

Chairman's Message

Changing of the guard

Ok, here's my final Newsletter Chairman's message. A few goodbyes and thanks in a moment. First, a few words on Special Interest Groups. We're a fairly large Society, with a thousand or so members. Not everyone's interested in everything RS & P, so SIGs are a great mechanism for focusing interest and effort around specific thematic areas and topical issues. Other societies operate SIGs very effectively. The International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS) operates a series of Technical Commissions and, under these, Working Groups. These WGs are revised every four years at the ISPRS Congress, ensuring their currency and stimulating interest. The SIGs of the European Association of Remote Sensing Laboratories (EARSeL) probably represent EARSeL's greatest assets. These are well focused themes generating considerable interest and facilitating strong technical meetings. In contrast, EARSeL's annual conference is perhaps less strong, really the polar opposite of RSPSoc.

I don't think RSPSoc has performed well with its SIGs in recent years. I should say some are very active, such as the Geological Remote Sensing Group, with its annual meeting, quarterly newsletter and often updated website; or the Ocean Colour SIG which has held excellent technical meetings at least every year or two in the recent past. It may be no coincidence that these two are affiliated RSPSoc SIGs, involving collaborations with other organisations. Other SIGs are less energetic and in some cases have gone without any meaningful activity for a great length of time. I will name names. The Modelling and Advanced Methods SIG, the Synthetic Aperture Radar SIG and the Archaeology SIG are underperforming, though in some cases there is clear interest in their continuation. I challenge the convenors of these SIGs and other interested parties to get together before the September Annual General Meeting and demonstrate their relevance and sustainability, including a plan of SIG activities. Otherwise, I recommend their cessation. I think this is how SIGs should operate: as temporary entities responding to current developments, and terminating when interest wanes.

There is good news here. One or two new SIGs have been proposed recently, responding to current developments in the discipline. A SIG on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles is at an advanced stage of discussion and I hope this will be created by the time of the Cork Annual Conference. Another SIG on Technology has also been suggested. Watch this space...

Finally, then, goodbye from me. I've enjoyed the role of Chairman of the Remote Sensing and Photogrammetry Society. It's been a real challenge, but often rewarding. I'm grateful for the contribution from all involved in the Society. Karen Laughton in the RSPSoc Office has kept the show on the road throughout, and deserves all our thanks. Council members work hard, without reward, and I thank them for all their efforts. The Executive Committee has been a constant support, so well done to Philippa Mason, Honorary General Secretary, and Bob Taft, Honorary Treasurer. Bob and I have had our differences, but that's democracy, I think. The new Vice-Chairman will be Colm Jordan from the British Geological Society. Colm has impressed greatly in a relatively short time on Council and will be a real asset to the Society. As for the Chairman, RSPSoc will be in the very capable hands of Samantha Lavender. Good luck Sam.

Paul Aplin
paul.aplin@nottingham.ac.uk