

Robot welder unveiled at SAIW

At the handover of a Yaskawa Motoman Robot Welder at SAIW on November 20, Terry Rosenberg of Yaskawa Southern Africa (YSA) and Sean Blake of SAIW spoke about their vision for modernising welder training.

“In our industry there is constant demand for robot welding programmers; it is a skill that requires multiple disciplines and, especially in the automotive industry, companies find it difficult to find suitably qualified people,” said Yaskawa’s Terry Rosenberg.

“Most robot technicians currently employed by the likes of the automotive industry come from an electrical, electronic or maintenance background, and they all learn by default. Robotic welding facilities seldom have an in-house specialist who can program robots and develop welding procedures for robots – and there is no-one that offers welding training in the combination of these skills,” he added.

“For years, we have known that SAIW trains people how to weld and how to test the quality of welds using methods such as ultrasonic testing. I have long hoped to establish, in partnership with SAIW, a facility where welders can be trained to use robots to weld properly in their profession.”

“When a student comes out of the Institute as a qualified welder and goes to Toyota, BMW, Nissan, Eberspächer or any of the big automotive OEMs or their suppliers, they are told they are not actually needed, because all the welding is done by robots. So it occurred to me that there should be a post-qualification course for welders to qualify them as robotic welding specialists,” he said.

Following conversations with its overseas Yaskawa parent as well as its robot welding power source manufacturer SKS Welding

Systems, Yaskawa Southern Africa finally secured approval to donate a R1-million robotic welding system – a Yaskawa MA1440 robot with a two-axis servo positioner and the SKS power source and its accessories – to SAIW to begin to realise Rosenberg’s vision.

“We envisage a time in the very near future when SAIW is as good at training people to weld with a robot as it is at training them to weld,” he said, adding that the goal was to develop qualified and certified robot welding professionals who could walk into jobs anywhere in the automotive and other automated sectors.

Another aspect of Rosenberg’s vision is entrepreneurial: “We see people coming out of this programme as potential entrepreneurs, whom we can potentially assist in setting up their own small businesses using their robot welding qualifications and expertise. The automotive industry has expressed interest in setting up incubation centres that extend supplier networks. We at Yaskawa, along with SAIW and the automotive-sector and other partners, will add some business management skills and then help qualified robotic welding specialists to start using their skills to manufacture parts for the local automotive sector.

“But first we need to prove we can deliver the skilled people the sector needs for robotic welding,” he said.

Thanking Yaskawa on behalf of SAIW, executive director, Sean Blake noted that Terry Rosenberg and Yaskawa have had a long and excellent relationship with SAIW. “Back in 2011, Terry was a recipient of the SAIW Gold Medal for his efforts to expand the use of robot welding in South African industry,” said Blake.

“We see this training opportunity as a way to break into markets we haven’t really focused on in the past, such as the automotive sector. This will radically change our reach and approach,” he continued.

Being launched in 2019 is the SAIW Robot Welder training course, which according to Blake, is based on the International Robot Welder (IRW) course. “Internationally, this course is a surprisingly recent development and we are one of the first members

of the International Institute of Welding (IIW) to be rolling it out.

“With Yaskawa’s support, we look forward to adopting a team approach to making this course a success,” he added.

“In addition, it is very motivating for welding students to see the high end of the industry. This has been the motivation underpinning our Future Welder training centre, in which robotics will be a significant element.

“The 4th industrial revolution is on our minds and we aim to make sure that the skills of South African youngsters are better aligned to the new and exciting opportunities that will be on offer in the future workplace,” Blake concluded. □

Africa Energy Indaba 2019

Several exciting dialogues will form the focus of discussions at the 11th Africa Energy Indaba at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg from 19 to 20 February 2019. Access to energy and the rate at which Africa is realising this will be amongst the dominant themes, with mini-grids, off-grid power projects, finance, renewables, transmission and distribution also featuring.

Through the Indaba’s MarketPlace platform, all exhibitors and conference delegates will have the opportunity to meet and engage with the event’s high-level speakers, exhibitors, sponsors and delegates through pre-arranged meetings. The platform is designed to help fellow professionals to meet, network and establish partnerships.

Industry diary

January 2019

MTE Cullinan 2019, Gauteng

January 31, 2019
Cullinan Diamond Mine
www.mteexpos.co.za

February 2019

Middle East Rail 2019

26-27 February 2019
Dubai
Jamie Hosie
eloqua.me@terrapinn.com
marketing@go.terrapinn.com

March 2019

PROPAK AFRICA 2019

Packaging, Food Processing, Plastics, Printing, Labelling
12-15 March 2019
Expo Centre, NASREC, Johannesburg, South Africa
www.propakafrica.co.za



At the handover of a Yaskawa robot cell to SAIW on November 20 2018 are, from left: Kurt Rosenberg (YSA); Sean Blake (SAIW) and Terry Rosenberg (YSA); Willie Williams and Lourens Hand (SAIW); Colin Brings (YSA) and Shelton Zichawo (SAIW).