

# Keep it Spatial, Keep it Smart



The recent FIG working week in New Zealand and GEO Business in London all highlight the growing influence of geospatial. But will our core skills change? asks Gordon Johnston, chair of the Geomatics Professional Group, ahead of an RICS review.

Following the mantra of KISS (“Keep it Simple Stupid”) often takes considerable will power. In a profession too often buried in its own complexities, taking this approach can be as big a challenge as the decision itself being considered, due I think to our association with detail. It means making a decision can be difficult but the debates and discussions are over, the votes are cast and we have a result. No, not the UK’s separation from the EU or Brexit, but this May’s FIG Working Week General Assembly election for new vice presidents to join our own vice president, Diane Dumashe, at FIG and to help steer it

forwards.

The new vice presidents are Mikael Lilje (Sweden) and Orhan Ercan (Turkey). It is no coincidence that they are from north western hemisphere countries, due to the current trend of many developments in standards and guidance notes being strongly supported from these regions. That is not to say that the other candidates (who lost out by only a very small margin) or their regions are not contributing: they are, across many of the Commissions. In fact, the Christchurch hosted FIG event was one of the best FIG working weeks in recent years and the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors did a fantastic job. See the articles on pages 2831 for more details.

Now in its third year, GEO Business in the UK proved to be a hugely entertaining and engaging event with over 2200 delegates from many countries attending. The plenary speakers, including RICS president elect, Amanda Clack, were from across the geospatial sector, which helped the panel discussion. The themes of innovation, sustainability and the value and impact of geospatial data ran through much of the two days. Various new innovations had been introduced as part of the ongoing commitment to develop and sustain a strong industry event for the UK. The “Ale trail” around the exhibition being one such popular addition! Again, elsewhere in this edition of GW, you will find a comprehensive report on GEO Business 2016.

## The Growing Influence of Geospatial

The general interest and awareness in geospatial data is on the increase. In part through the socializing and wider use of location based tools and apps, which we hope have had their design influenced and supported by experts from our profession. The development of digital and visualization based technologies and the real need to manage and sustain the environment around us have also been influential. A widening user community is good, although we must ensure that the competencies we represent are not diluted to render areas of our expertise redundant. We need to continue to promote our values, engage and demonstrate that we have the relevant skills. There are important initiatives to embrace and support both here and around the world.

## Core Skills: Are they Changing?

Perhaps the core skills which our profession requires are changing. The RICS review, of the current APC (Assessment of Professional Competence) pathways, highlights the difficulty of assessing our profession and where the core and rather traditional competencies need to be for the future young surveyors. To use, an admittedly very simplistic but illustrative, example: in this digital age a surveyor, who uses GNSS with an unmanned aerial system to acquire point cloud data for analysis in a GIS and deliver results to a client, may never have to level a tripod. Surely they do need to know how to do this survey task, don’t they, or do they? The massive construction projects that the Olympics represent or survey work for the Gotthard tunnel might offer a clue. I would certainly welcome your thoughts and comments on this topic, noting that the Olympics, currently being hosted in Rio De Janeiro, demonstrate that accurate measurement skills are perhaps still required for the competitive field sports results.

Finally as the summer makes an appearance in the northern hemisphere many of us will find time for some holidays, visiting and experiencing new places, and hopefully not getting lost. It used to be product centric (maps), but it is now much more data centric (satnav) and now moving towards the user centric experience (interactive “smart” apps). They all require the input and expertise of professionals with geospatial competencies during their creation. If we’re smart this will sustain us into the future. Okay, so someday a stay at home interactive immersive experience (no not the swimming pool!) might just be a common occurrence. Until then let’s hope the journey still involves some fun and the visits are both smart and safe. Keep it Spatial Stupid!

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