

The Cambridge Conference

President Stig Enemark gave plenary session keynote addresses at the Cambridge Conference held at St John's College, Cambridge, UK, from 15th to 20th July 2007. The Cambridge Conferences date back to 1928, since when an increasing number of national mapping agency chief executives from around the world have met at St John's College every four years. Organised by Ordnance Survey, UK, and hosted by its director-general and chief executive Vanessa V. Lawrence, this year's conference was entitled "Expanding horizons in a shrinking world" and was attended by more than two hundred participants from about seventy countries.

Key People

Morning plenary sessions supported by afternoon workshops provided a good mix of listening and discussion. Social events and the atmosphere of St John's College acted as stimulant. And then there were the presentations by key people such as Dozie Ezigbalike, UN economic commission for Africa, David Cowen, chair, US Committee on Land Parcel databases: A National Vision, Michael Jones, chief technology officer at Google Earth, David Spackman, chief executive at MapAction, Knut Flåtthen, director-general of the Norwegian Mapping and Cadastre Authority, Jeff Labonté, director-general, Earth Science Sector, Natural Resources Canada, Peter Larakker, director of strategy and policy at the Dutch Cadastre, Land Registry and Mapping Agency, and David Maguire, director of products and international for ESRI. The workshops treated subjects such as Land Administration in the 21st Century, Models for Geospatial Rights Management, Education, Mapping for Disaster Management, Licensing, Reference Frameworks and Active networks, The Business of SDIs; International Boundaries, and the GI Knowledge Portal. A special workshop on Capacity Development was conducted by Iain Greenway, chief executive, Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland.

Enemark Keynote According to a definition emanating from the University of Melbourne, Australia, spatially enabled government is achieved when governments use place and information as the key means of organising their activities, and when location and spatial information are available to citizens and businesses to encourage creativity. But who understands the concept "Place"? Fewer than 1% of people are "specialists", less than 5% understand the technology, and 95% understand it not at all. In his keynote entitled 'Spatially Enabled Government - A Global Land Management Perspective' Prof Enemark referred to these findings and considered the option: spatial data from Google Earth merged with built and natural environment data. This would unleash the power of both technologies for applications including emergency response, taxation assessment, environmental monitoring and conservation, economic planning and assessment, social-services and infrastructure planning. He also discussed good governance, the land-management paradigm, land administration systems and 'spatial enablement'. This was about designing and implementing a suitable IT-architecture for organising spatial information that could improve communication among administrative systems and improve reliability thanks to the use of original data rather than copies. Spatial enabling offered opportunities for visualisation, scalability, and user functionality:

- attachment of information to images of parcel and property
- identification of "the place" in ways understandable to non-technical people (Google Earth)
- capability given to businesses and citizens to manipulate information through service-oriented IT-architecture
- integration of government information systems
- provision of seamless information to institutions and government
- ultimate management of information through spatially-enabled systems rather than databases.

Challenges

These matters were related to institutional challenges, a range of stakeholder interests, and included ministries/departments of justice, taxation, planning, environment, transport, agriculture, housing, interior (regional and local authorities), utilities, and civil society interests such as businesses and citizens. Creating awareness of the benefits of developing a shared platform for Integrated Land Information Management would, warned Enemark, take time and patience, and mapping/cadastral agencies had a key role to play. A spatially enabled government organised its business and processes around "place"-based technologies, as distinct from using maps, visuals, and web-enabling. The technical core of spatially enabling government was the spatially enabled cadastre. And here the role of FIG was highlighted in professional, institutional and global development. FIG, Enemark said, was strongly committed to Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and to the UN HABITA Agenda on the Global Land Tool Network. MDG was a powerful concept towards development, security and human rights for all. FIG had co-operation agreements with UN HABITAT and the World Bank. The surveying profession played a key role by providing:

- geographic information in terms of mapping and databases on the natural and built environment
- secure tenure systems
- systems for land valuation, land-use management and land development
- systems for transparency and good governance

Another presentation by Prof Enemark covered 'Capacity Building in Land Management: Implementing Land Policy Reforms' and the issue of survey business in land administration as related to customer needs provided interesting stuff for discussion as the accuracy paradigm was challenged!

Full proceedings at: