

# Maps Are Going Mainstream



A few weeks ago, I caught up with an old friend who has a career in IT, focusing in particular on database administration. On almost each occasion that we have met over the last few years, he would try to better understand this field called 'geospatial'. The questions became routine. "Why are maps not the responsibility of IT? Why is spatial data so different from tabular data? What more does one need from a map aside from occasional directions? After all, I have Google Maps on my phone!" he would say.

Our last encounter was different. "Niall, I finally get it!" he said cheerfully. "Over the past few months, I've been meeting with clients in lots of different industries who are talking about maps - emergency services, farming, local government, banking and retail. It seems like your area is really taking off." After years of futile explaining, this announcement was

music to my ears.

Although there are probably numerous reasons why non-GIS professionals are changing their tone on the value of location, the most obvious one perhaps is that the wider public is curious about what more can be done with these mainstream mapping applications. As the 'above encounter' indicates, a range of established industries, which previously had little use for maps, are starting to embrace them as a tool which can be used to help overcome actual operational challenges.

In this edition, therefore, it seems appropriate to celebrate this sea-change by focusing on one of the most essential aspects of the geospatial industry, Earth Observation satellites. These instruments, which collect the imagery that underpins our locational knowledge, is the focus of Gianni Cristian Iannelli's article. In it, he takes us through the key milestones which have taken us to the point of being able to continuously monitor the planet using HD imagery, HD video and sensor technology. According to Gianni, we are entering into a 'bright age' of Earth Observation.

Perhaps appropriately enough, we also have an article by Nathan Heazlewood on the next phase in the ongoing battle between IT and GIS departments – the lockdown of Master Data in ERPs. Nathan's article reminds us that there are still major spatial awareness-raising challenges for the GIS field. Tim Hayes, meanwhile, continues his exploration of careers in the GIS world - this time focusing on the utilities sector, while Tim Sutton focuses on the open source technology components which can be used to build an OGC standards compliant Spatial Data Infrastructure. Aside from this, we also have an article by Aligned Assets on the use of British Standard addressing management in Africa, a column by Mikael Stern on the continuing 'hammer-mindset' which exists in the Earth Observation industry, and a review of the recent GeoPlace 2018 conference in Birmingham by Jason Poole.

As always, we also have regular contributions from Adena Schutzberg, Katie Decker, and Abigail Page, who recently spoke about the UK's Geospatial Commission at last month's GeoBusiness Conference in London.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our readers and advertisers for your continued support. I hope that you enjoy this edition of GIS Pro!

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