

## Editorial

This is being written just after the first of the Commission Symposia in 2002: Commission IV, held in Ottawa. The meeting was very successful and this bodes well for the remaining 6 meetings. Besides the technical sessions and the fringe discussions on technical matters, and the general networking, all an important part of these meetings, other issues of importance to ISPRS were discussed. One of these was the general issue of whether ISPRS is effective in achieving its aims, and the other, more specific topic, was whether to restructure the technical commissions.

We must be constantly thinking about the first issue. As new technology is introduced and new requirements emerge for national mapping organisations and commercial companies, and government and intergovernmental agencies set new priorities, ISPRS must maintain a relevant programme of activities, and convince people that it has something different and worthwhile to offer. In addition new 'competitors' emerge, organising meetings and setting up task forces. It has been ISPRS policy to be active in international affairs and in particular, to make input into policy making bodies such as CEOS<sup>1</sup>, ICSU<sup>2</sup> and the UN COPUOS<sup>3</sup>. Council members have attended and contributed to these bodies on behalf of ISPRS. Hopefully we have had some impact. Our presence is certainly felt at these meetings. We have also had discussions with organisations with similar objectives to ISPRS: SPIE<sup>4</sup> and IEEE-GRSS<sup>5</sup> (which organises the IGARSS<sup>6</sup> conference), for example. And we are trying to maximise the impact of programmes from different organisations so that there are fewer overlaps and a real choice. We also need to ask ourselves whether the current structure of ISPRS, which put emphasis in working groups which hold small workshops and may conduct other activities such as tests, publication or surveys, is still relevant compared to the activities of other societies, such as IEEE-GRSS or SPIE, which put emphasis on large meetings and the publication of the resulting proceedings. The recent meeting in Washington DC, USA, of FIG, ASPRS and ACSM attracted comment that it was too big, had too many overlaps, that it was too difficult to attend relevant sessions when there were 8 or so parallel sessions and that discussion at the sessions was limited. How to deal with these criticisms, how to collaborate effectively without destroying potential synergy, and how to best serve the interests of the participants at conferences, is a major issue for ISPRS and the other organisations serving the spatial information science community.

An interesting observation was made in Ottawa that ISPRS should be offering 'portals for different communities', this is

quite a challenge when looking at the communities concerned with remote sensing. Whilst ISPRS may sensibly not become too involved with marine remote sensing, for example, there is still a vast number of topics concerned with the remote sensing of the land, and many different sensor technologies which are not covered at present. ISPRS has an opportunity to be the umbrella organisation for this diverse range of technologies and applications.

This brings me to the second issue; the reorganisation of the technical commissions. A meeting was held in Ottawa to discuss this, (a meeting will be held at each of the symposia), which was very constructive and useful. There was an overwhelming feeling amongst those at the meeting that a reorganisation was necessary, and that a move to adjust the perception that ISPRS was a 'photogrammetric' society is necessary. This was where the concept of 'portals for different communities' was suggested. In my last editorial in 2000, I quoted from the work plan of Franz Leberl, President of Commission III, who has stated his intention to reposition photogrammetry vis-à-vis computer vision. I repeat here his challenge: 'I invite all interested persons to discuss this and to help in positioning photogrammetry clearly, both in the minds of people calling themselves "photogrammetrists" as well in the minds of the outsiders in computer vision.' Members of ISPRS should consider this not just in the context of computer vision, but also with respect to remote sensing, GIS and the whole range of activities which are represented and discussed at ISPRS meetings. Now, more than ever, we need new thinking.

The quadrennial congress of ISPRS is undoubtedly the occasion that all those associated with ISPRS look forward to, and hope to attend. It is an important event at which the current state of the art is reviewed, business is conducted and to which cognate organisations are invited. It is also large. The symposia are much smaller and have a greater emphasis on new technology, on cutting edge research and on detailed discussion among experts. Workshops, organised by working groups should, of course, go even deeper into the details of new developments in specialised fields. Thus there should be scope at the symposia to discuss the wider issues challenging ISPRS; they should serve as a breeding ground for new ideas which can grow and become firm proposals by the time of the Congress. It is to be hoped that the time spent at the symposia in 2002 will allow the incubation of fresh thinking and lead to real innovation in 2004 that will position ISPRS at the centre of activities within the scope of spatial information science.

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<sup>1</sup> CEOS – Committee on Earth Observing Satellites.

<sup>2</sup> ICSU – International Council of Scientific Unions.

<sup>3</sup> COPUOS – Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

<sup>4</sup> SPIE – The International Society for Optical Engineering

<sup>5</sup> IEEE-GRSS – Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers-Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society

<sup>6</sup> IGARSS – International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium