
Kord Smith
**Challenges and Approaches to Coupled Monte Carlo
Neutronic/Fluid Flow Analysis of Commercial Nuclear
Reactors**

MIT
77 Massachusetts Ave
Room 24-221
Cambridge
MA 02139
kord@mit.edu
Kord Smith
Benoit Forget
Paul Romano
Bryan Herman
Andrew Siegel

Despite the great advancements in Monte Carlo neutral particle transport methods and their implementation on advanced computing platforms, Monte Carlo methods have achieved decidedly little impact on either the design or licensing of commercial light water reactors (LWRs). There are numerous reasons that contribute to this lack of penetration:

- *Conventional Monte Carlo analysis requires 10 to 100 so of billion so of neutron histories to resolve local spatial physics effects).*
- *Traditional Monte Carlo statistical treatments lead to non-conservative estimates of spatial parameter uncertainty cycle correlation effects in high dominance ratio cores (e.g., central limit theorem cannot be applied directly).*
- *Reactor core depletion requires tracking several hundred nuclides in each radial ring of 100,000 fuel pins at a time.*
- *Each fuel depletion region and each feedback region has unique physical properties (e.g., nuclear data in each region).*
- *Accurate analysis requires dynamic coupling of Monte Carlo neutronic to nuclear fuel/fluid flow models (e.g., thermal hydraulics).*
- *Steady-state core analysis cannot answer a safety question that requires dynamic multi-physics analysis (e.g., Monte Carlo methods must be extended to the time domain for both rapid and long-duration transient applications).*

The authors will present a formal LWR cycle depletion benchmark that can be used to test coupled neutronic/fluid flow models in pseudo steady-state (reactor cycle depletion) applications. This benchmark will be based on two cycles of operation of a commercial LWR, and measured reactor data will be provided to assess computational model uncertainties in core reactivity and 3D fission rate

distributions. The inherent challenges and difficulties in developing methods to solve this challenge problem will be outlined and discussed in detail. In particular, limitations of parallelization of Monte Carlo by replication and challenges arising from massive storage requirements (for temperature-dependent nuclear data and detailed spatial tallies) will be discussed. A summary of recent algorithmic testing of alternative parallelization strategies to overcome these limitations will be presented.

The authors experiences in applying one class of non-linear operators to the acceleration of deterministic multi-physics methods will be summarized, and computational results from recent extensions of these methods to steady-state Monte Carlo analysis will be presented. Authors will present results from recent parallel algorithm computational tests and a proposed strategy for using non-linear operators to solve coupled Monte Carlo neutronics and nuclear fuel/flow problems.

The authors will also present their proposed approach for extending these non-linear operators to the development of transient Monte Carlo coupled multi-physics reactor analysis methods. Key developments needed for success will be outlined, and prospects for future success will be discussed.