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Special Issue GI-Days, Münster, 2007

Introduction to the Special Issue on GI-Days 2007

A Forum for Lively Exchange and Constructive Discussions*

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The idea of dedicating the GI-Days 2007 to young researchers in geographic information science was put forward by one of the German pioneers of the field, Prof. Dr. Ulrich Streit. Since then, Prof. Streit has become Professor Emeritus. We want to take this opportunity and thank him for his constant encouragement of students and young scientists for self-reliant and independent work and research.

Despite the uncertainties that the organization of such a new kind of conference holds, the meeting in September 2007 emerged as a valuable platform for presenting and discussing new ideas. The lively crowd, largely Masters and PhD students, made an interested and highly engaged audience. They saw 36 presentations of full and short papers, which were extremely well prepared and presented with unspoiled enthusiasm. This special issue contains peer-reviewed and revised versions of the best papers presented at GI-Days 2007, representing an overview of established and emerging topics in geographic information science.

GI-Days 2007 were held in conjunction with tutorials to give the participants an in-depth introduction to four topics central to young researchers, namely the ins and outs of writing a thesis, funding acquisition, the utility of logic and formal methods for the GI-Scientist, and geoinformatics in business. The talks and tutorials were rounded off by three highly interesting and skilled personalities invited for keynotes: Dr. Silvia Nittel, Associate Professor at the Department of Spatial Information Science & Engineering, University of Maine, Dr. Max Craglia, Spatial Data Infrastructures Unit, European Commission - DG Joint Research Centre, and Samuel Widmann, Head of Local/Maps, Google Switzerland GmbH.

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The Münster GI-Days 2007 was the fifth conference in a series started in 2002. The proceedings of the GI-Days 2007 – the first conference in the series dedicated to young researchers – cover a wide range of topics including geostatistical methods, space time analysis, cartographic visualization, wayfinding and navigation as well as uncertainty in geographic information. In addition to these well-established research fields, we observe a remarkable concentration on topics related to social aspects of web-based communication of geospatial information. This is reflected in submissions related to folksonomy and geotagging, geographic information in the Web 2.0 as well as ontology engineering, conceptual modeling and cognitive aspects of spatial knowledge. Another cluster of contributions documents that geosensor networks, geospatial web services, location based services and geospatial infrastructures have been established as core research areas in geographic information science.

Authors of accepted papers were invited to revise their work for this special issue; from the submissions, the reviewers finally selected six papers. The review committee was put together from committed participants in the conference, and prominent experts from the respective fields. In this respect, this special issue rounds off the complete scientific process: writing, presenting and discussing papers and posters, attending keynotes and tutorials, and finally reviewing papers for a journal. These tasks gave the participants of GI-Days 2007 the opportunity to gain experience and to develop new ideas, take different perspectives and discuss research collaborations. Looking back, GI-Days 2007 supported the network of the upcoming generation of geospatial information scientists in an efficient but also enjoyable manner. Despite the ever-growing number of conferences, future forums dedicated to young researchers promise to provide excellent starting points for academic careers.

As Programme Chairs, we thank the many people who helped making GI-Days 2007 a success: the authors who submitted their work and participated in the conference, the program committee and additional reviewers, the local organizers, the University of Münster and our sponsors.