



Editorial

>> Marc Cheves, LS

THE American Surveyor

A FOOT IN THE PAST... AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

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PUBLISHER Allen E. Cheves
allen.cheves@chevesmedia.com

EDITOR Marc S. Cheves, LS
marc.cheves@chevesmedia.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR Joel Leininger, LS
ASSISTANT EDITOR Jacalyn Cheves
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Jason Metsa

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Dale Beeks	Jeff Lock
Joseph Bell, LS	Dan Martin
Joe Betit, LS	John Matonich, LS
Shawn Billings, LS	Jerry Penry, LS
J. Anthony Cavell, LS	Al Pepling, LS
C. Barton Crattie, LS	Walt Robillard, Esq., LS
James J. Demma, Esq., LS	Fred Roeder, LS
Dr. Richard L. Elgin, LS, PE	Gavin Schrock, LS
Fred Henstridge, LS	Angus W. Stocking, LS
Chuck Karayan, LS	Patrick Toscano, LS
Gary Kent, LS	John Wilusz, LS, PE
Wendy Lathrop, LS	Robert Young, LS
Thomas Liuzzo, LS	Rj Zimmer, LS

The staff and contributing writers may be reached via the online Message Center at amerisurv.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN LTD Creative, LLC
WEBMASTER Joel Cheves

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT Edward Duff
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Richard Bremer
CIRCULATION Mirta Ryker

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The Things We Gather

You can tell a lot about people by the things they collect. Whatever the motivation, for most of us the process of collecting is a pleasurable pursuit. Many of our writers own fine collections—old surveying instruments, classic cars, antique clocks, coins, photographs and more. Personally, I've always been drawn to good-looking maps—preferably free or inexpensive ones—because of the vast amounts of information they convey.

As Editor, I'm always on the lookout for good-looking cover photos and images to accompany the articles we publish. The ability to graphically convey an idea or concepts in an organized, attractive format is a fine art. Graphics professionals—ranging from statistics gurus like Edward Tufte (whose many books include *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*) to the talented graphic artists who design each issue of this magazine—skillfully apply color, layout and design techniques to convey information in a manner that is pleasant to the eye and easy to comprehend.

One of the images in this issue that caught my eye for a cover photo accompanies the feature article on the **Twangiza-Namoya** gold mining project. The article focuses on the use of positioning technology to help bring jobs and raise the standard of living to the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa. As we are painfully aware in our current state of the economy, the creation of jobs and private ownership of property is directly tied to the well-being of a country's citizens. In a related topic, longtime contributing writer **Fred Henstridge** weighs in on the value of land ownership as a means to create capital, which in turn, helps create jobs.

Also in this issue: **Wendy Lathrop** shares information on how FEMA deals with levees. In the wide-open state of Montana, with more than 900,000 parcels of land, **Esri's Matt Freeman** explains how the Big Sky State pioneered a valuable GIS-based statewide cadastral database. North Carolina surveyor **Ken Mills**, with the help of Google Earth, has assembled a digital "collection" of virtual map pins that represent the many places he has lived and worked, in addition to using it as a valuable survey tool in his business. Rounding out the issue are three case studies for using RTN—featuring Leica's SmartNet—in Philadelphia, New Orleans, and South Texas.

In this issue I'm also pleased to introduce a new columnist, surveyor **Landon Blake** and his new column, *Footsteps*. Blake's inaugural article on the evolving state of the title industry focuses on an issue that affects every boundary surveyor: obtaining records that affect land parcels. Like surveyors, the title industry has been buffeted by the decline in land development. Future articles by Blake will offer practical advice on the art and science of boundary surveying, including the evaluation of boundary evidence, the content of boundary survey maps, protocols for conducting and processing boundary field surveys, collecting oral testimony, writing and interpreting land descriptions, discussions of real property law and more.

As always, each issue of *The American Surveyor* is a unique collection, designed to bring you, our valued readers, a publication that is worth your time to read. We welcome your comments! 