those guys. He was just a real giver, never looking for any glory.”

Johnson competed in about 25 marathons, including Boston, and in National Senior Games all over the country until age 99, when he competed in the 50-meter dash. He was honored with the Personal Best National Senior Games Award at age 94, which recognizes service and staying fit consistently for a lifetime.

He’s done many bike races and duathlons, and for several years, starting when he was 90, he biked 100 miles indoors at a gym for his birthday.

“People would sign up and we had shirts made for everybody who participated. That was just kind of the connection and the influence that Larry had on the whole gym,” said Johnson’s spin instructor Terri Pachelli, who has known him for decades and competed with him in duathlons.

“Larry probably did that 100-mile ride up until he was about 95 or 96. In the past couple of years, we’ve cut back and called it Larry’s Ride. It’s an hour ride, which is about 25 miles. We just put a time on it and celebrate.”

Due to COVID-19 social distancing guidance, Johnson’s friends and family celebrated his 100th birthday April 5 with a drive-by parade as he sat in his driveway on a “throne” decorated by his granddaughter.

The party he had planned was supposed to take place at Los Poblanos with family and friends from Sandia, the ski patrol, his spin classes and more, but that will have to wait until later this summer when there are fewer worries about COVID-19 exposure. Whenever it happens, it sounds like there will be a big crowd.

In addition to his friends, Johnson said he enjoys spending time with his four children, who all live in Albuquerque. He and his wife, Billie Ann Johnson, were married for 68 years before she passed away. They have a handful of grandchildren and another handful of great-grandchildren.

Johnson continued to attend Pachelli’s hour-long spin classes up to three times a week until gyms across the state closed due to COVID-19. He’ll be back at it as soon as he can.

“Keep moving,” he said. “Enjoy life, save a little money and get out and do stuff.”

Johnson’s advice for others is simple.

“Larry is working a whole lot harder than you are.’”

At 100, Johnson’s advice for others is simple. “Keep moving,” he said. “Enjoy life, save a little money and get out and do stuff.”

100 AND COUNTING — Friends and family of Larry Johnson celebrated his 100th birthday on April 5 with waves, cheers and well wishes from their cars. Another celebration is planned for later this year.

Photos by Randy Montoya

JANUARY 1, 2018

Photos by Manette Newbold Fisher

WHEELS KEEP ON TURNING — Larry Johnson has competed in many cycling races and continues to enjoy working out with a local spin community.

Photo by Janelle Johnson

PERSONAL BEST — At age 94, Larry Johnson earned the National Senior Games Personal Best Award, which honors services and a commitment to stay fit over a lifetime. He competed in the National Senior Games nearly every year, starting in 1987 and continuing until he turned 99.

Photo by Janelle Johnson

Long may you run

Retired Sandia engineer turns 100, continues active lifestyle

By Manette Newbold Fisher

AIRCRAFT COMPATIBILITY — Larry Johnson, far right, stands with a group of Sandia employees holding a B-61 test unit in 1976. Johnson worked at the Labs for 38 years, retiring at age 75.

Photo courtesy of Sandia National Laboratories

KEEP MOVING — Former Sandian Larry Johnson’s advice for longevity is to stay active and enjoy life.

Photo by Randy Montoya

DONATE YOUR vehicle — Larry Johnson is one of the recipients of the 2020 Inaugural National Senior Games Personal Best Award, which honors services and a commitment to stay fit over a lifetime. He competed in the National Senior Games nearly every year, starting in 1987 and continuing until he turned 99.

Photo by Randy Montoya

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Photos by Randy Montoya
Federal Laboratory Consortium honors Sandia successes
Innovations developed at Sandia bring home four national awards

By Manette Newbold Fisher

Technology that helps men test their fertility is among Sandia’s four national award winners honored by the Federal Laboratory Consortium for work to develop and commercialize innovative technologies. “These awards are highly competitive,” said Jackie Kerby Moore, Sandia’s manager of technology and economic development and the Lab’s FLC representative. “This year our honorees include three start-up companies who are successfully deploying Sandia technologies, creating jobs and generating far-reaching impacts.”

The FLC is a network of more than 300 federal laboratories, agencies and research centers. The national FLC awards are some of the most prestigious honors for federal laboratories and industry partners that demonstrate outstanding technology transfer achievements.

The tech transfer success that led to the Trak Male Fertility Testing System received an Impact Award, a new category this year that honors efforts and successes that have made a lasting impact for people or the marketplace, ranging from a local to global scale.

Former Sandia inventors Greg Sommer and Ulrich Schaff developed Trak, which is based on the Labs’ SpinDx portable lab-on-a-disk diagnostic technology, originally developed to detect biological and chemical threats.

