

CONFIRMING AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

Cartography and GIS

The Second International Conference on Cartography and GIS took place in the Bulgarian ski resort of Borovets from 21st to 24th January 2008. The 130 participants from Europe, Africa and Asia confirmed the international reputation of this conference.<P>

Exactly two years since the first conference in this series, experts met again for four days in the beautiful Rila Mountains, enhanced by plenty of snow. Ms Marta Nagy-Rothengass (EC) presented the Seventh Framework Programme. Geographic Information (GI) was essential amongst information, she remarked. However, no special research and funding were devoted to GI, which was seen rather as enabling information and technology. She also presented EU policy and research projects in the area of disaster management. Mr Alessandro Annoni from the EC Joint Research Centre presented the INSPIRE programme, emphasising the importance of cross-border problems: about sixty million people in the European Union live less than half an hour from a border. Data concerning borders had therefore to be correct, just one example of the need for harmonising data across Europe, and thus for INSPIRE. May 2009 is the deadline for transposing this directive into national laws. The EC played a strong role, said Mr Annoni, in GEOSS, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, set up to produce and manage earth-related information for the benefit of the environment and humanity. As in INSPIRE, interoperability was key to GEOSS.

Cartography to Camels

Other topics covered were

- new developments in remote sensing
- applications of GIS in areas such as erosion, vegetation (including camel grazing!) urban growth and archaeology
- use in GIS of new technology such as XML and XSLT, semantics, multimedia or virtual worlds.

Your reporter gave an overview of OGC standardisation of the sensor web, including several applications. Problems in GIS education were discussed; GITTA, the Geographic Information Technology Training Alliance (www.gitta.info), offers free access to e-learning material about GIS. Prof. Kira B. Shingareva and her colleagues from Moscow State University for Geodesy and Cartography discussed planetary cartography, mentioning research that included the preparation of internet access to maps of several planets. Another issue is education, and Moscow State University offers opportunities for children to get familiar with the maps of planets and with scientific work. Further covered was the creation of hypsometric maps and digital terrain models, and an unpublished digital map of Venus was presented.

Disaster Management

A highlight was a seminar on disaster management, held during two successive afternoons. A new working group on disaster management was established, and the advanced state of the art of relevant research in the Czech Republic was particularly demonstrated; Milan Konecny, initiator of the working group, reports further in this month's GIMasters and Disasters column (see page 49). The ICA Commission on Cartography and Children chaired by Jose Jesus Reyes and T. Bandrova, and the Commission on Planetary Cartography chaired by K. Shingareva held their working meetings, and the management board of the Association for Geographic Information in South-east Europe (AGISEE) chaired by U. Boes held its own annual meeting.

Exhibition

A small exhibition and many poster-shows accompanied the conference, although the attention of participants and organisers alike remained focused on the presentations. The social programme included an award for best children's drawing in the Barbara Petchenik Children's World Map Competition that was held in 2007 in Moscow. The cocktail party on the first evening included Bulgarian folk dancing and music, and the conference dinner not only provided opportunities for socialising but also for trying out Bulgarian folk dances. Sadly, the dense conference programme did not allow time for winter sports.

The reputation of this event organised by Temoujka Bandrova from the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Sofia, Bulgaria, with Dr Milan Konecny, past-president of ICA as overall conference president, is now firmly established. Whilst details of such have not yet been confirmed, a third conference might attract even more participants. The organisers might therefore have to reconsider the focus of the conference. More information at: <http://datamap-bg.com/conference2008/index.html>.