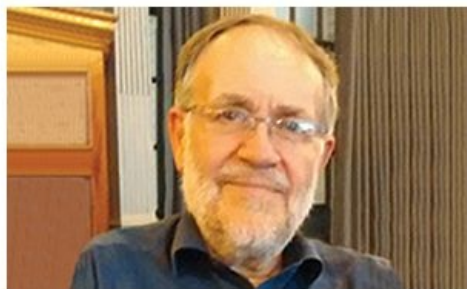# Was the Internet Such a Good Idea?

A range of diverse applications for Geomatics technologies are on the board for this issue. But they all need reference frames. But which type? Meanwhile, land registration is moving up our agenda.

By some determined unsubscribing I have managed to reduce my inbox to around 50 emails a day; that's not counting the spammers who at times bombard it. The majority of unsolicited emails come from marketers who somehow think that you, dear readers, will be interested in the latest bathroom fittings, a painting contract in a primary school, portable generators and other irrelevant products to our business. Oh for the days of the posted press release when marketers had to consider the cost. Now it is all just digital confetti.

The Internet is a wonderful thing, or is it? Apart from the aforementioned irritating spam, how many emails do you get that purport to reveal all sorts of great truths or skulduggery about government, politicians or celebs? How many of you take a moment to check the contents against the good guys' websites like Snopes or FactChecker, which debunk these myths and rumours? It's all too easy to read, shake your head and descend further into life's enveloping cynicism. With print books and magazines it's a lot less easy to circulate this nonsense, which undermines intelligent debate, democracy and the benefits of the Internet.

I have therefore been reading Andrew Keen's The Internet Is Not The Answer. A brilliant exposé of the history of the net from the idealistic founders like Berners-Lee to the Silicone Valley billionaires with their yachts and planes. Don't be deceived the next time someone argues the net is helping to create jobs. Ponder this: 30 years ago Kodak was turning over $30bn (1989 prices) a year and employed over 145,000 worldwide. When Google reached that equivalent level of turnover it was employing barely 10,000. You can read our review on page 29.

Broad Field

This issue of GW has no less than seven articles which demonstrate how broad a field Geomatics is. Using satellite altimetry to map the terrain below the deep oceans; applying laser scanners and high resolution cameras to capture the details of ancient castles, trees or cheetahs; how an efficient workflow is created by a mapping agency to create digital surface models from point clouds and orthophotography; how a CAD software developer is merging construction and manufacturing in applications as diverse as prosthetics, car manufacturing and distributed computing.

These applications of Geomatics technologies all require a reference frame, a coordinate system or a grid to enable data to be correctly analysed and interpreted. With the expansion of web mapping and the drive to integrate spatial data within interoperable systems, the Open Geospatial Consortium is proposing a standard for discrete global grid systems (DGGS) to replace what they quaintly call "legacy coordinate systems". Such grid systems operate in a very different way to continuous coordinate systems and are not suitable in every situation as Roger Lott explains on page 26.

Privatising the Land Registry

Readers may be aware that the UK Government is proposing to privatise the country's Land Registry. The registration of land title has been shown to be a critical element in a country's development. It provides security of tenure (see last issue's report of Paul MonroeFaure's Michael Barratt lecture) and not only contributes to social stability but enables investment and lending to flourish, secure in the knowledge that it is backed by government-controlled land registration.

Privatising this function per se does not necessarily mean that any of this is threatened or will change. But Britain's experience of privatising the public realm since the 1980s has had mixed outcomes, particularly in the rail, prison and health sectors. The proposal is surprising given that an extensive consultation by the Government only two years ago found extensive opposition to the move.

This article was published in Geomatics World March/April 2016