Influx

It has been my unerring observation in every country I've ever visited: people so dislike car driving that they move at the highest possible speed, which is not usually the allowed one, to their destination, the aim being to ensure the shortest possible time sitting behind the steering wheel. The higher the speed, the greater the aversion, and the more obvious the disgust at being on the road and stuck in the driver seat. In at least 90% of trips the driver knows the route to the destination in advance because it is workplace, shopping centre, children's school or other familiar spot; the navigation system mounted on the dashboard is thus more status symbol than practical device. However, the ubiquitous presence of in-car screens displaying maps bears testimony to the popularity of these systems. And that the instruments have entered into common parlance as 'GPS' marks success beyond the wildest dreams of the geomatics disciplines.

Destinations, especially leisure-time locations, are increasingly searched for by starting up Digital Globes on PCs connected to the internet; usually this will be Google Earth, the most popular one. The very core of Digital Globes consists of aerial and satellite imagery and maps, and these are all major products of geomatics technology.

As GPS and Digital Globes, both offspring of geo-information technology, are used by so many people, so often, and all around the world, one might expect high-school students to be triggered in their droves by the power and beauty of these new technologies into unendurable curiosity as to the behind-screen whys and wherefores. One would expect a huge influx of youngsters eager to sign up for courses and university programmes to learn more about how it all evolved and got where it is today. But no. It seems that everyone wants to possess the tools, but only very few are willing to put in the hard graft needed to arrive at some understanding of how the stuff works. As a result, geomatics programmes on all continents are suffering from a lack of fresh blood, while on the other end of the education process firms and organisations frantically search for qualified professionals - which they are unable to find. What does not exist can never be found. How to whip the influx curve into an upward trend so that, most importantly, 'outflux' increases to meet the high demand for geomatics specialists? How to reach the youngsters? How convince them of the many and thrilling career opportunities?

Any answers out there?