When Sommer realized there could be multiple commercial applications for the SpinDx technology, he left Sandia through the Entrepreneural Separation to Transfer Technology program and started Sandstone, a company that specializes in producing medical products and research tools to improve health care. Schaff later left Sandia to join the company.

Trak enables men to measure, track and try to improve their sperm count at home to boost their chances for conception.

“Trak is a private, discreet and complete home testing system that has the accuracy as the lab,” said Sommer. “It’s not only a testing device, but an entire system to help men make changes to their health and lifestyle to improve their reproductive health.”

Sandstone continues to refine and develop the technology, which they now call CentriFluidics. The company has applied its technology to additional diagnostic areas, including infectious disease.

The other Sandia innovations that earned national FLC awards this year include:

- Efforts made by business development specialist Jason Martinez to increase partnerships and revenue with federal and nonfederal entities.
- Research that enabled a Sandia scientist to start a company using hydrogen fuel cells to power vessels.
- Creativity in technology transfer that helped a company obtain funding to build a reactor to produce medical isotopes for the world.

Connecting with universities, businesses and government agencies, Jason received an Outstanding Technology Transfer Professional Award for his work to promote and set records for Sandia’s Cooperative Research and Development Agreements.

Photo by Lennie Anderson

CRADA STRATEGY — Sandia business development specialist Jason received an outstanding Technology Transfer Professional Award for his work to develop a strategy for Cooperative Research and Development Agreements.

Industry demand for medical isotopes to produce medical isotopes to meet a global patient demand for imaging procedures each day. A short-lived isotope that can be used to make individual patient doses, said Eden Chief Operations Officer Chris Wagner. When any of these aging reactors came in to apply the knowledge on hydrogen fuel cells to ships.

Sandia chemical physicist Lennie Klebanoff and former Labs scientist Joe Pratt had previously researched how hydrogen fuel cells could be used for vehicles, construction lights, power generators and power on board commercial airplanes. When the industry came in to apply the technology to ships, the researchers applied their knowledge on hydrogen fuel cells to determine the feasibility of using them on vessels.

After Lennie and Pratt developed a method to use hydrogen fuel cell technology for maritime applications, Pratt left Sandia through the Entrepreneurial Separation to Transfer Technology program, launching Golden Gate Zero Emission Marine. Pratt’s zero-emission marine company is a full-service provider.

EMISSION-FREE VESSEL — Golden Gate Zero Emission Marine’s Water-Go-Round vessel pictured here will use hydrogen fuel cell technology to help keep citizens of San Francisco healthy. The successful collaboration earned a national Excellence in Technology Transfer Award.

Photo courtesy of Sandstone Diagnostics

EMISSION-FREE VESSEL — Golden Gate Zero Emission Marine’s Water-Go-Round vessel pictured here will use hydrogen fuel cell technology to help keep citizens of San Francisco healthy. The successful collaboration earned a national Excellence in Technology Transfer Award.

Photo courtesy of Sandstone Diagnostics

Photo by Randy Montoya
Finding a big life on the open road
After 15 years in a part-time job, Brian Olson has some stories

Story by Michael Ellis Langley
Photos courtesy of Brian Olson

Brian Olson doesn’t have weekends like everyone else. He spends his days away from Sandia driving people all over the state. From ferrying the elite athletes of the National Football League to and from games to saving the lives of 86 people during a mass shoot- ing, it’s been an interesting trip.

“I’m a logistics technical professional,” Brian said of his work at Sandia. “We manage shipping and receiving, mailroom, fleet, reappraisal and disintegration, shredding stuff, moving stuff around site. I supervise the technical parts of Logistics — working on large contracts, maintaining and enhancing our mobility projects and constantly working on ways to improve our services. And all of this using integrated service delivery as the umbrella, which is a big part of our organization.”

Brian started at Sandia’s Livermore campus in 2000 as a contractor, becoming a full-time employee in 2012. His favorite part of the job is the unknown.

“My normal day? Putting out fires,” he said with a laugh. “What’s going to come across the email when you open it up in the morning? That sometime could occupy five minutes of your time to fix that, or it could take all day. I love figuring out how to tackle the unknown stuff. That’s the thing that keeps me coming back — the new stuff every day.”

Those impossible-to-predict requests have ranged from moving a case of water to responding to a box containing a live animal.

“It seems like if it doesn’t fit anywhere, it ends up in Logistics. We will figure it out,” he said, smiling at how most people see his department.

If that seems like enough stimulation for a week, you haven’t met Brian.

Weekend warrior

“In 2005, I don’t know if it was out of boredom or stupidity, I went into Storer Coachways (in modesto, California) and asked, ‘Do you ever hire weekend drivers?’” Brian said. “I thought it would be kind of fun to go places and do things on the weekends.”

The company hired him but said he probably would work two weekends a month driving tour shuttles, casino trips and shopping runs to San Francisco. Brian laughed as he remembered how it really went.

