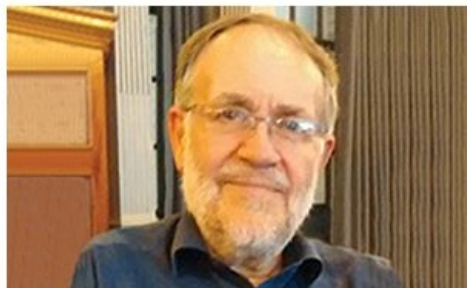# GeoCom Grabs the Headlines

The AGI's decision to change the format of the annual GeoCom conference from residential to a one day event with invited speakers seems to have worked. Several of the presentations were outstanding. Big Data author Timandra Harkness set the scene very well, grabbing everyone's attention with a big data example drawn from the Ice Age!

Dr Catherine Mulligan also gave some headline-grabbing stats. If it's not appeared on your horizon yet, Blockchain computing is sure to arrive soon. It's a way of ensuring security for online transactions and is set to play a role in securing the Internet of Things. Currently, its main use has been to secure Bitcoin transactions and is already consuming as much electricity as Ireland.

From developing risk-free navigation for drones, to relieving hunger, to green corridors and the underground, GeoCom16 was an event to really set you thinking. It was also rather grand to be at Britain's home of geography, the Royal Geographical Society, whose director general Dr Rita Gardner was on hand to kick-start proceedings. You can read our full report, starting page 20.

Staying with Big Data, Varun Adibhatla of ARGO Labs argues that there are benefits for local government by combining GIS and big data collected through low-cost street sensors and viewed through the platform of a common operational picture. This is collaborative technology and can only help break down walls and silos within the government. Soon artificial intelligence will become significant. But, in the words of the old song, there could be trouble ahead. To quote a leading pundit, "In a field where reality testing is difficult under the best of circumstances, wherein authenticity can be assumed, an AI takeover may prove undetectable". Read more on page 18.

This issue (the last in the current form) sees the launch of a new column under the working title of "the elevator pitch". To reiterate for those unaware: you have a brilliant geospatial idea to take your organisation forward; you have just a few minutes in the lift with the CEO to convince him or her. What do you say? The idea is to be as concise and convincing as possible. The first in the series comes via Esri's start-up programme and it's all about an energy company using GIS and social media.

A visitor to GeoCom16, who last attended such an event say 20 years ago might notice quite a change in the audience. Today there are far more women in GI. Esri UK's Sarah Lewin comments on this phenomenon on page 15. The good news for the girls is that we're reaching equilibrium in the geo workplace, but there are currently more girls than boys on GIS courses.

It is now six years since the UK's data.gov platform was launched and four since the UK Government set out its vision for a data-based future of openness and transparency. While there are plenty of datasets available and being used, their use in high-value authoritative applications is patchy. We're still a long way from realising those promised multi-billion pound benefits. The future, barriers to use and solutions are examined in detail by Ed Corkery and Steven Ramage (page 11).

We are delighted to honour Prof Ian Masser in this issue (page 17) who has received the rare GSDI Global Citizen award from the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association. GiSPro congratulates Emeritus Professor Masser on this well-deserved recognition, which celebrates a remarkable academic career spanning geography, town planning, GIS and INSPIRE with an underlying thread of spatial data infrastructures. This column is all too brief. I had wanted to tell you all about Connectography and its advocate Parag Khanna but you'll need to Google him. Trust me, this guy is on to something. I'll try and tell you more in the next issue when I've finished reading his book.

Enjoy this issue. We shall return in the new year with a refreshed design. Stay safe and enjoy the seasonal break.

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https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/geocom-grabs-the-headlines