

# Product Survey on Airborn Lidar Processing Software

This is the first ever Product Survey on Airborne Lidar Processing to appear in the pages of GIM International. No fewer than eight companies were willing to co-operate by filling in the questionnaire. Lidar is a tremendously flourishing technology!

The eight companies contributing to the present Product Survey are (1) Applied Imagery (see also Company's View on page 56) based in Washington DC US, (2) FPI Fuchs Ingenieure based in Königsbrunn near Kempten, Germany, (3) Geolas Consulting based in Reichersbeuren, Germany, (4) Inpho based in Stuttgart, Germany, (5) Merrick & Company based in Aurora, Colorado, US (6) Prologic based in Fairmont, West Virginia US, (7) TopoSys based in Biberach near Ravensburg, Germany, and (8) Visual Learning Systems based in Missoula, US.

Thus, remarkably enough, exactly half the companies are based in the US and the other half in Germany. No other parts of the world are represented. The overrepresentation of Germany probably results from the considerable academic research carried out by this country on Lidar at an early stage in its development and still continuing today. As a spin-off and engine for economic expansion, companies here were facilitated in commercialising the valuable knowledge gained by those named "researchers", who so strangely spend their days in weird, tedious and cumbersome labour. The US too is known for its well-established academic research culture within which intellectual efforts are, so to speak, converted in more or less real-time into commercial and beneficial products.

Also remarkable is the position of Toposys amongst these manufacturers. This company operates on three fronts in the Lidar arena: as Lidar sensor operator carrying out surveys, as Lidar sensor manufacturer and as a manufacturer of Lidar processing software. With this tripod of activities the company occupies a very unique position.

Prologic has announced its intention of releasing a completely new version (2.0) of Lidar Explorer for ArcGIS. Although the name will remain the same, the new version for launch at the ESRI Conference in San Diego in June 2007 will differ greatly from the present version.

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