

# History

To be honest, I had completely overlooked the link as well. And that doesn't say much for me, a historian by trade. Okay, a few months as publication director with GIM International had taught me how geospatial information was helpful in keeping track of climate changes and planning the building of roads and bridges; that it was also used for defence purposes and for decisions in agricultural business. And that geospatial information was even used to preserve old buildings and landmarks. Let's just say I'd learned that geospatial information touches almost every part of daily life.

But I'd missed the real historical connection - until I read the fascinating article entitled Geospatial Aspects in Historical Sciences by Peter Doorn of The Netherlands Institute for Scientific Information Services in Amsterdam, published in this issue of GIM International. His article starts with the reminder that geography and history are sister disciplines. True. But I know from experience that these sisters are not so close that they pay visits to each other every day. Doorn, however, goes on to describe how the development of GIS applications has been responsible for an explosion of interest amongst historians in the combination of geographical and historical data. He quotes some striking examples. In the United States GIS is used to study racial segregation in certain cities; it has also led to new perspectives on the effects of Roosevelt's New Deal during the Great Depression. And the development of the railway system in the United Kingdom can too be explained using geo-information.

The historians Garry Keyes and Jens Toftgaard Jensen have gone even farther: they reconstructed a historical city map of Aarhus in Denmark using GIS. Their new digital map facilitates the analysis of urban social and economic structures.

The world opens up ahead in a way that may even shake up old historical views and explanations, as technology unites the two sisters with the same surname: social science. And, as I said earlier, history is not the first field or branch to become intertwined with geospatial information. But it will surely not be the last. We can probably assume that every single line of business or science will eventually be touched by geo-information in one way or another. In GIM International we will try to keep you up to date with these new marriages.

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