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guest **editorial**

# SPAR 2015 Recap

**T**he return of SPAR 2015 to Houston, Texas coincided with record setting attendance and perhaps one of the best events in recent memory. There was no shortage of new technology on display with over 30 first time exhibitors, but I think most people would say that the real value came from the face-to-face networking. More than 1,000 people attended, with 15 percent representing 26 countries.

There is no question that the background of a strengthening economy makes a difference and although the price of oil has been cut in half Houston was in full construction mode. Everywhere you looked there was a sky crane. Next year the event returns to the Woodlands which most people that I spoke with would have preferred over the downtown location.

The conference got off to a great start with three very complimentary keynotes. The common theme that I found was the idea of ease of use. Ralph Rio, Research Director at ARC Advisory Group noted that the lack of this capability was holding back the industry. Andy Lowery, DAQRI CEO explained that the success of wearable computers will be driven by the ability of the average worker to make use of them. His research revealed that human error could be virtually eliminated through the use of augmented reality. And Dave Truch, Technology Director, BP, noted that the extreme weather and travel restrictions associated with working on the North Slope makes the use of virtualization that everyone can use critical to their profitability.

On the technology front there were a number of product announcements, but most of these fell into the incremental improvement category. Leica Geosystems held an offsite to announce three new scanners. One of the most impressive demos came from Christoph Held, Applications Engineer at Z + F who explained the integration between the new Imager 5010X and their Laser Control Scout software. This impressive combination supports a number of quality control tasks that insure you have all of the data that you need to collect before leaving the field. Topcon and Viametris announced new mobile mapping solutions. The latter is perhaps the most advanced indoor product.

Trimble and DotProduct had one of the major business announcements with Trimble becoming a reseller of the handheld scanners and software. In an interview with Bryan Williams and Chris Ahern both indicated they were very excited about this opportunity which is being initially positioned in the construction market where Trimble is very strong and there is a need for a handheld solution to document as-built conditions. DotProduct gets access to a worldwide distribution channel.

Autodesk hosted an offsite event for the press at the Houston Space Center to reinforce the benefits of Recap in being the conduit for capturing reality and bringing it into the major Autodesk design workflows such as Revit and Civil 3D. It was amazing to see an actual lunar landing module as well as a number of other NASA space vehicles.

On the organizational side Ralph Rio noted much work needs to be done in the area of business process automation (BPA), but as Bill Emison from Merrick observed, "To wit, more companies and presenters insist on discussing other relevant corporate "themes" such as worker safety / productivity, quality of source data (and derivatives!), and improved understanding regarding their return on investment (ROI)."

On a final note I was part of a panel that discussed the issue of certification and licensure for 3D data capture professionals. As one would expect we did not make any breakthroughs, but it certainly is a topic that deserves the industry's attention. See you next year at the Woodlands. ■



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