

Geomatics in Russia

Professionals from outside eastern European countries are not often exposed to the developments in geomatics underway in Russia. Last year I was privileged to attend three conferences there. I went to the Geo Siberia '07 conference and exhibition in Novosibirsk in April 2007, and the ScanEx Third International Conference "Earth from Space: the most effective solutions" in Moscow in December 2007. I also attended the Seventh Annual International Conference of the Russian Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing Society (RSPRS), on the theme "Laser Scanning and Digital Aerial Photography Today and Tomorrow", also held in Moscow in December 2007 and sponsored by GeoKosmos. These conferences were well organised, with high-quality papers and papers in translation, mostly presented in Russian.

Major Source

The conferences all exhibited significant advances in technologies for photogrammetry and remote sensing. Private companies are playing a major role in the development of the geomatics industry in Russia, as demonstrated by the sponsors. While Russia lacks significant earth-observation systems, reductions in security restrictions have enabled the use of foreign satellites for remote-sensing purposes, received by local receiving stations. The companies have efficient systems for adding value to data received from these foreign satellites, thus providing an alternative source of information for countries both within and outside the CIS. High-resolution satellite data is an important source of information, and hence Russian companies have contracts with all the high-resolution satellite data providers. Examples of application of earth-observation data in the CIS countries include earthquake monitoring, studies of salt and sand in the Aral Sea region, air and oil pollution, monitoring natural resources, fire monitoring and monitoring the safety of dams at the Chernobyl site.

Aggressive

Digital photogrammetry software is well established in Russia, and private companies are providing services around the world for imaging and airborne laser scanning, as far afield, indeed, as Australia and New Zealand. Presentations by representatives from CIS countries demonstrated aggressive business approaches to obtaining spatial information. Provision of image and other spatial data is very competitive worldwide. This bodes well for the users of spatial data, but a very demanding climate for the data providers. However, there is also competition from outside for providing spatial data services within Russia. A representative from Microsoft Photogrammetry, (part of the Microsoft Corporation), Franz Leberl, gave a keynote presentation at the RSPRS meeting. In their advertising statement before the conference, Microsoft Corporation claimed that, 'The territory of Russia and CIS countries possesses the strongest potential for implementation of the "Virtual Earth" Project'. Microsoft has plans for 3D-mapping, with realistic texturing of buildings and correct representation of geometry, for up to 3,000 cities in Russia and CIS countries. There are plans for five hundred cities to be mapped by June 2008, which means providing data at the rate of a city per day. Overall market turnover in information technology in Russia over the next three to four years is predicted to grow by 15%. Russian companies are providing a new source of spatial information services, while there are likely to be marketing opportunities in Russia for international organisations.