

# Obituary



**Prof. Dr. Jörg Albertz**

**Honorary President, German Society for Photogrammetry,  
Remote Sensing and Geoinformation**

**29.2.1936 - 28.10.2010**

On October 28, 2010 Prof. Jörg Albertz of the Technical University Berlin died unexpectedly after a short but severe illness. He has been Honorary President of the German Society for Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Geoinformation.

A very dignified funeral service has been held on November 26, 2010 at the city hall Berlin-Charlottenburg. Numerous colleagues, collaborators and former students attended. Some have come from far way, from Canada, the USA, Turkey, Israel, Greece and all parts of Germany. A very warmhearted eulogy was delivered by Gerhard Koenig, one of the closest collaborators. Addresses were delivered by Prof. Gründig, Berlin on behalf of the University; by Prof. Cornelia Glaesser, Halle, President of the German Society for Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Geoinformation; Prof. Orhan Altan, Istanbul, President of the Internatoonal Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing; Prof. Manfred Buchroithner, Dresden, Vice President, German Society for Cartography; and two representatives of the Geographical Society Berlin and the Free Academy. All orators testified Jörg Albertz's exceptional scientific achievements, they noted his broad views beyond the horizon as a professional and mentioned the high esteem he held with colleagues, collaborators and students.

Jörg Albertz was born on February 29, 1936 as a younger twin brother in Esslingen near Stuttgart, where he went to school and high school. After graduation he began his studies of Surveying Engineering at the Technical University of Stuttgart in 1955. He graduated in 1959 as Diploma Engineer with a thesis submitted to Prof. Ernst Gotthardt.

Because of his excellent record he obtained an appointment as Scientific Assistant with Prof. Rudolf Burkhardt at the Technical University of Berlin. Already in 1963 he had an interest in history of the discipline. He published a summary of German literature in photogrammetry during the years 1938 to 1960 for the German photogrammetric periodical *Bildmessung und Luftbildwesen*. In 1965 he received his doctorate with a thesis in block triangulation with single images.

After two years of freelance activity in surveying Prof. Kurt Schwidofsky of the University of Karlsruhe appointed him as Chief Engineer and Lecturer to his Institute for Photogrammetry and Topography. Thus Jörg Albertz had direct personal contact with almost all major German photogrammetric scientists of the Nineteensixties (Gotthardt, Burkhardt, Schwidofsky).

In Karlsruhe he authored, at that time together with Kreiling, the popular "Photogrammetric Pocket Book", which since that time has been translated to many languages and which now has appeared in 5 editions in German language.

In 1973 he obtained a fellowship which permitted him to spend half a year in the U.S. and Canada to follow up with the rapid developments in remote sensing there. His report about these developments in the German periodical *Bildmessung und Luftbildwesen* earned him the Hansa-Luftbild-Prize in 1974.

It was obvious that he obtained the first professorship of Remote Sensing in Germany at the Technical University Darmstadt in 1976. This coincided with his chairmanship of the German Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing Working Group on Photographic Interpretation and Remote Sensing from 1975 to 1979. In 1978 Jörg Albertz became Dean of the Faculty of Surveying Engineering at the Technical University of Darmstadt. Nevertheless he accepted in 1979 the professorship for photogrammetry at the Technical University of Berlin as a successor to his teacher Rudolf Burkhardt. He continued to supervise Burkhardt's research initiatives in non topographic photogrammetry and in electron-microscopy. But soon he pursued his own interests, which he developed already in Karlsruhe and Darmstadt with regard to human vision, photographic interpretation and remote sensing.

When Jörg Albertz accepted the professorship in Berlin in 1979 he could not foresee, that the Technical University of Berlin would assume a key position a decade later in the integration of both former German States into the reunited Federal Republic of Germany, when it came to the integration of scientific activities.

Jörg Albertz keenly accepted this challenge in the area of photogrammetry and remote sensing. This concerned a close scientific collaboration with DLR in Berlin-Adlershof in digital imaging and in the design and operations of the German Mars Projects Mars 96 and Mars Express 2003. On the other hand he pursued close contacts with the photogrammetrists of the new States of the Federal Republic in East Germany, especially within the German Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing.

What helped him in this task, was, that he had been editor of the German journal “Bildmessung und Luftbildwesen” together with Walter Hofmann from 1978 till 1987, since Kurt Schwidewsky retired as editor in 1978. When he became Vice president of the German Society in 1993 and when he was President of the Society from 1996 to 2000 he could set the course. These very successful activities, coupled with Jörg Albertz’s natural humility and his quiet and balanced judgement eventually led to his appointment as Honorary President of the Society in 2004 in Halle. On this occasion Karl Kraus of Vienna gave an impressive account of Jörg Albertz’s personality.

The chair of photogrammetry, which he occupied in Berlin, was the oldest in Germany. It was established in 1930 with Otto Lacmann as the first professor. Jörg Albertz felt committed to maintain the historical legacy of the Technical University of Berlin. Lacmann had worked in Moscow in the 1920’s, which gave him the idea to invent orthophotography. The Technical University of Berlin had been the host of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress for Photogrammetry in 1926, but even before, Albrecht Meydenbauer, Franz Stolze and many others had been active in developing photogrammetry in Berlin.

Jörg Albertz used the occasion of events such as the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Meydenbauer’s passing in 1996 organize an important historical meeting.

He also arranged for the celebration of the Golden Doctorate of Prof. Kurt Schwidewsky and of Prof. Wang Zhi Zhuo, one of the cofounders of Wuhan Technical University for Surveying and Mapping in China in 1989, who had completed his doctorate under Lacmann in 1939.

Jörg Albertz will be remembered by photogrammetrists especially for his publication “100 Years of the German Society for Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Geoinformation” which he wrote according to his impressive historical key note address at the 100 year DGPF celebration in Jena in 2009, in which he analyzed, better than anyone else could do it, the somewhat complex historical relations in the development of our discipline.

How was it possible, that Jörg Albertz, in addition to successfully pursuing his academic career interests, was able to comprehend and communicate the more general philosophical aspects of our professional history? Shortly after starting as a professor in Berlin in 1979, he was elected president of the Free Academy, a post he held for more than 2 decades. He initiated a publication series for this academy in 1980. The Free Academy is an association of

individuals free of political and religious constraints, who are concerned with the scientific and cultural clarification of human existence and its values in modern times. This is perhaps the key to understand the broad lifetime achievements of Jörg Albertz. He deserves our respect.

He left us at the age of 74. We will greatly miss him.

Gottfried Konecny, Hannover