



## welcome to the October issue of *GIS Professional* . . .

FIRST OF ALL my apologies for this issue being so late but we decided that we just had to include a report of the AGI'08 conference. I think readers will not be disappointed. We record a lively and very successful event for AGI with plenty to think about. We also have reports on a recent seminar on NLUD (Mapping the Planning Pipeline), the ESRI user conference and the British Cartographic Society's annual conference.

The latter is a new territory for *GiSPro* but an important one. In the maps-for-free age of the Internet former BCS president **Mary Spence** tells us exactly what cartography is about – something that seems to have been forgotten by some in the GIS and digital mapping world. Mary attracted criticism following her appearance on BBC Breakfast and the web, when she commented on the dearth of information on Internet and sat-nav mapping beyond street names. She is absolutely right. My recent trip to Bremen in Germany needed a quick map but all I got was a crude diagram of streets and open spaces – key topographic features like the vast mainline railway station or the exhibition centre I was visiting, which occupied almost half a kilometre of frontage, were all missing. Mapping should provide the traveller with landmarks; it should inform and even aspire to educate.

Over the last couple of years the GI community has been in something of a turmoil trying to come to terms with Google and MicroSoft's arrival in their space. A whole new vocabulary of terms have been generated and the industry is still trying to work out what global free imagery and mapping means for our business. It is not easy, especially explaining to would be users of mapping and GIS why they should buy what can apparently be had for free. And if you think this is difficult to digest then just wait until the two IT behemoths have each built a 3D virtual reality world too. It's coming, trust me!

If this issue has an underlying theme it's language; how those in GI are having to learn new terms and redouble their efforts to explain what it is they do in words that other professionals and people of influence can understand. We are currently suffering from what will surely prove a plethora of ephemeral words and terms that sound clever for a nanosecond or two but can be dangerous if they leach out into the wider world. There, they will surely only serve to confuse and obfuscate what we're trying to achieve in getting GI more widely adopted across government and business.

Please do not misunderstand: geography and GIS, like any other serious subject, has always had its own vocabulary and as **Adena Schutzberg** observes in her column (page 27), "Watching the words change is one way to see how our discipline and industry is changing too." While **Chris Holcroft** (Lost in translation, page 31) cautions against the gobbledegook that professionals can otherwise slip into in trying to explain what it is they do. As he observes, "just as the technology is making GIS more accessible. . . the language is making spatial technology. . . increasingly less accessible." Chris provides an interesting analogy of the AGI's accountant Alan Wilks (a well read fellow if ever there was, judging by the quiz he put together at the conference where every answer was a place yet most delegates stumbled to get half the answers). Alan like many struggles with some of GI speak yet is able to lucidly and usefully explain the state of accounts to AGI members. We should be able to do the same about GI.

Next, I would like to welcome **Steve Feldman** to our pages. He takes over the Blogging the Blogs column. As chair of the AGI conference and with many years service to the industry, Steve will attempt to bring some order out of the chaotic blog world. Like any media, you need to be selective, he advises. This issue he guides us through what the blogging pundits have been saying about crime mapping, a subject that has had the red-top tabloids in full cry. Enjoy!

Finally, we are including some details of GEO-9, next year's big event for the geo community. Following the success of GEO-8 at Coventry Arena we are returning to the same venue. We are planning more seminars including a major one aimed at the broad church of chartered surveyors to explain to them how place and location underpin the property profession. We will also be running our annual **m<sup>3</sup>** conference and the popular Gala Dinner. More details will gradually appear on the website but in the meantime do register your interest.

Stephen Booth

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