

INTERGEO 2019

ALISTAIR MACLENAN VISITED THE 25TH INTERGEO EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE THIS YEAR, WHERE HE FOUND EVERYTHING GEOSPATIAL, FROM DIGITAL TWINS TO BAD ELVES



The residents of the Baden-Württemberg state capital refer to the valley within which it sits, as the Stuttgart Cauldron: the rich soil in this corner of south-west Germany has made it an important agricultural region for thousands of years.

Whilst the fields around Stuttgart continue to feed millions of people, the town is also famous for technical excellence. Both Mercedes-Benz and Porsche have their headquarters there. And, within walking distance of the airport, the Stuttgart Messe's 10 cavernous halls, draw industry exhibitions and conferences from all over the world.

Between 17th and 19th September, three of those halls were home to Intergo:

demands concerted action. Intergo provides experts with the ideal platform to tackle precisely these tasks. The multi-faceted sector it serves is doing all it can to forge a positive future for our planet."

Fixing the skills gap

Whilst Intergo is known primarily as a trade fair, the conference that ran alongside it was well attended and well received. The presentations were split into four subject areas: inter-aerial solutions, Smart City solutions, geo-careers and the Geoinnovation Campus.

The Geoinnovation Campus and other initiatives with similarly collegiate names are becoming commoner sights

I REFLECTED THAT HAVING ATTENDED, I WAS BETTER INFORMED, HAD MADE MANY NEW CONTACTS AND HAD ENJOYED MY TIME IN STUTTGART

one of the world's largest confluences of land surveyors, data suppliers, geo-hardware providers and UAV manufacturers.

This year, its 25th anniversary, Intergo attracted more than 700 exhibitors eager to display their wares to an audience of, according to the organisers, 20,000 visitors.

These numbers made for a very happy host – namely the German Society for Geodesy, Geoinformation and Land Management, the president of which, Professor Kutterer, remarked that: "Given all the challenges it is facing, our planet

at many conferences. The 'skills-gap' – the difference between the number of available job vacancies and the number of people with the right skills and experience to fill them – is becoming an ever-more urgent problem for the geo-industry.

The campus sought to introduce school children, current students and postgraduates to these companies and create a bridge between the two groups. One of the higher profile attempts to achieve this – and one that is sponsored by Riegl, GeoSlam and Korec to name but a few



companies in the industry – is the "Get Kids into Survey" initiative (see GeoConnexion International, September 2018).

Business on the conference floors seemed brisk but the middle day of the three was noticeably the best attended. The morning of the last day is usually a little quieter but that is maybe due to the various loud and well-lubricated stand parties that take place the evening before.

Industry heavyweights Hexagon, Topcon and Trimble had each fitted out their football-field sized stands with huge numbers of helpful staff and each of them drew large crowds throughout the day. At one stage, the queue for the Hexagon-branded reusable coffee mugs almost encircled the stand!

But the smaller stands – and when I say smaller, some were able to host a decent five-a-side game – did well, too. SenseFly has gone from a start-up in 2009 to being bought by the Parrot Group, one of the largest drone companies in the world, only

a few years later. Its distinctive black and yellow eBee range of fixed-wing drones are used in great numbers across equally numerous industries – something managing director Jean-Thomas C lette (see page 28) explained was because SenseFly offers an ‘integrated solution of hardware, services and software that meet customer’s needs’.

GeoSLAM is another company going places fast – which seems appropriate, given that the company markets its innovative hand-held 3D mapping tools as ‘go anywhere’. GeoSLAM – the SLAM part standing for Simultaneous Localisation and Mapping – launched its first product in only 2013 and have maintained an almost one-year product release schedule ever since.

This year, its new ZEB Discovery took centre stage. It is a backpack – something you see a lot of at Intergeo – that holds all the equipment needed for a user to fire off 300,000 LiDAR points per second whilst ‘simultaneously’ collecting high definition images of the target environment. Combined with the included GPS technology, it is a neat and fast way of creating digital twins of places, whilst enjoying the benefits of taking a walk!

Digital Twins

Digital Twins – accurate accessible virtual representations of real-world environments or infrastructures – were at the heart of everything on the Bentley Systems stand.

VP of digital cities for Bentley, Robert Mankowski, took time away from his keynote duties at the conference to highlight the vast number of applications in towns, cities and industrial installations all over the world that users of his company’s OpenCities Planner software had created. As Robert very wisely noted: “Most things have been built – it is all of our job now to make these critical infrastructures work better.”

Venturing off the beaten track in most fairy tales tends to lead our hero into peril, sometimes at the hand of a malevolent pixie or imp. Well, that happened to me. Sort of. During one of my forays along a side wall of one of the halls, I came across Bad Elf.

Now as anyone with high school-level German will know that I had nothing to fear, unless I was terrified of the number 11. Founder and CEO John Cunningham explained that the name and marketing – have a look at the eyes of the Bad Elf – runs through everything the company does. Which is create affordable, stand-alone GPS products, with an emphasis on all things Apple and more latterly, Esri.

As my time at Intergeo ran out, I wearily boarded the plane home, having covered close to 25km a day in the various halls. I reflected that having attended, I was better informed, had made many new contacts and had enjoyed my time in Stuttgart. A list that, like thousands of other people, will bring me back next year to Berlin.

NEW AND NOTABLE RELEASES AT INTERGEO 2019

- ◉ Trimble released the X7 3D laser scanning system, designed to enable professionals of all scanning levels to quickly and easily capture precise 3D scanning data.
- ◉ Topcon showcased its GTL-1000, which it described as a new generation of scanning robotic total stations that integrates a compact high-speed laser scanner and a fully featured robotic total station.
- ◉ Tallysman Wireless released the VSP600L VeroStar precision antenna, which provides tremendous gain levels at low elevations.
- ◉ Vision Engineering showed off its patented 3D imaging technology TriTecQ3 within its DRV-D1 digital stereo imagers.
- ◉ Septentrio introduced the ruggedised AsteRx SBi – a GNSS/INS receiver in rugged, waterproof housing.

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