

Brand New Beijing

The XXI Congress of the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS) is to be held in Beijing from 3rd to 11th July 2008. The quadrennial ISPRS Congress is one of the most important events in the photogrammetry, remote-sensing and spatial-information sciences community diary. The congress will be hosted by the Chinese Society of Geodesy, Photogrammetry and Cartography, with the theme "Silk Road for Information from Imagery". To get an impression of how things are shaping up for this event and what participants may expect, we conducted an interview with congress director Chen Jun.

During the 2004 ISPRS Congress held in Istanbul, Beijing was elected as venue for the 2008 Congress. What were the decisive arguments for this choice?

There are three major reasons why China applied to host the ISPRS 2008 Congress, and Beijing was finally elected as venue. First of all, China has achieved remarkable progress in ISPRS-related areas. Bringing ISPRS Congress to Beijing will provide an unprecedented opportunity for the international community to visit our institutes and industry, to observe new research and developments and to explore the co-operative potential and initiate new international collaborative agreements. Secondly, this is China's second bid to host an ISPRS Congress. We have actively participated in each ISPRS Congress, sending large delegations ever since 1980, and have chaired three Technical Commissions. China has also hosted a number of ISPRS events, including three symposia and tens of ISPRS workshops. But China has never been offered an opportunity to host ISPRS Congress. We have been preparing for four years for this second bid, and China has shown its strong aspiration to contribute more and more to ISPRS. Thirdly, Beijing is the ideal city! Since 1992 the venue for congress has moved steadily eastwards, from Washington DC to Vienna, Amsterdam and Istanbul, and it is a natural and logical move on now to Beijing. In addition, Beijing is hosting the 2008 Olympic Games. Our congress participants will see a new Beijing, with ancient culture and modern charm.

What are your main aspirations for the 2008 ISPRS Congress and why, in your view, should geoinformatics professionals attend the congress and exhibition?

The logo for our congress indicates that China warmly welcomes participants from the whole world to gather in Beijing in 2008, and is closely collaborating with ISPRS for a successful congress. With support from ISPRS community and local society we will offer a really successful ISPRS Congress: informative, special, progressive and relaxed. Geoinformatics professionals will enjoy a Beijing renewed in readiness for the 2008 Olympic Games, first-class conference facilities and a variety of hotels able to meet differing needs. They will find here an efficient and human congress organisation, excursions across China and sightseeing in Beijing, the well-known Chinese hospitality and more...

What will be the hot topics during the congress, and may we expect any exciting new developments from the industry?

New data-acquisition platforms (satellites and airborne and terrestrial vehicles) and sensors (digital cameras, Lidar), online and real-time processing algorithms and systems, as well as new applications, including disaster mapping, health studies and Olympic applications will be among the hot topics for congress. About forty theme-related and special sessions have been arranged to present the latest developments and applications over the past four years. Leica Geosystems, Microsoft, Intergraph and many other companies will demonstrate their exciting new products and services. To facilitate understanding of the significant scientific and technical progress over the four-year period between the last two ISPRS congresses, a Congress Book has been produced and will be published in anticipation of the Beijing congress. The book contains 34 high-quality overview/review papers summarising the major achievements and describing the state of the art of topics relevant to ISPRS. It is intended for a wide audience, not just scientists and researchers but also university students and practitioners. A User's Forum has also been established at this Congress for the first time, to promote interaction between user, scientist and manufacturer. New demands for utilisation of photogrammetry, remote-sensing and spatial-information sciences will be discussed and possible solutions explored. The User's Forum will comprise three sessions: production chain for new imaging sensors, thematic information extraction from images, on-demand geo-spatial data updating and integration, and web-based geo-spatial information services.

Please elaborate briefly on the present status of photogrammetry and remote sensing in China. To what extent is this expected to be reflected during the coming congress and exhibition?

China has achieved remarkable progress in ISPRS-related areas. For example, it has launched more than fifty earth-orbit satellites, developed broad societal applications and established the largest professional education system, with hundreds of thousands of professionals and students. A special book entitled Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing in China and published in both Chinese and English is currently in production and will be out in advance of congress. This book gives an overview of the historical development, status and vision for photogrammetry, remote-sensing and spatial-information sciences in China. It will facilitate overseas congress participants in understanding China's development and exploration of co-operation potential. Moreover, a special exhibition will present the latest Chinese development in the field of remote sensing. Technical visits to about ten local institutes and companies are also included in the congress programme.

ISPRS 2008 Beijing will take place just one month before the Olympic Games, when Beijing will become the focus of world attention. What is the possibility of interference between the ISPRS Congress and Olympics, as they will occur more or less simultaneously? Could the congress be negatively affected in terms of, for example, transportation restrictions and insufficient accommodation? If so, will alternatives be available?

The whole of China is anxiously preparing for the 2008 Olympics and the host city Beijing has made developmental progress at an unprecedented pace over the past four years. We are seeing an almost 'brand-new' Beijing emerging from its traditional charming environment, one with perhaps the greatest variety of architectural masterpieces of all world mega-cities. New motorways, roads, city rail-links, fast inter-city railway lines and airport terminals are appearing all the time. In Beijing, even the most experienced taxi driver sometimes gets lost nowadays because there are just too many new roads and places! (Good news for GPS business!) In the new Beijing, your gaze will frequently be arrested by the great diversity of ancient and modern landmarks which in the language of architecture tell you the story of the city's history, culture and modern life. Ultra-modern architecture blends beautifully with the most well-known historical landmarks, such as the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Summer Palace and Temple of Heaven. There is the new National Grand Theatre ('The Egg'), National Stadium ('Bird's Nest'), the National Swimming Centre ('Water Cube') and the unimaginable 'Z criss-cross' CCTV headquarters edifice.

Box:

The Congress

The programme will consist of keynote and plenary sessions featuring distinguished academics, and parallel oral and poster sessions presenting the latest developments over a broad range of topics. There will be a user's forum showing successful solutions and new professional community demands, and a commercial exhibition demonstrating state-of-the-art equipment and services. The congress will be the culmination of four years' work by many researchers, scientists, practitioners and administrators in fields covered by ISPRS. Besides the technical activities, a wide variety of social events will be arranged during congress, providing participants and their accompanying persons with the opportunity to experience the unique culture of China. A selection of pre- and post-congress tours will show participants Chinese historical relics and natural wonders, both in Beijing and other places in China.

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