

TWO MOSCOW CONFERENCES

Geodata from Space, Air and Ground

At the beginning of December 2007 Moscow hosted two interesting conferences on rapidly advancing technologies for the acquisition of geo-data. The first meeting focused on “Earth from Space” and the second on laser and digital-camera technology.<P>

From 4th to 6th December the 3rd International Conference “Earth from Space – the Most Effective Solutions” was held at the Russian Presidential Administration Votkinski complex, an hour’s drive south of Moscow city centre. Radarsat (Canada), CosmoSkyMed (Italy) and TerraSAR-X (Germany) presented the current status and plans for radar and sub-metre resolution imagery. ISPRS had an exhibition stand and held a session on the possibilities of ecological, economic and social monitoring of territories using space systems.

Two Moscow Conferences

Rainer Sandau, chief scientist at the Berlin German Aerospace Center (DLR), discussed the prospects and limitations of small satellites for earth observation (see also [interview, GIM May 2007](#)). Main conference organiser Scanex arranged four master-classes demonstrating new versions of its software (see [interview with Scanex general director Dr Vladimir Gershenzon, GIM March 2008](#)). The biennial event hosted an exhibition for twelve companies and organisations to show their products and services. Although the venue was a rather chic resort, and thus expensive, the number of participants and countries was more than double that of the previous conference. Over 330 people from 32 countries came, witnessing the boom in space technology in Russia. Nearly a hundred oral and more than forty poster papers were presented, many in Russian, although interpreters did a terrific job in simultaneously translating the oral presentations. To make the conference really international, maybe next time the slides could be bilingual too.

Lasers and Cameras

Held almost simultaneously, on 6th and 7th December, and also in Moscow but closer to the city centre, was the 7th International Conference on “Laser Scanning and Digital Aerial Photography Today and Tomorrow”. The conference, held at the President Hotel, attracted 250 participants from nineteen countries and was accompanied by a small exhibition. The main sponsor of this two-day event is Geokosmos, founded in 1993 and headquartered in Moscow. According to Sergey Melnikov, president of the Geokosmos Group of Companies, the company in 2001 became the first in Russia to own a 3D-laser scanner. Since then the company had focused on using innovative laser scanning (both airborne and terrestrial) and aerial digital photogrammetry and this strategic decision had, he said, put it on the list of prominent geo-data acquisition providers worldwide.

Here too ISPRS council members presented papers; John Trinder delivered the opening speech. The majority of presentations were by Russian and foreign companies discussing their products and services, experiences and vision of the future. The foreign companies that gave a paper included Aerodata International Surveys, Eurosense, Riegl, Rollei, Terra Imaging and Terrasolid. Jan Willem van der Vegt of Terra Imaging demonstrated how integration of data from laser and digital camera provided benefits for many applications such as river management and 3D-city modelling. A great eye-catcher was the presentation by Dr Franz Leberl, founder of Microsoft Photogrammetry and part-time professor at Graz University of Technology in Austria, who outlined the development strategy for Microsoft’s Virtual Earth Project, also successful in the CIS countries, to gain leadership in mapping over Google. Planned are 3D modelling of more than three thousand cities, to be performed geometrically correctly and with photo-realistic texturing of buildings and objects. More than a hundred cities have already been mapped, and the number will grow to five hundred by June 2008 and 1,500 cities a year later. Leberl demonstrated how advances in automatic image interpretation supported by integration of data from multiple sensors could automate the creation of 3D-city models. The wish expressed by Bill Gates, he concluded, that everybody would be able to virtually visit any shop or museum in any city anywhere, was not so strange as one might think.