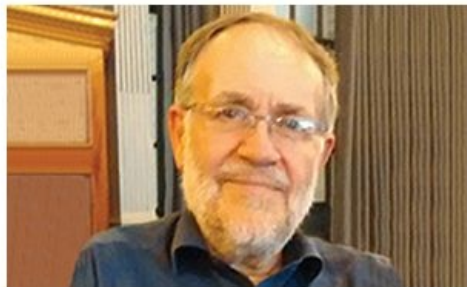


Geospatial - Is it really just part of the Techno Stack?



I attended the Scottish AGI conference last month in Edinburgh in a land where local government and other state agencies benefit from an organisation called the Improvement Service. Colin Mair of the service painted a grim picture of local government finances north of the border though probably no worse than most of the rest of UK. Nevertheless, it was a particularly well attended, vibrant and busy day. Presentations ranged from the heritage sector, UAVs (aka drones), driverless vehicles, Big Data and data islands, to Glasgow's emerging space satellite industry where size is apparently measured in whisky boxes (quite a change from those great ships that once began life on the Clyde whose size could be measured in football fields). The day wound up with one of those thought-provoking presentations from Google's geospatial evangelist Ed Parsons; we are moving from the

desktop to "a world in your pocket" (or handbag?) where the smartphone maps countries.

While a number of pundits have tended to dismiss geospatial as nothing special including one at AGI Scotland ("just another techno stack") it is remarkable how many aspects of life today rely on it, including the all-important consumer sector. The still from Grand Theft Auto which graces our front cover is typical of games whose compilation can be made a whole lot easier by basing the background scenery on real-world 3D topography. Andy Coote and his son James discuss the influence and importance of geospatial in this context on page 24.

Since at least last year the privatisation of the Land Registry has been on the Government's agenda. A previous proposal three years ago under the coalition government was rejected by over 80% of those consulted. But when did the views of those with knowledge of a subject ever stop government? Only when you can get The Sun or The Daily Mail behind you, are you likely to make our Government think again, and the Land Registry was never going to be an issue to exercise the mass media – too much hard thinking. We report on the Government's plans in this issue's News columns and former chief land registrar John Manthorpe sets out the arguments against this worrying move on page 16.

One of the problems of conferences, unless you are an eminent keynoter, is that each speaker gets the same amount of time to present. That can work well for those with a simple message; less so for those with a complex idea to get over. Last November at AGI GeoCom15 I was struck by an interesting presentation from Andrew Thompson on ground information modelling. Alas, Andrew didn't have enough time to properly get his message across and was cut short. I am pleased to be able to give him space in GiSPro to present his ideas in detail on this important topic (page 21).

Because mappers are an enthusiastic bunch and understand all too well the importance of up-to-date mapping in critical decision making, it is unsurprising that there is an increasing number of voluntary initiatives around crisis mapping. One such is HOT, the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team. HOT relies on open source and open data to provide up-to-date mapping for NGOs as well as local communities around the world. Their work though is not just for crisis situations but also for economic development, as Paul Stewart explains (page 18).

This issue of GIS Professional will be distributed at geospatial's three big upcoming events: GEOBusiness (24-25 May); the Esri UK Conference (17 May) and GeoPlace (28 April). All take place in London and are advertised in this issue. I look forward to meeting readers there. In addition, we shall also have copies available at the GeoDATA series of events (see News, page 08).

This article was published in GIS Professional April 2016