

World Cartographic Forum

Inaugural meeting: Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC, 1330-1430, Monday 03 July 2017

Present:

Eric Anderson (CaGIS, USA), Temenoujka Bandrova (Bulgarian Cartographic Association), Marek Baranowski (Cartographic Division of the Polish Geographic Society), Chrysoula Bartoura (Hellenic Cartographic Society), Eric Bayers (Euro SDR, IGN Belgium), Kjell Borjesson (Swedish Cartographic Society), Manfred Buchroithner (German Cartographic Society), Aileen Buckley (CaGIS, USA), Bill Cartwright (Mapping Sciences Institute of Australia), Steve Chilton (Society of Cartographers, UK), Igor Drecki (New Zealand Cartographic Society), David Fairbairn (British Cartographic Society) (Secretary), David Forrest (ICA, UK), Scott Freunds Schuh (CaGIS, USA), Ana Maria Garra (Centro Argentino de Cartografia), Sebastian Hennig (German Cartography Ex-Student Representative), Anja Hopfstock (German Cartographic Society), Antti Jakobsson (Cartographic Society of Finland), Alika C. Jensen (TU Dresden, Germany), Alexander Kent (British Cartographic Society) (Chair), Pyry Kettunen (Finnish Cartographic Society), Monika Kopecka (Cartographic Society of the Slovak Republic), Menno-Jan Kraak (ICA, Netherlands), Miljenko Lapaine (Croatia), François Lecordix (Comité National de Cartographie, France), Silvia Marinova (Bulgarian Cartographic Association), Takashi Morita (Japan), Chokchai Puatanaohokolmai (Royal Thai Survey Department), Oren Raz (Israel Cartography and GIS Society), Anthony Robinson (NACIS, USA/Canada), André Skupin (CaGIS, USA), Necla Ulugtekin (HKMO, Turkey), Roger Wheate (CCA, Canada), Alexandra Youssoulakou (Hellenic Cartographic Society)

The chair of the meeting, **Alex Kent (AK)**, President of the British Cartographic Society) **opened** by suggesting that the range of national societies represented in the meeting and throughout the ICA community showed variation and exhibited different ways of doing things. An agenda was tabled to investigate such different ways: *Welcome; Purpose; Experiences; Future*.

The ICA President, **Menno-Jan Kraak (M-JK)**, then spoke to endorse the initiative, although **he raised some concerns over the title of the group**. He also reflected on the *nature of membership* of an organisation (such as a national cartographic society): previously membership used to be taken as a firm, long term commitment; today with the rise of social media, using which it is very easy to 'unfriend' or withdraw from engagement, the concept of belonging to a society is much more fluid, and the commitment to such a society is much more irregular.

Some attendees had filled in the request from **AK** for information; others were asked to fill the *spreadsheet entries* in later. A 'register' of attendees was taken.

Attendees were then invited to contribute comments. **Aileen Buckley (AB)** suggested that the primary issue is *membership* – the attracting, retaining and offering of benefits to members is crucial. **AK** suggested that benefits include publications, although in principle this could be supplied through a Facebook page. **Marek Baranowski (MB)** related experiences with the member benefit of a *journal*: for him this is a vital part of the society – it must be readable and approachable (with sections in English for internationalism). **André Skupin (AS)** offered that societies need to be broad-based to appear relevant to as many as possible. **AK** suggested that categories of membership are important to appeal to all.

François Lecordix (FL) indicated that the French cartographic society regularly collected information about numbers related to events and membership characteristics. **Oren Raz (OR)** **described** his

society's recruitment drive, which involves insisting that membership is mandatory for conference attendance. The conference is recognised as valuable for networking: publications are less highly regarded. Most members do want to get something tangible out of their membership. The experience of **Monica Kopecka (MK)** was that her society had an ageing profile, and difficulty in recruiting younger cartographers. This is also the case in Poland, according to **MB**, who also said that, echoing **M-JK's** point, membership is not perceived as important by young people.

Bill Cartwright (BC) argued that promotion of the *cartographic community* to potential members was better than focussing on the individual: the question "what's in it for me" should be replaced by "what's in it for us". He also considered that the two main concerns are members and money: retention and growth of membership numbers are critical and rely on both of these. **Anthony Robinson (AR)** indicated that the main member benefit for his organisation is not its printed journal, but the *conference*: a lot of work goes into ensuring this goes well, student discount is enormous; the conference recognises professional/commercial sectors; travel awards go to members from across the field; the conference is open to all, and is abstract-based only. He estimated that >50% of the conference effort was devoted to non-academic activities. **AB** said that connections with amateur cartography must be maintained: **AK** concurred, pointing out that personal relationships with members are important where possible, and that 'lone cartographers' need to feel connected to the society. **Steve Chilton (SC)** suggested that conferences should be less formal: many 'neocartographers' are not sociable and do not want formal conference sessions - perhaps the day of the conference is over. However, **Kjell Borjesson (KB)** said that their annual event attracts 1000 people, but it does have a wider geomatics scope. Students are well-looked after at this event – up to 150 of attendees per year are students, and scholarships are widely awarded. **Eric Bayers (EB)** indicated that in his experiences, students are unable to learn in a standard environment, much preferring 'hackathons' with supplied pizza and beer.

EB pointed out the role of *sponsors* – the only element which allows conferences to break even: in his experience conferences do not earn money. **Pyy Kettunen (PK)** agreed, indicating that members do have a reluctance to pay even modest fees for conferences: his challenge is operating in an environment where people are unwilling to pay. By contrast, **AR** said that their conferences had no sponsors, but that their annual meeting is a definite source of funds (much more than membership). **BC** suggested that the *recent* spreadsheet should have a column added for adding commentary about experiences in *recruitment*.

Igor Drecki (ID) described their 'leap of faith' away from a membership focus. There is no drive for numbers (32 in 2007; 70 in 2017) and finances do not depend on membership. *Quality* trumps quantity, with the main conference being key. Joint conferences are possible to maximise efficiency. **Manfred Buchroithner (MB)** explained that InterGEO (Germany's biggest geomatics event/show directed to commercial and industrial work) has an associated conference, which DGfK has joined with every two years: *students* are bussed in free-of-charge and feel embedded. **Temenoujka Bandrova (TB)** confirmed that embracing commercial companies is important. She introduced some of the other widespread activities, including leadership of the 2017 children's map competition, arrangements for an IMY exhibition in Parliament, and discussion about *accreditations*, standards etc. **David Forrest (DF)** related that insurance for liability made such professional accreditation difficult to administer, maintain, and police. **AK** then went on to discuss the role of 'young leadership' and succession planning within national societies.

FL then raised the issue of the *national reports* submitted by each nation to ICA. These are expensive, time-consuming to produce and are not often consulted. ICA should provide a template

for the national report: it was pointed out by **Laszlo Zentai (LZ)** that such a document does exist, and **DF** indicated that national report production was not the role of the national cartographic society.

AK suggested that the *collective documentation* from each society could be profitably collated. Descriptions of working practices (in the case of the British Cartographic Society, its 'blue book') and lists of bye-laws etc could be placed on the ICA website for dissemination. **SC** pointed out that a forum model could be adopted, as in the OSM community, or such sharing through a mailing list.

Summarising, **AK** considered and solicited thoughts on the *future for the forum*, an online presence, the *role* of the WCF in future ICA conferences and meetings, and initiative for getting *young people engaged*. **The ICA would be approached about hosting a WCF webpage, through which members could share material and interact.**

DF, minutes, 03 July 2017



Photograph by Laszlo Zentai, 03 July 2017