

STAKEHOLDERS ARE AN EXTENSION OF US

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What do you envision for geospatial in the future?

I see geospatial becoming fully integrated into everyday decision making. Not just by government agencies and engineering firms, but by the public at large.

Look how far we have come already. When I started my career in the 1970s, geospatial data was mostly depicted in printed map format. Cartography was applied to photogrammetric data on scribe-coats, peel coats, and various other cronaflex sheets. These 'layers' were thematically-based, colour coded and included symbology, but you couldn't isolate an individual feature class (roads) within a theme (transportation). There were other obvious limitations as well.

Then came digital mapping in the 1980s where map features not only had colour and symbology, but also a theme and a feature code. Paper maps were still delivered with the cartography intact, but now customers also received the supporting digital data, which could be queried and reviewed with singular or thematic searches. In the 1990s, we saw further sophistication in the map making process along with the beginning of a vast array of value-added products that had not existed 20

years earlier. And here we are today, operating in a fully digital environment where data is acquired, processed and delivered in record time and with unprecedented accuracy and detail. Our data is colour and feature coded, thematically organised, symbolised, attributed and linked to external databases so that multiple users from multiple disciplines can access and manipulate the source data simultaneously. We utilise the data on our desktops, in our automobiles and on our smart phones. All this was accomplished in the last 30 years, and within one generation.

But there's more to come. I think in the next decade we are going to see a deeper connection to geospatial data from institutions and individuals alike. Cloud sourcing is a good example. With this technology, the general public is starting to voluntarily update public geospatial datasets online; I find that extremely exciting. Given the richness of data content



and the range of GIS tools now available and soon forthcoming, geospatial won't just be about location anymore. It is going to be way more embedded, helping to solve the world's critical problems, such as climate change, poverty and pandemics. I see a future where geospatial is fully incorporated into policy, business, finance, healthcare, environment, agriculture-you name it. And as a result, all of the critical components of our lives will function at a higher level.

What role will Fugro play in achieving this vision?

Fugro has a long and accomplished history of innovating to meet the changing needs of our customers within their varied market sectors. This includes LiDAR innovations, the commercialisation of GeoSAR for dual-band airborne IFSAR mapping and most recently a panoramic mapping system that enables production of vertical and oblique orthoimagery from a single flight. For us, it is a simple equation. We listen to our customers, we partner with the very best technology and research firms and we empower our

managers and technical staff to find new solutions to problems so that we can fill technology gaps and develop niche markets. As a global company with capabilities that include satellite, airborne, marine and terrestrial services, we have at our disposal an incredible pool of talent from which to draw. It is a situation unique to the industry and it is a position that we highly value and thus will continue to cultivate.

What would be the most conducive environment for your vision to fructify?

I think we are there. It may not be the best economy, but with electronics continuing to evolve and Web based services becoming more sophisticated, businesses, governments and average citizens are increasingly using geospatial technology in their everyday lives. Consider the rapid growth of Google Earth. What started out as an extension of Google's search services has quickly become a high-demand tool for business and government users through its professional and enterprise versions. We see this increased use of geospatial

data continuing in the near term and are working with our customers, technology partners and researchers to maintain our leadership advantage over the next decade.

What in your view is the responsibility of stakeholders-be it government, users or the research community to make geospatial stronger?

We see the stakeholders as an extension of ourselves. Any senior manager in any organisation will tell you that as the organisation grows, communication and intelligence integration become increasingly critical to success. I see the geospatial community in the same light because, really, we are in this together. If we want geospatial to get to that next level, then we need more collaboration, more partnering, and more truth among the users, providers, and academics/researchers. Our future is going to have to be more about value than costs. It is every stakeholder's responsibility to demand greater value and stop accepting the 'good enough' or 'better than nothing' solution. It is a level of compromise that doesn't serve the end goal. If we want to make data more affordable, then we must apply it differently to impact more problems and streamline more processes.

Is GIS Development meeting the aspirations of the stakeholders? What more can we do?

GIS Development magazine and website are part of my normal workday ritual. I need to keep abreast of developments in some of Fugro's largest markets and GIS Development helps me do that. Your focus on the stakeholders of South East Asia, Africa and the Middle East is valuable. My only suggestion would be to expand your reach to include South America. ■

