

# How Will Open Data Affect the Geospatial Business?



Open data is becoming increasingly available all over the world. How will this trend affect the geospatial business? 'GIM International' has asked experts from some of the sector's most influential companies for their opinions. How do Leica Geosystems, Trimble, Esri, Topcon and Bentley view the shift towards open geospatial data? Is it a blessing, or is there reason for caution and restraint?

Last but not least, what are their expectations for the years ahead? Read on to find out!

**Jürgen Dold, president Leica Geosystems/Hexagon Geosystems:** "In some instances, such as airborne data that is subsidised by the government, then of course we support an open data model. When it comes to professional-grade data, though, you need to know when and where it was collected to fully trust the data, and then there are costs involved. For us, we have taken a page from the shared economy playbook, and we are applying this to our business model. Take our [HxGN Content Program](#), for example. By sharing resources to collect high-quality, professional-grade airborne data, our network of airborne sensor customers have come together to make this resource accessible and affordable for all. We support shared data over open data, solely for the quality there is to gain."



From left to right: Jürgen Dold, Ron Bisio, Clint Brown, Ian Stilgoe and Aidan Mercer.

**Ron Bisio, vice president geospatial, Trimble:** "Open data is changing the experiences and workflows of our customers for the better by increasing their efficiency and expanding their services, especially with the continuous need for updated [geodetic information](#). We see significant gains in efficiency because our customers can quickly access topographic base maps, satellite images, GIS census information, contour maps, land ownership records and other publicly available data online through our solutions, and integrate the information into their existing workflows. They can also expand their services by providing high-value deliverables, such as updated cadastral/ALTA drawings with updated topology and spatial relations and updated road and construction designs. Their confidence, authority and professional judgement sets them apart from other engineering professionals as they provide accurate and reliable deliverables that will withstand the scrutiny of a land-related legal dispute or a forensic reconstruction case."

**Clint Brown, director of product engineering, Esri:** "Open data will fuel the growth and relevance of GIS everywhere. Recently, computing has become more collaborative and social. With cloud computing and the mobile/app revolution, the GIS community has expanded to include almost anyone on the planet. The data in every individual organisation's GIS is being brought together virtually to create a comprehensive GIS for the world, made accessible on the web. Today, nearly everyone can take GIS with them everywhere they go on their tablets and smartphones. Now everyone can access each other's geographic information as URLs on the web. Their results are being shared using maps and apps on the web and smartphones. The ArcGIS [Living Atlas of the World](#) reflects these data-sharing trends, enabling users to build on each other's good work and to share their most creative ideas with others."

**Ian Stilgoe, vice president of geopositioning, Topcon Europe Positioning:** "It is critical to have accurate and traceable data. In an era of supposedly 'fake news', the source and reliability of data is more important than ever. Open data is a useful addition to the decision-making process you may be involved in, but it should not be taken as absolute. Our kit is known for reliability and accuracy of data, but we also take the traceability needs of our users seriously. [MAGNET Enterprise](#) is one example of this. The software records all the field observations and shared project data, storing these in a secure cloud environment which can provide the traceability from field source."

**Aidan Mercer, industry marketing director for AEC, Bentley:** "Open data is very important. We have many users that are publishing data, like cities and local authorities. Bentley has been committed to open standards for many years, particularly on the geocoordination of applications. An example would be a GIS database, like CityGML, which has been developed as the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) standard describing such things as 3D urban objects as an application schema and which comprises different thematic areas. Although the model is in XML format, it is geometrically compatible with Oracle Spatial for RDBMS. Such standards provide the framework for semantic and geometric relationships and have the functionality of representing differing levels of detail required for complex [infrastructure](#) projects. These standards can also ensure the same object is represented in different levels of detail simultaneously, and integration with BIM, for example, is very important. Bentley has been a corporate sponsor of OGC for many years and continues to see value in open data."