



AEC Summit



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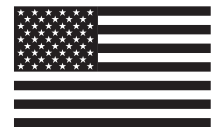
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I recently attended this event, held in conjunction with the annual Esri user conference in San Diego. Renamed from the Survey Summit in an attempt to attract more geo disciplines, the effect was just the opposite: as the Survey Summit, the event routinely drew 300-400 people, but this year only 150 showed up. We're not sure if it was the economy or a lack of promotion, but even so, the event was worthwhile and informative. Held concurrently at a different hotel was the 3D Summit, and it was almost as if NSPS was at the AEC event and ASPRS was at the 3D event. I suggested combining these two events in the future.

If we look back in time, in my opinion, part of the reason for the decline of both ACSM and ASPRS was that the organizations stopped holding joint annual meetings. Also in my opinion, because of the high cost of travel, the day of the national meeting for surveyors has passed. Surveyors now attend their state meetings. But as I have written, education is available at a national show that is not available at a state show. An example of this was Michael Dennis' informative and entertaining update about what's new at NGS. He assured the audience that they do *not* need a secret decoder ring to work with datums and coordinate systems, but that they *do* need special glasses.



As in Summits past, the hot topic continued to be unmanned aerial platforms. Joe Paiva from GeoLearn gave an interesting update about UAS regulations. I will admit that I have viewed these devices as nothing more than a replacement for traditional photogrammetry, but Shawn Billings has told me that he sees them as being very useful in ALTA surveys, so as it is with any kind of new technology, it'll be up to the users to develop new applications. The keynote speaker, Billy Gilliland from General Atomics—the makers of the well-known Predator series of remotely piloted aircraft—shed light on why the FAA is dragging its heels: Because America is such a land of commerce, the FAA has a very real fear that there will be tens of thousands of these devices in the air, and without a system to control them, havoc will ensue. Gilliland said the FAA will look most favorably on existing pilots because they understand airspace, are trained and tested, and have proven their "airworthiness." We are a long ways from pizza and beer delivery *a la* the movie *Minority Report*, and it seems to me that the systems that do not require—nor will they allow—joystick control will be the first to be approved. A flight plan will have to be filed, and the operators will have to prove that they are capable through training and testing. To avoid chaos, we can ease into it, with licensing and continuing proof of capability. The sentiment of the group seemed to be that the FAA will miss its planned 2015 rollout of regulations, but it seems to me that a rollout as I have described it is feasible.

In Passing

It is with sorrow that I announce the passing of John Keating, the man who gave me my start in surveying more than 50 years ago. Mr. Keating founded Topographic Engineering in Oklahoma, and lived to see the expansion of his company into the surrounding states. John touched the lives of many people during his long career, and went to meet his Lord on July 27 at the age of 92. In 2012 I wrote about John and how he had touched my life through his honesty, dependability and morality (Vol 9., Num. 5). The company he founded is in good hands, but he will be missed. ■