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J. Scott Carter (susandan@mac.com), Dept. of Mathematics and Stat, Mobile, 36688, **Daniel S. Silver** (susandan@mac.com), Mobile, 36688, and **Susan G. Williams*** (swilliams@southalabama.edu). *Links in thickened surfaces and virtual genus.*

We describe two invariants of an oriented link in a closed, orientable thickened surface. The first is a finitely presented operator group in the sense of Krull and Noether, and is a generalization of the Alexander group defined by Silver and Williams for links in S^3 . From this we derive a polynomial invariant that generalizes the Alexander polynomial. As an application, we give a lower bound for virtual genus and obstructions to invertibility of virtual links. (Received September 15, 2013)