

Looking Ahead with a Thankful Nod to the Past

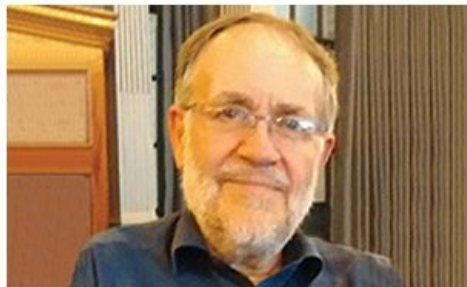


FIG forms a focal and reference point for our profession as technology drives us forward. But there remains much from the past we can draw on.

The FIG Congress in Kuala Lumpur is an important focal point in the calendar for all surveyors. It provides a rare opportunity to update current practice and technologies across all branches of what we collectively call geomatics. James Kavanagh's and Richard Groom's accounts, while very different in style, set the scene from an event whose papers and presentations from leading practitioners, opinion formers and leaders around the globe we will be drawing from in coming issues.

This issue of *GW* is one where we look back as well as forward. We couldn't miss the opportunity to mark the historic juxtaposition of the D-Day and First World War anniversaries. Malcolm Draper's Undercurrents column also includes a tribute to a remarkable man – not a surveyor but an aviator – who nevertheless was part of that generation, who survived the second world war, and in the 1950s and 60s led, moulded, mentored and trained many of today's senior managers and leaders. We owe them much.

In looking ahead we have an article on a novel technique for an unusual area for geomatics – the high-resolution recording of murals on a ceiling in Whitehall, London. The first time I believe the art of the painter Rubens has featured in these columns. Dr Alexander Kohli proposes an interesting solution to help planners and land managers in the developing world deal with the urban sprawl that comes with informal settlements. His ideas should be given serious consideration by many cities around the world. One city with a staunch tradition of fine buildings driven by careful planning is Glasgow. Marguerita Cavallo explains the development and application of the Glasgow Urban Model – an accurate 3D city model - which is now available for the city's managers, planners, politicians and citizens.

New Era Begins

GEO: Business has come and gone and was an extraordinary achievement. For once, four rather disparate bodies worked in close harmony to present an outstanding conference; a real game-changer as some have called it, heralding a new era for geomatics. I am delighted that the event has been such a success because I know the enormous work put in by Versha Carter and her team in getting exhibitors to attend; I know they worked tirelessly with those four bodies to keep everyone on side and going in the same direction. GEO Business is a fitting legacy to the events that my company started 18 years ago initially as World of Surveying and latterly as GEO. The industry now has a solid focus for moving forward.

The Best-laid Plans...

Finally, literally, as we were going to press, news comes of the UK government's decision to abandon plans to sell off the Land Registry (see this issue's News on page 06). This is not just good news for the thousands of staff who work for LR. It was always difficult to view the proposed sale as anything other than the fag end of a series of ideology-driven fire sales by various governments over the last quarter century. The cash it would have brought in – £1.2bn was suggested – is a drop in the ocean of debt the government holds on behalf of UK citizens. A privatised land registry would inevitably have put up fees to generate the profit it needs with little evidence that new owners would have offered better service. Whatever your experience with the Land Registry has been, just remember that it is accountable ultimately to Parliament.

Any proposed privatisation of the Land Registry's complementary body, Ordnance Survey will raise even more complex issues than those it is already generating by its current plans (see News on page 06). For more on this controversial topic look out for the next issue of GIS Professional.

Enjoy the summer. Like Arnie, we will be back!

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