



# GIS Europe

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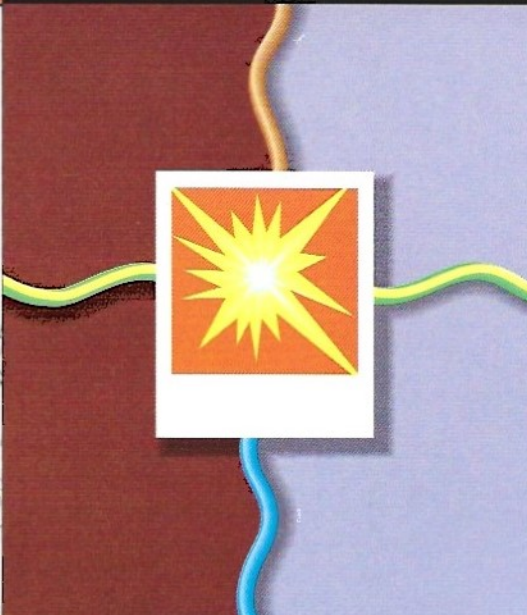
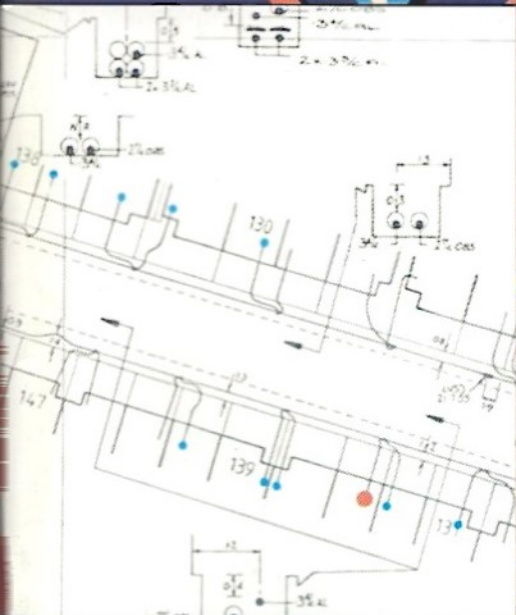
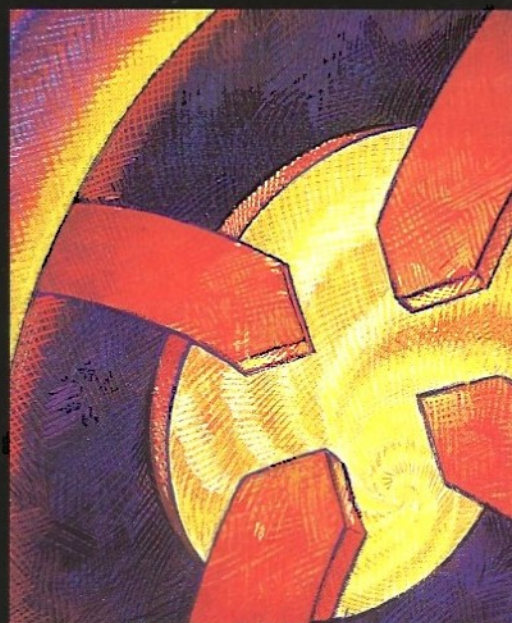
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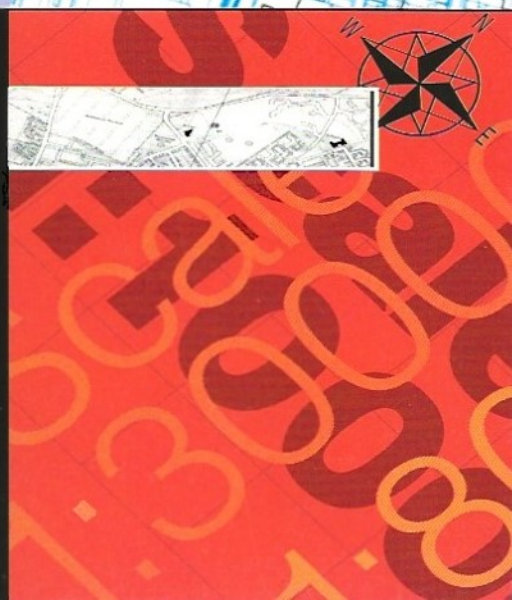
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# So far so good—but not yet good enough?

BY SEPPE CASSETTARI

**I**t is in the nature of academics to gather regularly and hand out hearty congratulations and pats on the back over their research work. But in the case of this meeting, it was both necessary and timely.

The two-day meeting at the Royal Geographical Society was held on February 4-5 to review the results of a £1 million research initiative launched by two UK research councils in 1989. The programme covered the technical aspects of GIS as well as the applications in economic, social, and environmental areas.

Now that the programme has drawn to a close, it is time for the GIS research community to take stock of the

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## Meeting Report: 'PROGRESS IN GEOGRAPHICAL HANDLING'

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achievements gained and to consider the way forward.

The research topics were many and varied—as demonstrated by the wide range of papers presented—and included such topics as:

- GIS in a multiprocessor environment
- four-dimensional data handling
- generic spatial interface languages
- object-oriented data structures—generalization

plus application studies for urban and rural development, property-based systems and hydrological applications. In the meeting's opening session, Professor Howard Newby of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) congratulated those involved in the research on making this initiative a success. This view was endorsed by the meeting chairman, Lord Chorley. But in looking to the future, Professor Newby noted that there will no longer be preferential treatment for GIS from the research councils. Future research initiatives will be funded on their merits in direct competition with the other disciplines competing for limited research funds.

This fact raises an important question about how the GIS community builds on the pool of experienced researchers that has been established. In his talk, Michael Jackson, chief executive of Laser-Scan Ltd of Cambridge, considered the commercial implications of the initiative and expressed disappointment that so little of the research had fed through into the commercial sector.

This identifies a pressing need in the GIS academic community—that of establishing a far greater degree of collaboration between academic departments and industry to develop research into commercial products. Without this collaboration, GIS research will diminish, and all the gains achieved over the last three years could be lost. The UK is currently at the forefront of GIS developments, but it is in danger of throwing away this advantage without seeing the benefits that should accrue. This is a story often repeated in the UK and one of which GIS researchers should be very wary. **□**

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