

Fearless



and other end users.

Geomatics is undergoing dramatic changes at a previously unseen pace. Nowadays, geodata is acquired, processed, analysed and stored so radically differently than before that it must be difficult for a newly trained surveyor to relate to one who qualified a couple of decades ago. And vice versa, surveyors who have been working in the field for some time can struggle to keep up with the rate of change. Just some of the factors that have altered the face of the surveying profession include GPS, photogrammetry, Lidar, UAVs, crowdsourcing, GIS and integrated total stations. Such developments have opened up the previously highly specialised job of surveying and providing data to new groups of professionals – and even volunteers. Since they are generally cheaper than traditional surveyors, these ‘new surveyors’ are reducing the cost of geoinformation for consumers

Perhaps understandably, the arrival of these newcomers to the industry is frowned upon by certain groups within the surveying community, who are concerned that the new entrants will not care about accuracy, will not understand old customs, will not grasp underlying theory and will not take account of quality measures and regulations. Some proud and established surveyors are even talking of unfair competition, low pricing and a damaged market. Internet discussion forums and comments sections are rife with complaints about the sorry state of the surveying sector.

A proud professional surveyor runs the risk of becoming a conservative traditionalist, claiming that everything used to be better in the old days, and fearing the future. Printed books are better than digital versions, calling a landline is safer than a mobile phone, writing a letter is more romantic than sending a text message...and it would be easy to extend this list for geomatics. But I won't, because I feel that surveyors who are thinking thus are doing themselves a disavour. Their original decision to become a surveyor must have been made out of a passion for technology, because that has always been at the heart of geomatics. Allowing fear to replace that passion is a bad trade-off.

In the past decade we have indeed witnessed tremendous advances, and for those who are enthusiastic about the possibilities technology holds, these are exciting times offering countless chances. True, they require a flexible and adaptive attitude, and a strategy and vision might come in handy, especially for entrepreneurial surveyors who have their own companies to run. But change can also create a new dynamism and, more importantly, it can keep you in business. There's no point crying over changes in the industry. Instead, it's much more productive to channel your energy into finding new ways to shape the future of your profession – fearlessly.