

Feet on the Ground

In January of this year, I opened my editorial of this 26th volume of GIM International with a column entitled '25 years!' – because, needless to say, we are celebrating our 25th anniversary this year. Marking 25 years of informing our readers all over the globe and, as I said back in January, hopefully another 25 years to come. Wouldn't that be great? 50 years of documenting and reporting on developments in geomatics, which has moved from pure land surveying to land data management, for land surveyors who have evolved into land managers. But we're only halfway there, so let's get our feet back on the ground. I would like to consider some other, much more astounding figures. In the world we live in today, 4.5 billion of the total 6 billion land parcels are still to be surveyed. Hence, although we have highly accurate maps of the world and, unlike a few centuries ago, there is no terra incognita anymore, 75% of all land parcels have still not been surveyed and registered in a land administration system. Whereas countries' boundaries are surveyed and resurveyed, the land on which billions of citizens are living is not subject to ownership through a proper cadastral system. To achieve that within the next 25 years, we would need to survey 180 million parcels a year, which is close to half a million per day – and even more if we discount weekends and public holidays. An immense task, which is reassuring from the point of view of job certainty yet frightening in terms of its sheer scale. So again, let's get our feet back on the ground. In this anniversary issue of GIM International, our editor Mathias Lemmens takes you through the developments in geomatics in the last 25 years, looking at societal and technological changes and more specifically at new techniques such as GNSS, mobile GIS, satellite imagery and laser, all of which have come to maturity during the lifetime of our magazine. This trip down memory lane will undoubtedly spark visions of the future. In this month's interview, Emmanuel Nkurunziza of the Rwanda Natural Resources Authority explains how his organisation will bring 10 million parcels under registered title by the end of 2013 – a valiant undertaking in the most densely populated country of Africa, which was deeply hurt by the genocide in the nineties but is now one of the continent's most economically prosperous pockets. I'll leave it up to you to assess the results of this African project in the light of the astronomical figures mentioned earlier. It's important to see it in perspective and in particular to regard it as an encouraging example of tackling the job at hand. In our regular editorial board meetings, we've decided not to spend too much time reflecting on our anniversary, but instead to focus on continuing to report reliably and accurately on geomatics in the years to come. With our feet firmly on the ground!

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