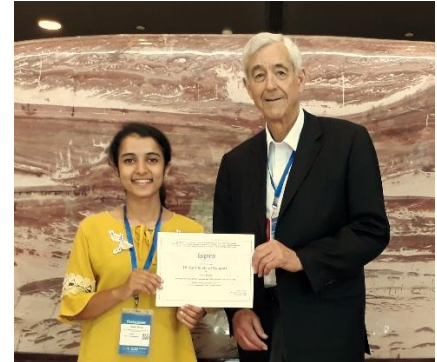


What an undergraduate learnt from ISPRS Geospatial Week 2017?

What really happens in a conference? How does one feel to meet the best scholars of the world (related to your field of study) in person and have a talk with them on interesting topics? Well, do you have any idea about the intensity of the excitement, knowledge and inspiration that one experiences while listening to those keynote speeches in international events? Do you know how the social events on an international conference be like? Okay fine, can you at least tell me how does the presentation slides on conferences should be like?

Well, these are some questions (among many) that majority of university students from a middle and lower-class family in Nepal would find hard to answer. Well let's forget about the others, the answer of these questions was something unanswerable by me some weeks ago. But now I can write a paragraph as a reply to these questions. And all of this was possible only due to the travel grant provided to me by ISPRS Foundation for attending ISPRS Geospatial Week 2017 held in Wuhan, China from 18th to 22nd September.



Being a fresh undergraduate student of Geomatics Engineering, I was probably among the youngest participant of the event. Geospatial Week was not only the first international event I attended but also first solo visit outside Nepal. So, the experience has influenced both my attitude to education and career.

Finding a mission

So far, the study I have received in my country is not fully research based, and as I like going into the depth of a problem the very concept of research stirs me. I have a keen interest to learn the skills of doing research and writing research papers. The biggest thing I used to wonder was – how could one possibly explain the whole results and concept of his/her yearlong research work in such a short time frame and space. Well, now finally after listening and observing various presentations given by scholars around the world in the technical sessions of GSW, I got chance to be familiar with the skills to some extent. The poster sessions were also equally informative. As our bachelor's course syllabus was a mix of each workshop topics, I had some basic knowledge about each workshop. So, I managed my time to attend at least a presentation of all ten workshops. Actually, I wanted to explore the field where my passion lies and ISPRS GSW helped me to find it. I was drawn mainly towards the workshops related with smart cities, web mapping, SAR and Cryosphere. The most interesting among all (for me) was the one about smart cities. 'Smart city' had been a buzzword during local elections in our country in last May. But only a few people here are clear about the concept of it. I had read plenty of articles to understand the concept but, despite the effort, had many unsolved queries about the topic. Gladly, the key note sessions about smart cities during opening and closing ceremonies solved many of those queries. And after the experience at Wuhan, I have finally realized that adopting smart cities concept in Nepal is a very daunting task. It will require years of solid vision, plan, effort, technical experts, resources and dedication. The realization has inspired me a lot to learn further about geospatial technology and its application in creating smart cities in Nepal. Now, my mission in future is clear and the desire to pursue masters and PhD studies is more passionate and powerful than ever before.

Opportunity for new perspectives in life

“Oh, an undergraduate from Nepal. It's amazing to have a such a young participant in the conference. Come, let me take you to my colleague”, these were the words by honorable Prof. Dr. Deren Li when I luckily got opportunity to meet him during the gala dinner. I used to find a really hard time in initiating conversation with such a renowned personality and often stayed in the background. But, the response of Li on our first meeting just amazed me. The care and sensitivity in his words made me feel like home. The ten minutes with Prof. Li and Prof. Dr. Armin Gruen changed my old perspective about professors. I realized that professors are not so harsh and hard to talk to as I used to think, instead they are very friendly,

inspiring and caring. Well, meetings with other great professors like Prof. Dr. Michael Batty, Prof. Dr. John Van Genderen and Prof. Dr. John Trinder were also some of the most memorable moments in GSW.



The event also proved to be a great platform for sharing ideas and cultural exchange. I met young researchers from China, Bangladesh, South Africa, Pakistan, Germany, Philippines, Egypt, Hongkong, etc. during social gatherings. It was magical to meet, communicate and listen experience of people from diverse culture under a single roof. I was also moved by the hospitality of the conference organizers. The way in which they assisted me in hotel booking and travel was really impressive. I pay my sincere gratitude to them as well.

In a nutshell, ISPRS Geospatial Week has become a milestone for my personal as well as professional development. I am very grateful to ISPRS Foundation for its travel grant which is the main supporting pillar behind it. The overall experience has broadened my perception about the world and cultures, enriched my understanding about geospatial field and technology and introduced me to some of the extraordinary minds of geospatial sectors. Most important of all, it made me realize the field where my passion lies and of the endless possibilities of future research in that field. So, if anyone asks me what did GSW 2017 give me, I would reply – ‘a thirst to embark on research works, a dream to foster smart city initiatives in Nepal through geospatial technology and strong confidence and enthusiasm to realize that dream’.

Sincerely,

Shristi Paudel
Undergraduate in Geomatics Engineering
Paschimanchal Campus, Pokhara
Institute of Engineering
Tribhuvan University, Nepal