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Taking a sky-high view

Abigail Page reflects on her new role as Chair of the Association for Geographic Information

As the new Chair of this great and diverse community of individuals and organisations, I realise that I'm in a very privileged position. I can see everything that's happening everywhere, across the AGI, and capture a 'sky-high view' on each aspect of the activity we're all so enthusiastic about.

Take, for instance, our amazing Groups and all the work they do. The local focus of each Region too. By the time this is published, I'm sure AGI Cymru will have hosted its 'Easy Access to Satellite Data' event (that's one I can't get to, but I do wish I was going).

We're doing even more work with the RGS(IBG)¹ and, as always, we have a great team of volunteers who are promoting the great value of geographic information at all of the events we're are going to – can you believe GeoBusiness is almost upon us?



Earlier this year, the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and the Association for Geographic Information announced a strategic alliance, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), that will see them working closely together to advance the understanding and use of geographic information. Pictured here, Dr Catherine Souch, Head of Research and Higher Education and Dr Rita Gardner, Director of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) holding the MoU with the author, and former AGI Chair David Henderson

Challenging perceptions

One of the challenges for an organisation the size of the AGI is our own potential and the opportunities that we want to offer all our members. Part of my reason for pursuing the role as Chair was the chance to challenge some of the external perceptions of our organisation. We may sometimes look a little disparate in our activities, but actually we do have a very strong focus: it's all about promoting the value of using location in every walk of life.

We see the AGI as the route to that destination: offering CPD that bridges the gap between our own discipline and many others, plus accreditations for courses that deliver great learning ... those are just two of the benefits we offer to our members.

I also want to see us going back to our grass roots and where we know how properly adopted and used geoinformation adds incredible value to so many disciplines. We have to encourage a new breed of geographers to come forward and, to some extent, that means finding ways to spread the word – not just via our

website or with standard emails and meet-ups – but also by encouraging people (and business) to visit industry-related events.

Making it relevant

That variety of events and the rewarding experiences we can promote never ceases to amaze me. This February's British Library Lates evening, sponsored by Geovation (the innovation hub of Ordnance Survey), was a good example.² This exclusive late-night opening of the Maps and the 20th Century: Drawing the Line exhibition (4 Nov 2016 - 1 Mar 2017)³ gave the public an opportunity to try out the latest mapping technology and applications and meet some extraordinary artists in the process²

It was inspiring. It was different. It made us relevant, not only to the general map-loving public, but also to other sectors – it helped us show that what we do is valuable and interesting, in a relatable and understandable way. My strong belief is that we do need to focus on a more modern image of geo – one that draws on the strengths and traditions of geographic data collection and use – but which sets the imagination alight with that data's potential to change the world.



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The technology we have, the tools we can use, the thought leadership that's encouraging us – and the next generation of geographers – to see and use GI in a different way.

Personal challenge

Without evangelising too much, that philosophy of making what we do accessible to all is one that I'd like to take on as my personal challenge in the role of Chair at the AGI.

By sharing, learning, spreading the news, seeking out new opportunities, and engaging with others both inside and outside our own networks in a stronger, more active way than we've ever seen before ... I know, it's a bold call to action. I do hope you'll join me.

1. <http://www.agi.org.uk/news/agi/1029-strengthening-ties-to-advance-the-understanding-and-professional-use-of-geographical-information-and-its-market-growth>
2. <https://www.bl.uk/events/late-at-the-library-you-are-here>
3. <https://www.bl.uk/events/maps-and-the-20th-century-drawing-the-line>