

The Impact of the US Sequestration on Geomatics



After the postponement of the National Map Users Conference and the cancellation of this year's Joint Navigation Conference, numerous empty seats at the ASPRS 2013 Conference were yet another sign of the impact of the US sequestration. Can we expect to see more negative effects in the future? GIM International is asking around in the geomatics sector to obtain some expert opinions. The first contribution comes from ASPRS president Steve DeGloria.

Paying the Price for Geospatial Isolationism

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Well-organised scientific and technical conferences draw upon a wide body of knowledge and allow access to top experts and decision-makers in our imaging and geospatial profession. Properly structured technical conferences serve to convey timely information and knowledge to members of our geospatial communities and enhance professional competence by allowing opportunities to network with and mentor fellow professionals and students. They also improve the quality of education and training of students and, ultimately, serve the public good.

Given current constraints on attendance at conferences and meetings, most recently the result of government-imposed sequester of funding, diligence is required to weigh and measure which conferences merit participation and to justify the transaction costs of participating in such events outside the office environment. These decisions should take into consideration what a scientific/technical conference is, why we should care, and what the consequences are to our respective professional communities.

With advances in social media and internet-based conferencing technologies, many employers are opting to limit information transfer and facilitate online professional interactions. Though presumably cost-effective, the consequent reduction of in-person interaction impedes networking, mentoring, and collaborative problem-solving among fellow professionals. This approach also presents a distinct disadvantage to those employers with mission-central objectives by limiting their ability to serve the public good through the integration of science, technology and education.

Limiting attendance and constructive engagement in technical conferences results in a less-informed and isolated workforce. Such actions reduce connectivity to fellow professionals where personal, non-virtual interaction is paramount to convey useful geospatial data and information. Real and perceived isolation from the geospatial community increases uncertainty on the advantages of geospatial science and technology in addressing concerns and interests of our respective organisations and local communities.

Scientific and technical conferences advance the state of our geospatial discipline. They provide professionals and students numerous opportunities to grow intellectually, offer valuable counsel to fellow geospatial practitioners, and advance the mission of our respective organisations. Restricting attendance at such conferences reflects counter-productive resource-allocation policies that serve to isolate individual geospatial professionals from the geospatial community at large. Ultimately, this isolation is too great a price to pay by any organisation.