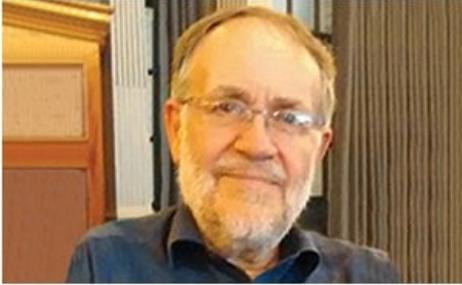


GIS Comes of Age



An important issue for all our readers as we focus on education and training for GIS professionals plus the growing market for remotely sensed data from space.

Just over two years ago Sir Mark Walport, the UK Government's chief scientific advisor, told delegates at the AGI GeoCom conference that "geospatial now underpins everything government does". That applies to local government and the emergency services too, through the PSMA and the work of GeoPlace. Our focus on education and training in this issue underlines how geospatial and geography have truly come of age. Our interview with the RGS's director Dr Rita Gardner reveals that geography is now a highly sought-after starting point for a career. Whither the PPE ruling elite?

The recent budget in the UK contained several aspects with a high geospatial content. £270 million for emerging technologies like driverless cars and other so-called disruptive technologies, together with £16m for 5g mobile phone infrastructure development, for which currently no standards exist, all add up to an endorsement of geospatial as an essential part of the economy. The budget also included money to fund new 1,000 PhD's in those important STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and mathematics, some of which should trickle into geospatial. Mathematics in geospatial is identified by the RGS and others as needing more support. In the age of big data and analytics, starting out in geospatial/geography with A level maths has become essential.

A sector of the economy tipped to grow in the near future is space. We already derive much useful information from remotely-sensed data. With the emerging market for low-orbiting satellites (see our front cover and News page 6) the UK could be poised to become a global leader. Check out too Steve Ramage's report from the SatSummit event in Washington D.C. (page 9).

Elsewhere we take an in-depth look at education through a variety of contributions. Adena Schutzberg sounds a cautionary note about MOOCs – aka massive open online courses. While their original intention was to offer free training, most have now closed even their freemium options. Meanwhile, Patrick Rickles, a researcher at UCL, offers some sound advice. He says that GIS educators and learners will need to expand their understanding of approaches to learning and make greater use of a variety of teaching resources if they are to stay up with rapidly evolving technology such as spatial apps on smartphones. We are in the age of enthusiastic crowdsourcing and the citizen scientist.

We have identified several courses for GIS education and training and offer a more detailed insight into the MSc programme available at the University of Aberdeen (page 23), while Abigail Page explains the benefits for all GIS students and practitioners in joining the AGI with its early careers network and evolving link to the RGS and the chartered geographer route to becoming a GIS Professional.

This issue is also my last as editor. As you should be aware, last year GiSPro became part of the stable of magazines published by Geomares Publishing. It is their declared intention to continue publication and grow GiSPro's readership internationally. A new team of contributing editors under the editorial management of Joost Boers is already in place and I wish them well.

I launched GIS Pro in 2004, which may seem like ancient history to younger readers but for me is little more than a flick of an eyelid! Back then we were beginning to get excited about 3D spatial information systems (pioneered by UCL's Virtual London model). In the first issue I declared that as publishers we put great store by ensuring that the words on the page invite reading. That applies just as much today if not more so as we compete against the incessant drip-drip of emails and the web's constant attention seeking. I wish my successors well and urge them to keep in mind those ideals. I also thank all the authors, regular columnists and past editors of GIS Pro who have contributed to making this magazine essential reading for GIS professionals.

This article was published in GIS Professional April 2017