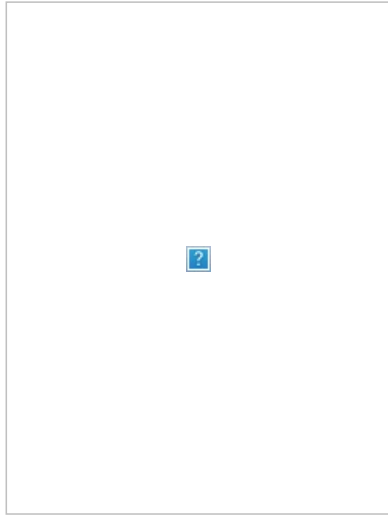


Dancing the Polka in Praha

I was fortunate to participate in the Joint Symposium of the ICA Working Group on CEWaCM and JBGIS Gi4DM entitled “Cartography and Geoinformatics for Early Warning and Emergency Management”™, held in Prague, the Czech Republic, from 19th to 22nd January. The theme of the conference was “Towards Better Solutions”™. My 144 fellow participants came from 34 countries, many from central and eastern Europe.



After an impressive list of keynote speeches on the first day, a welcome reception was held. The president of the conference, Milan Konečný, was the perfect host - introducing me personally to all keynote speakers and other people he thought I should meet.

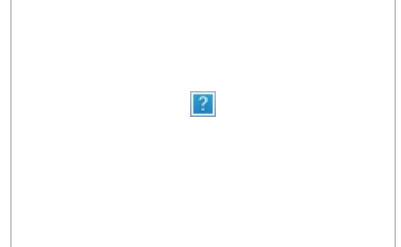
On most days, there were two or three parallel sessions with blocks of four to five presentations. They were divided into several topics: 'frameworks and tools', 'technologies and infrastructures' and 'citizens in early warning and emergency management'. The first day I felt like a little child in a candy shop, wanting to listen to every presentation I had highlighted in the programme, no matter what session it was scheduled in. I soon decided it was best to stay put in a session once I was in, since in my opinion it was very disruptive having people walking in and out all the time during presentations. I would say that the conference was a victim of its own success: there were too many presentations to choose from!

With global warming and an increase in the frequency of natural, humanitarian, industrial and man-made (terrorism) disasters, early warning systems and crisis management are greatly needed. The conference showed that technology keeps improving, with progress in data access, good web-based systems (geo-portals), many open standards and testing of open source solutions, new types of virtual environments and even serious games.

There was only one session held at the end of day two, and even that one was poorly attended. Maybe this was due to Barack Obama's inauguration speech. (See our news feature on page 10). The round table discussion scheduled later that evening attracted only seven people who listened to the planned discussion between a group of 10! It was very interactive: we, the audience, were invited to join the theoretical round table with all the presidents and professors. The discussion on spatially-enabled early warning and emergency management focussed on the gap between what researchers develop and what real users in the field need, and on the misuse of data. A statement was made on the need for commercial parties to participate in EU programmes.

To conclude, it was agreed that pilot projects with end-users, experiments and demonstrations focused on programme areas of interest to leadership are needed to show the benefits of spatial data infrastructure in improving decision-making.

Prague, city of hundred spires



The third day brought more worthwhile presentations and was rounded off with the conference's social event held in a historic brewery from the beginning of the last century. Traditional dishes were accompanied by liqueur and the brewery's 'U Flek' beer. Folkloric live music drove the attendees to dance the polka. Even I was persuaded in the end. Konečný had scheduled his speech for the next morning, ensuring everybody would join and attend the last presentations and the closing session.

Roosmarijn Haring, editor-in-chief, GIM International

Jazzy New Orleans hosts ILMF

Welcome sign LIDAR09



Business and pleasure went hand in hand at the International Lidar Mapping Forum in jazzy New Orleans. ILMF, held from January 26th through 28th at the Astor Crowne Plaza drew some 40 exhibitors and 450 delegates from all over the world.

Despite an economy in crisis, the sentiment during the show was still one of moderate optimism. While nobody really knows what will happen, there's still a lot of work out there and there will be throughout 2009. Intelligent Exhibitions, organiser of the show, always makes certain that besides business is complemented by pleasure during conferences and shows. At the exhibitors' reception a jazz band played on the exhibition floor and at the last night of ILMF the 'Intelligent Exhibitions ladies' held audience in Pat O'Briens, one of New Orleans' most famous beer drinking venues. Many delegates didn't let that opportunity go by. The conference, chaired by Alistair McDonald, had a good balance of speakers and topics on lidar in both land and sea zones, with sessions like Coastal Zone Lidar, Technology Development and Data Fusion & Processing. The keynote was given by Alexander Wiechert, Managing Director for Microsoft Vexcel Imaging in Austria.

Durk Haarsma, Publisher, GIM International

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/dancing-the-polka-in-praha>
