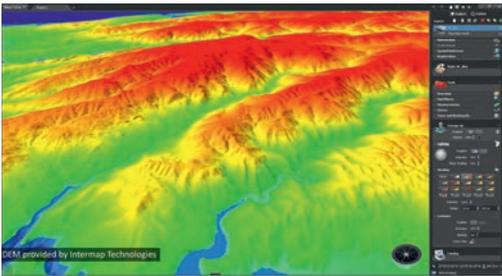


Blaze Terra Extension to Enable Customers to Access WAMI

Eternix, specialised in next-generation software for GIS visualisation and editing in 3D, has released its first WAMI extension enabling Blaze Terra users to access WAMI data through cloud-based services. WAMI stands for Wide Area Motion Imagery and is an advanced sensor-based technology, delivering board stretches of video-like footage. WAMI has been gaining popularity since its adoption by the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC).

► <http://bit.ly/1C17TVb>



Geo-matching.com Adds GIS Software Category

Geo-matching.com has recently added GIS Software to its broad spectrum of product categories. Adtollo was the first supplier to join this category with the product Topocad. In addition to general specifications, detailed information is given about storage, interoperability and data analysis.

► <http://bit.ly/1C17h1L>

ASPRS Releases Positional Accuracy Standards for Digital Geospatial Data

The American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) has announced the release of the new Positional Accuracy Standards for Digital Geospatial Data. The new ASPRS accuracy standards fulfil a critical need for map users and map makers alike. For centuries, map scale and contour interval have been used as an indication of map accuracy. Users want to know how accurately they can measure different things on a map, and map makers want to know how accurate maps need to be in order to satisfy user requirements.

► <http://bit.ly/1C17SAT>

Data Cannot Be Created from Thin Air



Progress in Earth observation (EO) from space has been astounding since the turn of the millennium. Over 200 optical EO satellites are currently in orbit, run by governmental agencies or private firms in over 30 countries. The US and France definitely take the lead. The platforms orbiting at 500, 600 or 700km above us produce images with overwhelming detail and accuracy. Until recently regulation disallowed the use of space images with a ground sample distance (GSD) smaller than 50cm. Particularly Digital Globe urged the US government to ease the GSD restrictions, and with success. Under the new ruling, images with a GSD of 31cm are permitted; this is exactly in line with the GSD of Worldview-3, which was launched by Digital Globe on 13 August 2014. A GSD of 31cm means that more objects and more object types on the ground can be recognised and outlined than on any other space image. On its website, Digital Globe promotes Worldview-3 images as a “viable alternative to aerial imagery, particularly for countries with formidable legal, geographic, or geopolitical barriers to aerial-based imagery collection, or where fast delivery and regular, cost-effective updates are major requirements.” This is a triumph for all those geomanagers who need accurate, timely and detailed geodata for monitoring and mapping purposes. Post-disaster damage inventories and relief efforts become easier to conduct and environmental monitoring becomes more effective. However, as in all human communications and interactions, not everyone is happy. A near-ideal situation for some creates anxiety and resistance among others – in this case outdoor workers,

including farmers, and outdoor recreationists. They express privacy concerns: “Big Brother is getting very close to my skin.” Farmers may be concerned that tax officers could count the number of cows or sheep on their property. Citizens, especially wealthier ones, might be anxious that neighbours or the media could ‘spy’ on their parties from above. The higher the level of detail visible on Google Earth and other Earth viewers, the more pressing the privacy issue becomes. Regulations so far have not focused on privacy as governments have primarily attempted to balance the GSD issue between military interests (homeland security) and business opportunities.

Is the level of detail visible in an image where the real issue lies? High-resolution aerial images have been captured over extensive areas, including cities, for generations. Nobody complained. However, usage was previously strictly reserved to mapping agencies, the military, local and national planners and suchlike. Today, everybody with an internet connection, whether wired or wireless, has access to satellite data through Earth viewers. If that were not so easy there would most likely be no privacy issue. Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, said in *The Guardian* in 2010: “People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. People no longer have an expectation of privacy.” I actually think people cherish their privacy – especially when they once have been confronted with the wicked aftermath of privacy violation, and the chance of that occurring increases with age. The solution? Limit the general public’s access to high-resolution satellite images and make them primarily accessible for government agencies, NGOs and private companies involved in geosciences. And when they are published in any form on Google Maps or other Earth viewers, any humans and human activities visible from above have to be pixelated or erased. How to codify that in law is another issue. In conclusion, here is a quote from the Digital Globe website which may hearten surveyors: “You cannot create data from nothing and the laws of physics cannot be conquered via software enhancements.” ◀