

A PIONEERING ONLINE-ONLY GATHERING OF THE INTERNATIONAL GEO-IT INDUSTRY

Intergeo Digital 2020: A Geospatial Community First



Despite having to improvise, this year's pioneering digital edition of Intergeo has received a lot of positive feedback. It became the international geospatial industry's first-ever online-only event after the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the live edition from being held in Berlin from 13-15 October as planned. With its high thematic relevance, an interactive and

stable online platform succeeded in bringing together members of the geomatics community, even during the current pandemic.



A huge number of exhibitors, visitors, speakers and conference attendees seized the opportunity to participate in the fully digital event. Nearly 12,000 participants created a digital profile on the platform. At peak times, the average time spent on the platform was up to 5.5 hours per participant, and the event was clearly interactive, as underlined by more than 330,000 interactions at the digital touchpoints.

The statistics speak for themselves. There was a significant rise in the number of international participants, with attendees coming from 153 countries. The top ten countries

of origin were Germany, USA, Switzerland, UK, Austria, Russia, China, Italy, France and Japan. The live presentations in the Intergeo Expo Lounge were watched for around 300,000 minutes in total. Guests included international experts and exhibitors from around the world.

Expo

Although understandably smaller than a live edition of Intergeo (which had 707 exhibitors in 2019), this year's Intergeo.digital nevertheless attracted 228 exhibitors presenting over 2,900 products between them. They included key industry players such as Autodesk, Hexagon, Trimble, DJI, RIEGL, ProVi and many more. At their digital booths and during the three days of live broadcasts, they revealed numerous new products and solutions. Online participants, exhibitors and speakers proved themselves to be open to the new digital format, and the feedback from the visitor survey was largely positive. Although the exhibitors sincerely hope that a live Intergeo will be possible again soon, most of them were happy with the opportunity to interact with the geospatial community during this pandemic year. The majority of Intergeo exhibitors believe that hybrid formats will be the way forward in the future.



According to many participants, the geospatial community can look back on a promising digital premiere of Intergeo.

Intergeo is one of the very few organizers to have succeeded in providing a stable platform on the announced date. Notably, Intergeo.digital did not suffer the technical issues, crashes or short-term failures of the online solution that have been a fundamental problem for many other events during the pioneering phase. Nevertheless, the trade fair industry is only at the beginning of the digital change. Together, the DVW and Hinte Expo & Conference have expressed their intention to continue to shape this change decisively in dialogue with customers and partners and implement improvements quickly.

Stages and Conference

A total of 405 speakers spoke across 345 sessions in the conference and on the three stages: Geoinnovations, Smart City Solutions and Interaerial Solutions. The sessions achieved an average of 370 visits per event. Discussion panels, talks and presentations were in consistently high demand. Cities and networks presented their projects live. Participants engaged in lively discussions and chatted extensively about geo-related innovations such as drones and smart cities.

The content of the conference was multifaceted with topics on climate, environment and sustainability, building information modelling (BIM) and smart cities, digital capture and construction, technology trends and artificial intelligence (AI) applications, navigation and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), smart mapping and innovations in administration. All three days of the conference started with contributions from renowned keynote speakers. Tuesday was completely dedicated to climate change and the Green Deal, while Wednesday was devoted to BIM and construction. 'What makes smart cities special?' was on the agenda on the last day of the conference, with some very concrete approaches for the city of Berlin.

In four parallel sessions, more than 120 speakers presented industry, scientific and research perspectives from the associations Bitkom, DGPF, VDMA, BVBS, buildingSMART and institutions (Association of German Cities and Towns and GDI-DE) as well as the Frontiers of Geodetic Science. About 600 conference participants had registered. They were very interested and eager to learn, used the chat extensively and some of them addressed their questions directly to the speakers in online face-to-face discussions. Pre-recorded interviews, panel discussions and talks were also well attended.

All conference sessions were recorded and will remain available for viewing by registered conference participants in the media library on the Intergeo.digital platform until 10 December 2020.

Q&A with Christoph Hinte, Hinte GmbH

Behind the Scenes of Intergeo 2020 (and 2021...)

How can members of the geomatics industry continue to network during the COVID-19 pandemic? Like almost all other major trade shows and conferences, Intergeo 2020 could not take place in Berlin this year. Instead, the organizing team turned the event into a fully digital edition. *GIM International* took the opportunity to ask Christoph Hinte, project leader at Hinte GmbH which is the company behind Intergeo, a few questions. Looking back, he says: "I have never experienced a time of such learning and adaptation as in the period between March and October this year."

Mr Hinte, how would you describe and rate this year's digital Intergeo?

Intergeo 2020 is extremely difficult to compare against the live events we have developed with our partners over the last few years. Our aim was to provide the geomatics community with the best possible platform on which to exchange information on the scheduled dates, and we achieved that goal.

Did this year's digital version of Intergeo attract the same type of audience as other years, or did you notice a difference in the participant profile?

Over the three days, as well as our regular visitors we saw an above-average number of newcomers logging on for the event, especially from an international perspective. The global reach was far greater than ever before. We had digital participants from Central and South America, Africa and parts of Asia, many of whom would not have made the journey to Berlin even if there were no restrictions. While we lost a few people who are less accustomed to a digital format, we definitely attracted a larger number of younger attendees due to the event being accessible from home.

Are you planning to include any elements of this virtual event in future live versions of Intergeo?

Absolutely. At this moment we are still evaluating customer and exhibitor experiences and feedback. We are currently in discussions with our customers and partners as to which conceptual elements may be further developed, adapted, included or supplemented for future events. The outcome will be clarified in the coming weeks regarding how they can be implemented sustainably, but we are certain that several digital elements will remain.

What is your prediction for Intergeo 2021? Will it be online, offline or perhaps a hybrid event?

There is only so much that can be achieved digitally; it is undoubtedly a limited experience in comparison and so the aim is to hold Intergeo 2021 as a live event in Hanover on from 21-23 September as planned. Due to the unprecedented situation that we all encountered this year and the associated logistical difficulties, we need to ensure our approach allows the event to take place whatever happens from now on, so it is imperative that we design a hybrid concept.

What lessons have you learned from Intergeo 2020?

Personally, I have never experienced a time of such learning and adaptation as in the period between March and October this year. It has been a demanding time for all involved; our exhibitors indicated that their participation proved to be an intense challenge. In that respect we have a stockpile of lessons learned from Intergeo 2020. Thankfully the online platform was stable throughout the event and performed effectively. Nevertheless, there are some technical details that can be improved for future events. For example, we would optimize the communication between the exhibitors and their online participants in order to provide greater transparency and reduce inhibition thresholds.



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