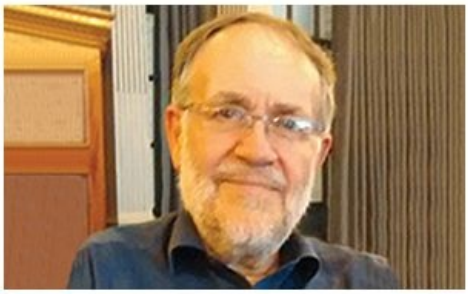
Black Boxes, Global Opportunities and Ethics



Surveying is dead easy isn't it? Of course it is, we did all that trigonometry stuff at school for GCSE. With that fantastic new Topocorp Trigo measurer we've just bought we can survey anything. Lovely job!

This has become a repeated worry for survey firms: the rise of cheap blackbox technology that encourages unqualified users to get started in survey. It's only when our new user runs into surveys that don't close and discovers things like scale factor, control or orthomosaics, that suddenly they need a bit more than GCSE Maths. A bit like Brexit in a way: easy to vote leave, rather more complicated to disentangle the complexity of rules and regulations for trade let alone projects planned or half way through.

Fortunately for would-be surveyors, there are a range of courses available from The Survey Association's Survey School at Worcester. There's even an apprenticeship scheme starting soon, which could lead after six or more years to full membership of RICS. This is excellent news for our industry. More details of this and the construction industry's CSCS card scheme, which you'll need if you're planning a site visit any time soon, can be found from page 28.

Global Opportunities

This issue of GW will be distributed at GEO Business (23 & 24 May); it has plenty for most geomatics practitioners beginning with a report on the World Bank's Land & Poverty conference – a real insight for surveyors. James Kavanagh has done an outstanding job on referencing and introducing the most relevant papers. Land transfer, acquisitions, geospatial information, new technology, land valuation, taxation, affordable housing, mining and mineral rights, gender issues and indigenous people's land rights and much more. RICS clearly sees opportunities around the globe where geomatics skills can make a real difference (begins page 13).

We also examine aspects of BIM: how Bentley is migrating to the cloud and the gap between the data requirements of facilities managers and a BIM as prepared by the design and construction team. How do you geo-reference objects like, desks, printers, desktop PCs etc. planned for a room?

Another complex challenge is how to measure and record economically how close to specification tolerances a flat surface is. An adaptation of existing technology to measure and record the levelness of cast floors is proposed by Belgian company Reduct in association with Tower Surveys (page 33).

Light detection and ranging continues to evolve and we look at the advantages that single photon Lidar brings to airborne scanning. Denser point clouds and faster capture rates are possible but at what point will SPL become a viable alternative to linear-mode systems? Turn to page 31.

The Ethical Challenge

Is it possible under all circumstances for a surveyor to act with integrity when work goes to the lowest bidder? Richard Groom examines the boundary between unethical and criminal behaviour and just when should you be prepared to walk away. The problems identified are all around us. I recently decided to change my broadband provider. Instantly the existing provider was offering all sorts of inducements for me to stay. The days when customers were rewarded for loyalty with better prices than the newby seem to have gone. How many times when shopping for an insurance quote have you been asked, 'How much have you been quoted?' Is this ethical? Shouldn't they be quoting you honestly at their best possible price based on the risks? If tenderers for major projects were allowed to do this it would become a chaotic race to the bottom and could leave clients picking up the bill from failed contractors.

Finally, do not miss GEO Business. Our review on pages 22-27 gives just an aroma of what's in store. It promises to be even better than previous events. Look forward to seeing you in London on 23 or 24 May.

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