

Beyond 2000!

Two years ago I joined the editorial board of GIM International. Let's not deny it; it has been really an enjoyable time. From the beginning, my colleague editor Ir. Jan Hein Loedeman and I formed a strong team. A strong team is one in which there exist shared vision, ambition and goals, while the abilities of the individual team members are complementary. Right from the start, my own clear focus and interest has been in publishing high-quality articles on cutting-edge technological developments, new application areas and society-invoked developments that may influence the outlook of our profession.



My primary driving force in the selection of authors and articles spins around providing the geomatics professional active at the technical and executive side of the business with a broad spectrum overview of developments and trends. That is why you find in GIM International such a variety of items, including: Internet, telecommunication, high resolution sensors, integrated surveying systems, precision farming, facility management, flood risk management, navigation and mobile guidance.

Millennium Change

The complementary editorial teamwork mentioned above is, with the turn of the Century, consolidated and made visible. From now on, each month in this column you will find a leader, in which I will pinpoint the month's choice of features and comment on trends. The technological developments of today form the practice of tomorrow; is that not so? I therefore feel very much obliged to identify significant tendencies. This intention, which I consider to be my mission, is certainly reinforced by my background as assistant professor in GIS technology at the Delft University of Technology, with a strong background in photogrammetry and remote sensing. And without doubt GIM International forms a strong medium for this type of knowledge transfer.

Invited Reply

In addition, I attach much value to GIM International as a platform for the exchange of ideas. One of my first initiatives, two years ago, was thus the introduction of the Invited Reply. In this feature, specialists are invited to comment on the main conclusions of an article or on a proposition. This special millennium issue clearly expresses how much value I attach to this way of communicating. No less than 50 per cent of the features space in the present special issue is occupied by comment from, in particular, instrument and GIS manufacturers on the following proposition: Beyond 2000, the geomatics industry will be primarily focused upon customer-orientated services, end-to-end solutions and fast adaptation to user needs. The development of generic instruments and/or software will take second place. You may read more regarding this initiative on page 36.

Bright and Vivid

In my view, the geomatics discipline is facing a fascinating, bright and vivid future. I am strengthened in this opinion by the developments going on in society. The growing world population increasingly needs accurate and highly-detailed information, in its full spatial and temporal dimensions, concerning virtually every square meter of both the land and the sea area of the Earth. I further pinpoint the trends in society that will affect our profession in a separate article on page 31.

The rapid pace of development in geomatics will certainly also affect the way we educate students. The Internet offers great potential for distance education, as Mr Betit indicates in his contribution starting on page 71. This way of learning will also attract mature students wanting to advance their professional skills, whilst simultaneously continuing with their job. Distance learning, however, is also associated with problems. One of the most severe of these is that it is labour intensive. Consequently, professorial research and literary output to journal may diminish dramatically.

Luxury Problems

However, in view of the situation in other parts of the world, one cannot deny that many of our problems are the result of too much luxury. For most African countries the obstacles to advancing GIS applications, for example, are many. They include the pace of advancement of the technology, implementation costs and investment in GIS, as well as lack of skilled manpower, to mention just a few. The article by Mr Mhango (see page 77) highlights issues hindering GIS advancement in Africa. He also proposes ways forward for developing countries to reap real benefits from the technology in the new millennium.

If you are interested in sharing your opinion and vision with a worldwide audience, stay in touch with me. In the meantime, enjoyable reading and I wish you a healthy and prosperous 2000!

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