

# Report



## GEOWS 2009

By Rifaat Abdalla PhD, Canada

The first International Conference on Advanced Geographic Information Systems & Web Services (GEOWS) took place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009 at the Feista America Hotel and resort of Cancun, Mexico. GEOWS was organised by The International Academy Research and Industry Association (IARIA) as a part of its annual DigitalWorld conference series, this year running under the theme 'Modelling and Prognosis of Emergencies'. Researchers from various parts of the world representing industry, government and academia gathered with the goal of addressing fundamentals of advances in geographic information systems and related new applications using Web Services.

An extensive five-day programme included three parallel tutorials addressing, respectively, Geospatial Decision Making in the Semantic Web, Decision Support for Environmental Analysis and Planning, and Working in Harmony: Integrating the Efforts of Usability Engineers and Agile Software Developers. Papers were presented covering Fundamentals of Geospatial Information Systems, Information Visualisation, Web Services and Geospatial Systems, Integrated Architecture for Geospatial Information, GeoInformation Processing, Spatial Data Infrastructure, and Exploratory Spatial Data Analysis. This all in addition to a rich social programme that included an opening ice-breaker event, gala dinner and a day visit to the historical site of Mayan Temples.

The venue and timing of GEOWS2009 made it a special conference that combined a formal research and networking environment within a flexible and relaxed, tourist-friendly atmosphere. This was evident in both the structure of the conference sessions and programme and in the selection of Cancun as venue, currently a popular tourist destination.

Thirty percent of papers submitted were accepted for GEOWS 2009 and these were peer-reviewed and published by the IEEE Computer Society Press and online via IEEE Xplore Digital Library. They will be indexed with major indexes.

## A Question of Sustainability

**Durk Haarsma, publisher, GIM International**

"Why is the most intelligent creature living on earth, destroying it's own home," asked Dr Jane Goodall of the gathered geospatial community at Map World Forum in Hyderabad, held from 10th to 13th February. This, one of the most important questions posed at the conference in India, got everybody thinking. Many about the different ways in which GIS is helping preserve the future of our planet.

The main theme of Map World Forum, a biennial event now held for the second time in the southern Indian capital of the state of Andhra Pradesh, was 'Geospatial Technologies for Sustainable Planet Earth'.

Dr Goodall, who currently travels the world for three hundred days a year to raise awareness of this issue, was alerted to the significance of GIS by visualisation of the tremendous effect of deforestation on Gombe National Park in Tanzania. She began her groundbreaking study of chimpanzee behavior there in 1960 and the Institute that bears her name continues her research, nearly 50 years later. Not only did GIS raise her personal awareness, 3D models made it easier for the villagers around the park to understand what had happened to their natural living environment.

Accompanying Dr Goodall to the conference was Dr Lilian Pintea, director of conservation science for the Jane Goodall Institute. Dr Pintea is experienced in using satellite imagery and was first to introduce it in Gombe. This ambassador for the use of geospatial technologies in conserving habitats ("I am dreaming of bringing Lidar to Gombe now") made the start of the conference an inspiring one.

Delegates failed to come up with an answer to the seminal question posed by Dr Goodall. But the theme was everywhere, included in the presentations, forums and exhibition, all organised by GIS Development. The next Map World Forum is likely to be held again in two years' time.

## **eSDI-Net+ Workshop for UK and Ireland**

**By Roosmarijn Haring, editor-in-chief, GIM International**

I joined in the eSDI-Net+ Workshop for United Kingdom and Ireland in Liverpool, UK, on 11th February, one of a series spread geographically all over Europe. In this region, organiser Robin Waters from RSW Geomatics decided with Professor Ian Masser to invite candidates by interview, resulting in a list of eleven participating SDI parties.

The aim of the workshop was to review registered 'sub-national' Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs) in these countries, identifying best practices and common issues. Or, put more simply, to learn, stimulate and feed each other with constructive comments and begin building a network between people who had never met before but were working in similar fields. The workshop programme included the presentation of survey results and best practices per topic of the methodology. This was followed by a roundtable discussion that covered key topics such as usage, networking, organisational assessment, legal aspects, technical developments, e-government, socio-economic impact and innovation, and ended with a panel discussion.

Common success factors were believed to be demonstrable value, reuse of datasets beyond original purposes, a well articulated vision/strategy to drive strong governance of SDIs, alignment with policy objectives, good support services and regulatory requirement (like the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) Directive). Also mentioned were common, unresolved issues, including data licensing, data protection issues, funding, conflicting (non-joined up) government policies and lack of central guidance. Others were the mix of data quality and its update status, with data arriving all in different time steps, the lack of priority given to data management, and last but not least, the matter of interoperability and standards (see interview on page 6).

It was clear that, as someone remarked, "You don't give birth to an SDI overnight." The results of the workshop will be reported to the eSDI-Net+ project for deciding the criteria for its evaluation process for Best Practice Awards during 2009.

## **Map Middle East 2009**

Map Middle East 2009 will be held at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre in the United Arab Emirates from 26th to 28th April. The theme of this year's event is Geospatial@WORK and focuses on the questions 'What, Where and How?' Symposiums will address Design and Engineering and Utilities, and seminars Oil & Gas, Governance and SDI, and Geospatial Technology Development and Trends. Will you be attending Map Middle East 2009 and would you like to report back to *GIM International*? If so, please contact editorial manager Boukje Vreman (bouk...@reedbusiness.nl).