

# Outlook

What will be the influence of a possible economic recession on the future outlook for the geomatics business? Will growth stall? Will it steadily increase, and, despite all, explode? Or will the market react by sliding into a decline? With the world economy faltering and prospects uncertain, decision-makers in every industry are eagerly trying to forecast how their businesses will react and survive this hiccup, or worse, recession.

It may be skating on thin ice, but I will hazard a guess. At the end of the day I am no economist, and even if I were my guess would probably be just that. But still, with a little help from the results of the Satellite and Information Service Remote Sensing Survey produced for NOAA by Global Marketing Insights for 2005 and early 2006, I will have a go. This survey collated more than 1,547 online surveys and 250 personal interviews to get an idea of what decision-makers in remote sensing were predicting concerning the outlook for their business, a major part of the whole of the geomatics sector.

Respondents came from North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia, thus representing global input. Although the survey did not go out to the entire geomatics industry, the remote-sensing sector is so significant a chunk of it that the survey can reasonably provide a notional overview of the whole. Overall, respondents were very optimistic regarding the outlook for the business. The group of respondents from the United States, one area of the world currently struck by disappointing growth figures, expressed optimism equal to the high levels found among other groups. Respondents were asked to identify trends in society that they felt would co-shape or influence the future of the remote-sensing and aerial market. Many quoted the greater emphasis on National Defence/Homeland Security as a very important reason for growth: no strange point of view, especially amongst respondents from the US, where this area of activity has soared in profile since 9/11.

Required mapping for cadastre, endangered species, national resources, heritage protection and global warming were other drivers quoted as having a potentially positive effect on the industry because they will increase demand for data and services.

Although initial responses to this survey date back to the end of 2005, all in all, the optimism is probably still justified today. The reasons identified by the survey respondents for their positive attitude have only increased in weight since. The remote-sensing industry depends heavily on government orders, and it is governments that are currently investing hugely in preserving flora and fauna, taking preventative measures against global warming and protecting their citizens - all of which increase the demand for data. And add to the conclusion that remote sensing and its neighbouring fields are set to flourish for the foreseeable future. Wild guess, or wishful thinking? I don't think so.

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