

OPENING REMARKS

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This will be a brief report to introduce this Symposium and to comment on the current programs of Commission VII. You will remember that the Earth Resources Technology Satellite was launched during the Ottawa Congress two years ago and the interpretation of ERTS imagery has dominated most other interpretation problems since. We are now returning to normal, after passing through a period of excessive enthusiasm, through a lull during which experiments were being completed, into the present period when results have begun to exceed the most optimistic expectations - at least for those who have access to advanced interpretation systems. You will hear some of these results during this Symposium.

But these new achievements have also posed new problems and things will never be the same again. The many experiments involving interpretation of digital data have brought it home to us what a quantitative discipline interpretation has become. Exact mathematical definitions and statistical approaches to pattern recognition are rapidly becoming standard interpretation procedures. The critical limitations in the use of aerial photography and remote sensing imagery are no longer resolving power and other measures of image quality, but the methods for extracting useful information from the mass of data available to everyone. By involving automation, computers and electronics in the solution of this problem, Commission VII is dealing with methods and objectives that are central issues in the International Society for Photogrammetry.

Several immediate priorities are well expressed by the array of working groups of Commission VII. To these we can add other tasks which clearly deserve more attention. There is, for example, the need to establish that conventional interpretation and the new technologies of remote sensing are not competing systems, but rather complementary methods that must be combined to meet whatever demands we choose to make from them. Also we have not made as much progress as there should have been in the interpretation of side-looking radar imagery, and in studies of imagery from high resolution weather satellites.

How should Commission VII meet its objective? To put it more specifically, what program would you like to see at Helsinki in 1976? The present Symposium, and several other recent symposia have emphasized "applications". Have we ignored the importance of basic research and interpretation concepts by responding to pressures for proof of useful applications and big benefits? I hope that the discussions and resolutions of this Symposium will attack this problem.

You will notice that the Symposium program deviates somewhat from the structure of Commission VII working groups. One reason is that the Symposium theme is "Applications" which does not cover all aspects of

Commission VII. Yet, the efforts of the active working groups are quite visible within the program. Commission VII has also enjoyed good relations with other scientific societies. Our close ties with the Remote Sensing Group of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations is particularly worth mentioning. This Group, at a highly successful remote sensing symposium in Freiburg in 1973, passed a resolution expressing its intention to cooperate closely with the ISP and Commission VII. Such offers for cooperation are gladly accepted because they contribute to the exchange of information between disciplines and they help in minimizing duplication and uncoordinated efforts.

I would now like to make a few comments about the method of selection of papers for this Symposium. We have deviated from the practice of having invited and presented papers: an open call for papers was issued and proposals received were screened by the program committee. So many proposals were received that good papers had to be rejected; the program committee faced difficult decisions simply to achieve balance.

This method of selecting papers has many advantages: it involves a more competitive approach, and gives new developments and new scientists a better chance to be heard; perhaps it also avoids inbreeding and repetition. But it also involves a committee in the extremely unpleasant task of judging and ranking proposals, often on the basis of incomplete information. This again is a topic on which the opinions of this Symposium will be appreciated.

As you know, this Symposium is hosted by the Canadian Institute of Surveying and receives strong support from the Government of Canada (Canadian Forestry Service and Canada Centre for Remote Sensing) and the Government of Alberta (Alberta Environment). The University of Alberta (Department of Extension) has assumed major responsibilities for the administrative arrangements at the Symposium. Commission VII greatly appreciated the valuable assistance from these agencies.