

*Presented at the FIG Working Week 2017,
May 29 - June 2, 2017 in Helsinki, Finland*

Geospatial surveyors: what's in a name

Brian J Coutts
Chair: Commission 1

Professor Paul Cross

*A profession that cannot even agree a name
is unlikely to be taken seriously*

⚽ (Cross, 1997. p15)

Antiquity

- ⊗ Measurers of land and structures have been around societies for millennia, measuring areas for “ownership”, taxation, etc
- ⊗ The Egyptians clearly understood measurement, both vertical and horizontal, and orientation in building their pyramids
- ⊗ The Roman *agrimensores* enabled engineering works such as roads, aqueducts, drains, heating systems as well as laying out garrison encampments for Roman troops that sometimes became permanent settlements.

English history

- ⊗ Surveying as an occupation first appears in the English language c.1490
- ⊗ Survey - Sur (*over*) voir (*see*)
- ⊗ The land overseer becomes the land measurer (surveyor) with the Renaissance and
 - ⊗ the developments in mathematics (algebra, geometry, trigonometry)
 - ⊗ measurement equipment (telescope, cross hairs, chain, accurately engineered graduated circles, Vernier scales) and
 - ⊗ the standardisation of measurement.

A Land Surveying Profession

- ⊗ As society developed so did the status of many occupations
- ⊗ New professions grew from the original three (the church, law, medicine) during the 18th and 19th centuries at an accelerating rate
- ⊗ Through an evolutionary process land Surveying became a profession by meeting all of the generally agreed criteria
- ⊗ Nothing much changed, in principle, for 450 years

Geomatics

- ⊗ The term Geomatics was first used in a scientific paper in 1975
- ⊗ It was adopted in Canada to recognise the new data gathering and managing technologies (GIS, remote sensing, photogrammetry) and because land surveying had a very narrow definition
- ⊗ It was adopted in Australia and the UK in the belief that:
 - ⊗ It was an “umbrella” term that embraced the new technologies
 - ⊗ Land surveying had a dull and boring image
 - ⊗ Geomatics sounded modern, exciting and different
 - ⊗ It would attract students to surveying programmes struggling to remain viable

Observations

- ❁ Geomatics was not necessary to embrace new technologies into the land surveying profession
- ❁ Definitions of the land surveying profession already allowed for the adoption of these technologies without changing its name
- ❁ Geomatics has been unsuccessful in assisting the survival of the university programmes that have adopted it to replace surveying
- ❁ Changing the image, self-image and public perception, of the land surveying profession requires a consolidated, concentrated consistent and continuous effort

Conclusion

- ❁ Geomatics does not resonate with the public nor with the profession though it has been widely used in academia
- ❁ Not using the term SURVEYING is a serious disadvantage in promoting to the public
- ❁ The existing public regard for the profession is seriously undervalued
- ❁ “Land” as a qualifier for surveying has been rendered obsolete by the new and potential applications of its technologies
- ❁ GEOSPATIAL is now widely used and understood

THE GEOSPATIAL SURVEYOR

*A profession that cannot even agree a name
is unlikely to be taken seriously*

⚽ *(Cross, 1997. p15)*