“For the first two years, I worked every weekend. Never a weekend off.”

Brian has spent the past 15 years working four days at Sandia/California, handling the logistics of hundreds of people and dozens of projects, and then two more days behind the wheel of large tour buses, going places he never thought he would see.

“I’ve been to places I know I would have never gone myself,” he said. “There’s museums down in L.A. I never knew existed.”

Hero in the making

He could not have known how his decision all those years ago would affect the lives of dozens of people in July 2019. It was a hot Sunday and the smell of garlic was everywhere as Brian loaded passengers onto his 54-seat bus to ferry them out of the Gilroy Garlic Festival. He had no idea that a short distance away, 19-year-old Santino Legan was about to open fire, killing three people and shooting 17 others before taking his own life.

“The shooter was about 150 yards away,” Brian said. “I heard the shots, and everyone started running out of the festival in pure panic. People ran on my bus. I loaded 86 passengers onto my 54-passerenger bus. There were children and parents covered in dirt from diving on the ground once they heard the shots.”

Brian drove his busload of people out to safety. Then he did something few others would have — he drove back in.

“I took them to a safe area and returned to evacuate more of the festival attendees,” Brian said. “It was one of the most stressful days in my driving career.”

Brian’s actions on a day that was unlike any other in his life earned him a Heroism Award from Storer Coachways.

Team player

Since 2010, most of Brian’s weekends from September to January are prescheduled. Storer Coachways has a contract with the NFL to drive visiting teams to games at the Bay Area stadiums for the San Francisco 49ers and the former Oakland Raiders.

“The players are really nice,” Brian said, dispelling the myth of bad-behaving millionaires. “I have no bad stories with them. Every one of them, from the top athletes to the guys who just came in, they are all ‘Thank you,’ when you hand them their luggage from under the bus. They usually will put you on the back.”

Even after a hard-fought game, players are professional.

“You don’t see any emotion,” Brian said. “When they come back to the bus, they have their

ADVENTURE AWAITS — Sandia logistics technician Brian Olson, who drives for Storer Coachways on weekends, stands by his bus, waiting to take a National Football League team to the airport after a game.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN — Since 2005, Brian Olson has held a part-time job as a bus driver for Storer Coachways on his weekends away from Sandia.

TEAM SPIRIT — Sporting a Green Bay Packers hat, Brian Olson gets ready to take the NFL team to Levi’s Stadium.
Visit ip.sandia.gov for information about free, temporary, non-exclusive licenses for technology and processes patented at Sandia. To obtain a license, interested individuals must:

- Be a U.S. current resident (licenses are not available for export).
- Submit an application.
- State the intended business purpose in the application.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As a multipurpose engineering laboratory for NNSA, Sandia invents technologies for research purposes and maintains patents under nine categories: bioscience; electromagnetics; energy and environment; information and computer systems; manufacturing and assurance; materials, chemistry and nanoscience; microelectronics and microelectromechanical systems; security and defense; and sensors and detectors. Sandia routinely grants licenses to businesses, universities and individual entrepreneurs to use these technologies for other commercial purposes.

The free, temporary licenses come with minimum restrictions. Technologies cannot be exported, so applicants must be legal U.S. residents, and businesses must legally be able to contract with the U.S. government.

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- State the intended business purpose in the application.
Serving up kindness

Sandia employees, family members and friends volunteered at the Alameda Food Bank in February. The volunteers packaged foods for distribution to families in need in the Bay Area.

By Tatiana Del Cid

More than a dozen Sandia/California employees and their friends and families helped fight food insecurities throughout the Bay Area with the Alameda County Community Food Bank at the second quarter Sandia Serves Saturday event on Feb. 27.

Volunteers jumped into action, donning aprons and hairnets to pack and seal bags of pasta while others got busy sorting and bagging produce.

Nalini Menon said she was grateful for the opportunity to spend quality time with her family while making a difference in the community.

"Volunteering is a small way for my family to give thanks for everything we have," she said. "My family loved every moment, and we are inspired to do more volunteer events in the future."

Sandia volunteers helped the Alameda County Community Food Bank pack 624 pounds of pasta and 14,298 pounds of fresh produce that will help to put about 12,000 meals on the tables of Bay Area families in need.

For more than 30 years, the Alameda County Community Food Bank has delivered on their mission to promote hunger-free communities by distributing millions of healthy meals to local food banks and pantries that serve families and individuals in need. Sandia is proud to support their mission and play a part in building stronger communities through family stability.

"Having Sandia organize the event, and all we had to do was show up, was great. The food bank is an amazing place, it was much larger and more organized than I expected," said Jerry Mcneish. "It is kind of unbelievable in our economic bubble to have so many folks in need."