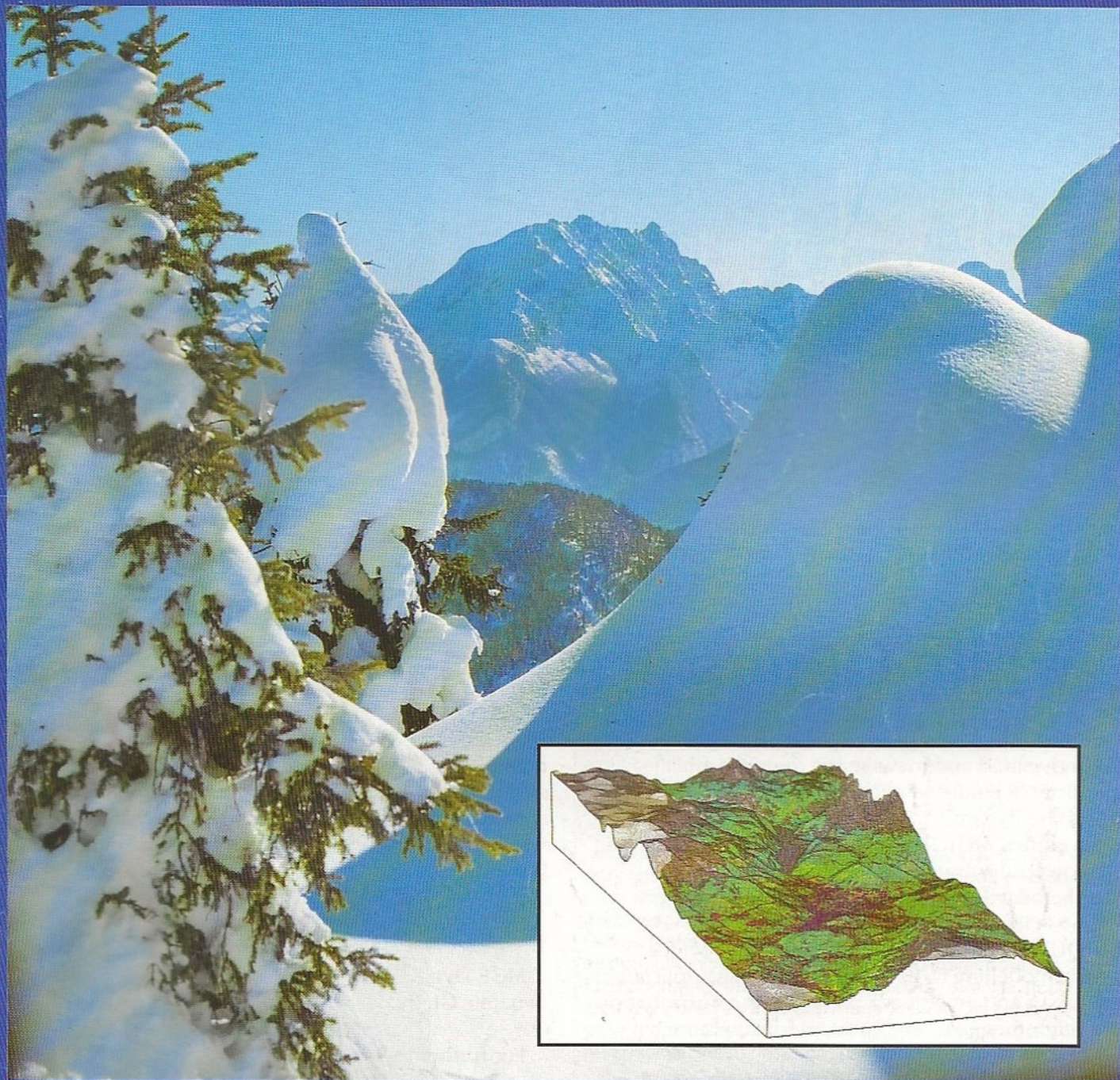


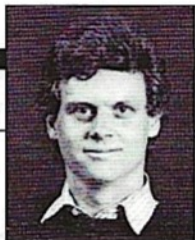


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Domesday 2000 project moves forward

A feasibility study into the creation of a national land information system (NLIS) for the whole of the United Kingdom commenced in November 1991. The Domesday project derived its name from the very first survey of England and Wales undertaken by William the Conqueror, following his conquest of the country in 1066. The Domesday Book was the first record of land ownership undertaken across a country for the purposes of tax collection and land management.

The objective of Domesday 2000 is to ensure that, by the turn of the century, a series of interrelated databases will exist containing information on land ownership, value and usage. Unlike its namesake, Domesday 2000 NLIS data will be kept up to date, cover the whole country and be on open access.

Results from the feasibility study were presented to a national audience in October. The basis of the study was a number of in-depth interviews and a postal questionnaire which established clear levels of support for a NLIS across a wide range of organisations.

The suggested model for the NLIS is a centralised computer system linked via a wide-area network (WAN) to a large number of data sets owned by local authorities, central government, utilities and commercial organisations. The data will provide information for planning aspects of land and property management such as local government property tax, potentially contaminated land, public rights of way, landfill management, agricultural land set aside and development control.

The next stage in planning the NLIS is the identification of appropriate data sets that exist and the development of a demonstration

system. These tasks will be undertaken by a researcher at the University of East London and another at Ordnance Survey's (OS's) GIS

If the wrong pricing structure is adopted, NLIS use will be less than Domesday 2000 organisers envisaged, dooming the information system to commercial failure.

laboratory. The generally supportive response to the feasibility study prompted the project sponsors, Capital & Counties, to extend their backing for another year until the demonstration system is completed.

Initial support for the project must be qualified by a number of issues and concerns that have not been addressed. There is a question about who controls the central computer system — the central government, OS or a commercial organisation? Or, will it be run as some form of collaborative venture? There is also a need to ensure that data is available from many data producers and at an affordable price. Fees for using the NLIS remain largely unad-

dressed, but are a key element in the commercial success or failure of the project. If the wrong pricing structure is adopted, NLIS use will be less than Domesday 2000 organisers envisaged, dooming the information system to commercial failure.

Another area of concern for many users is the question of data quality. How will the various data sets compare in terms of currency, accuracy and consistency? In addition, how will these aspects be monitored and controlled within the framework of a NLIS. These questions were raised at the Domesday 2000 launch with the fear that all data purchased from the system will bear a warning: "Beware — data quality unknown."

The issues need to be addressed, but much can be learned from the experiences of other countries, such as Sweden and Australia. Tentative steps towards a UK NLIS are to be welcomed, but managing the various contributions of government, commerce and academia to the project will require considerable effort and expertise. ☐

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