

Coming of Age

GIS is coming of age! The biggest evidence for this is the vast majority of young people I saw strolling through the hallways and conference and exhibition rooms of the San Diego Convention Center where at the end of July the 25th ESRI User Conference was held. I'd hazard a guess that the average age of the 14,000 visitors lay between 30 and 35 years. And that's a lot younger than the average age of attendees at, for instance, surveying conferences. All these young professionals will raise GIS to an adult working field with applications in all kinds of industries and in decision making - a process that is, of course, already well under way.

GIS is public! One area stirring up GIS as the new foundation for good decision making is obviously the public sector. In the crowds that populated the San Diego Convention Center, government, state and county officials, far outnumbered professionals from, for instance, electricity or other utilities industries. The theme of this year's conference "Helping manage our world" again emphasised how ESRI rates the importance of the public sector. It's there where "managing the world" is most relevant.

GIS anticipates! ESRI president Jack Dangermond presented at the conference the concept of GeoWeb, an online environment in which all systems will be linked to each other. All kinds of user communities will be able to make use of this "system of systems". According to Dangermond, GeoWeb will be the most important development in coming years, riding alongside the central role played by the internet in many of our daily working lives.

Another sign of the coming of age of GIS is the GIS Day to be held on November 16th of this year. GIS professionals, students, teachers and other interested people will, for the seventh year running, participate in all kinds of corporate open houses, workshops and exhibitions. A great opportunity to spread the word about GIS and its capabilities throughout the world.

One other thing: in my last editorial I wrote about the hostile take-over bid by Hexagon for Leica Geosystems. So I owe you an update on subsequent developments. Leica found a friendly partner and take-over party in Danaher and thinks that here it has a partner that will provide superior value for shareholders to that implied in the Hexagon offer. CEO Hans Hess is happy with Danaher's offer because it not only values the financial status of Leica Geosystems but also the innovative, dynamic and customer-focused character of the company. Danaher business includes professional instrumentation, tools & components and industry & technology. The company designs, markets and manufactures innovative products in markets like medical technology, environmental and electronic tests. Leica Geosystems fits in just fine! Good luck!