

New Open Data at Intergeo 2011

The OpenStreetMap (OSM) project is due to attract heightened interest at Intergeo, which will be held in Nuremberg, Germany, from 27th to 29th September 2011, and is the topic of the first-ever Intergeo BarCamp. The number of OSM members currently stands at 389,302 and rising. The importance of the global OpenStreetMap (OSM) community is also growing steadily. The broad-based and well-balanced conference programme includes many other highlights.

Free geodata played an invaluable role in the wake of the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. By providing a clear picture of the devastation, this information supported the work of the emergency services on the ground. "We received a thank-you e-mail from the leader of a U.S. rescue team for the fast and excellent data that was available shortly after the earthquake", said Marco Lechner, vice president of FOSSGIS e.V, which association is the contact for the OSM project in Germany. An article in none other than the New York Times on 28th March 2011 shows that engaging in more in-depth discussions on and with representatives of OSM is worthwhile. According to the report "Disaster Relief 2.0: The Future of Information Sharing in Humanitarian Emergencies", better coordination and communication between voluntary Internet mappers and aid organisations such as the United Nations and the Red Cross is needed in future to harness the full potential of digital maps. Martin Scheu, head of the DVW Working Group "Geoinformation and geodata management", also believes there should be more cooperation: "Open data and official geodata are two avenues that must be more closely interlinked in future. Vast potential could be tapped by linking these topics more closely and effectively."

It is widely accepted that the classic style of conference is not suited to the open data community. However, the INTERGEO Academy, which was launched in 2010 with great success, offers plenty of scope for discussing OSM in a BarCamp - a type of open-space conference. Participants will set the program themselves at the start of the event based on the lively online discussions that take place ahead of the meeting at www.intergeo.de/osmcamp. The BarCamp centres on the idea that coffee breaks are the most important part of a conference, providing an opportunity to share knowledge and float new ideas. The organisational team expects up to 250 participants at the Camp days on 26th and 27th September. Active participation - the very aim of the event - is free, but participants must first register online at www.intergeo.de/osmcamp.

Most members of the OSM Community partake in the OSM project through mapping. By collecting map data using GPS devices and uploading it to www.openstreetmap.org, they help form a free geoinformation database, which is available to everyone everywhere. Many primary and secondary topics at the INTERGEO conference are therefore of interest to mappers. For example, the central theme of the 2011 German Cartographers' Day "Mobile cartography - the history and modernity of cartography" incorporates both. "Participants can expect a diverse program of presentations - not just on historical topics but also on modern approaches to location-based services (LBS), issues relating to the Open StreetMap project and the latest developments in 3D", explains Professor Reiner Buzin, a member of the board of the German Cartographic Society e.V. (DGfK).

"Something is stirring in geopolitics. I hope that more and more data will be made available to the public", states Marco Lechner. He wants to present OSM to a wide audience at INTERGEO, as well as other unusual open source projects. The OSGeo Park offers his association the perfect platform to do just that. More companies have already agreed to take part in this year's OSGeo Park than in 2010. Rasdaman, Omniscale, MapMedia, Intevation, in mediasres, WhereGroup and terrestris have all confirmed their participation. The OSGeo Park's joint presentation has been sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) since 2009.

The detailed conference program of INTERGEO 2011 will be available from mid-May.