

Editorial

In the history of ISPRS, 2004 is a memorable year! The 20th Congress was successfully held in Istanbul, a place bridging the continents. The Congress, with the theme GEO-IMAGERY BRIDGING CONTINENTS, was so well exciting that we could still remember the details of the events. Time flies! It is 2005 now. From now on, I would like to draw your attention to the next (21st) Congress, which will be held in Beijing in 2008. I, as the Congress Director, would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all the national delegates and participants in the Istanbul Congress for choosing Beijing as the host city for the 21st Congress in 2008. We will do our best to make the ISPRS 2008 Beijing a truly **ISPRS** - Informative, Special, People-centered, Rewarding and Successful congress.

As you might know, 'Silk Road for Information from Imagery' is chosen as the theme of the ISPRS 2008 Beijing. The Silk Road was the well-known trading route between China and the West in the ancient times. In fact, in addition to silk, the route carried many other precious commodities. On the way to China, caravans carried gold and other precious metals, ivory, precious stones, and glass. On the way westwards, silks, furs, ceramics, jade, bronze objects, lacquer and iron were transported. It was also regarded as the information super highway of its age, serving as the conduit not only for goods but also for the transmission of knowledge and ideas between east and west. Therefore, the theme "Silk Road for Information from Imagery" means various things from different viewpoints as follows:

- exaction of various types of very important spatial information from imagery;
- monitoring of natural environment and hazards with imagery;

- navigation with aids of imagery;
- discovery of important things with the aids of imagery; and
- sharing of information from imagery to benefit the society

Nowadays, the need for timely, quality, long-term, global spatial information requires us to build and operate a new silk road that can transfer information from an unprecedented amount of imagery to everyone in the emerging people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. This presents a big challenge for our community. Further technological and non-technical progress is needed to realize the full potential of information from imagery, especially in areas such as integrated global observation, automatic interpretation of imagery, incremental updating of geo-spatial databases, value-added geo-information services, etc.

By combining 'Silk Road' with 'Information from Imagery', we want to emphasize the importance of knowledge sharing and international cooperation for advancing information from imagery. We hope that the ISPRS 2008 Beijing will provide an opportunity for us to develop a strong solidarity, new forms of partnership and cooperation among our spatial-information professionals, and with governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations.

Welcome to join our team for building and operating the Silk Road for Information from Imagery!

Chen Jun, ISPRS Congress Director

