

# Experience the Power

“Experience the power”™ was the theme of this year’s Intergraph international user conference, the largest ever. “Experience”™ did not relate to military or political power, but to mental, as R. Halsey Wise, president and CEO since 2003, made clear during the opening session.<P>

“There are more people alive today than have ever died. Around 80% of all the information on www is in the English language. Today the modern living room contains more computing power than was used to land the first man on the moon in 1969”. Remarks like this were spilled abundantly over the audience in both written and oral form prior to and during the opening session. In their search for fitting quotations the organisers had even found my own book *Geo-information Engineering; Change Technology in a Changing Society* (2003), as witnessed by their paraphrasing of my observation (page 65) that the name Jeep came from the army abbreviation for a ‘General Purpose’ vehicle.

## Stage Performers

The conference was held from 2nd to 5th June at Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas, with the opening taking place in the Colosseum, the immense theatre. Discussing how Las Vegas became the largest convention city in the world, Wise, immediate successor to Jim Taylor, one of the founders of the company, addressed the audience with all the flair of a routine artist. Perhaps inspired by Elton John, “best all-around performer”, who played ‘The Red Piano’ on that same stage. How to become biggest by the power of spirit and vision: that was the question central to Wise’s speech, and he invited Lance Armstrong, seven times Tour de France winner and cancer survivor, to take the stage and tell his story of persistence.

## Footprint

The conference hosted 3,500 customers, partners and employees from over sixty countries, and Wise told those present in the Colosseum that revenues extrapolated from 2003 to 2010 showed an exponential increase from US\$500 million to US\$1100 million. He also presented icon awards to eight companies in honour of their visionary use of Intergraph software. One such went to our recently interviewed Dutch Cadastre (GIM August 2008), which uses Intergraph GeoMedia to support activities including gathering, storing and displaying geospatial data. Intergraph stopped trading on the stock market in 2006, when it became a wholly owned subsidiary of Intergraph Holding Co, owned by Hellman & Friedman LLC and Texas Pacific Group.

## Photogrammetry

Intergraph was strong from its inception in both specialised hardware and software. But as the hardware industry matured in the nineties, the company de-coupled its hardware division to entirely focus on software solutions by the turn of the millennium. But not all hardware has been abandoned; in addition to developing software for the photogrammetric market, aerial cameras are still produced and under further development.??The development of a new camera, the RMK D, was announced during the ISPRS congress in Beijing. This medium-format camera aims to replace film-based technology for smaller mapping and remote-sensing projects and for engineering projects requiring high level of detail. Mostafa Madani, chief photogrammetrist and product manager, assured me in Beijing that “The camera provides a cost-effective solution for smaller jobs and that is a gap in the market”. It will be suitable for firms now using film cameras to step into digital image acquisition. I asked Klaus Neumann, product manager hardware, what was the significant difference between the new model and other medium-format systems. “We used the extensive experience gained from developing our large-format cameras, including high-quality lenses. The radiometric resolution of 14 bits enables the capture of quality images even when light is poor. The image size is 6,096 x 6,500 pixels. The multispectral sensor allows the capture of RGB and NIR images simultaneously. The high frame rate provides high-resolution stereo coverage, and these features combined make the difference.” The camera will be available in early 2009.

## Final Remarks

The nice thing about this user conference was that it not only enabled users to enhance their knowledge and skills through workshops presented by personnel, but also to share knowledge through presentations of case-studies by colleague product users. For example, the photogrammetry track gave the National Geographic Institute of Belgium the chance to share its experience in map updating and revision.

The conference was very well organised and the next one will take place from 15th to 18th 2009 in Washington DC, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center. “Over 85% of the world’s energy is produced using non-renewable sources (fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas)”: another of the statements strewn over the audience at the start of conference. But, to end on a positive note, “Enough sunlight falls on the earth’s surface each minute to meet world energy demand for an entire year”.