

## **GITA Ontario Fall Forum Puts the Future on Display**

Delegates to the GITA Ontario Fall Forum saw the future before their eyes.

In a spacious meeting room in Oakville on November 4, delegates watched in fascination as a new kind of computer platform made geospatial data come alive as never before – with no keyboard or mouse required.

The startling keynote presentation by Microsoft and a partner company, Infusion Development Corp., demonstrated the new platform called Surface in the form of an interactive tabletop computer screen, one of only two residing in Canada. It produced high-resolution maps, data, and photo and video images solely by means of motions made by the demonstrator's hands and fingers in front of the screen.

By spreading his hands wide, for instance, demonstrator Bill Baldasti brought orthophotos of the City of Seattle into focus first at the satellite level, then down to street level and finally right into the interior of a conference centre, all effortlessly and within moments.

The demonstration of this emerging technology was just one way in which the Fall Forum provided an educational view into the future of geospatial technologies.

Delegates also gained insight into the future of open-source GIS software, the plans for enterprise GIS at Land Information Ontario and innovative ways in which geospatial data is being used to support infrastructure solutions for organizations in both the public and private sectors.

All this took place in one day at the Oakville Conference Centre. Attracting 150 delegates, the Fall Forum demonstrated the ability of GITA Ontario to educate people from across the geospatial community.

“It's a venue for getting people together of a like discipline, to build the community,” said Marc Curtis of Global CADD Systems, the 2008-09 president of GITA Ontario. “We want to have speakers and panel discussions and a keynote that provide perspective and invoke thoughts and comment.”

Delegates chatted continuously throughout the day in the meeting rooms, during breaks and lunch and in the exhibit area. They interacted with presenters, especially the session

led by Kris Philpott of PowerStream Inc. and Greg Duffy of Woodfield Consulting that probed into where the GIS department best fits, or should fit, to most effectively support the goals of an organization.

Duffy commented: “The core motivation of GITA is education, the dissemination of knowledge. The point of our conference is to provide a facility in which someone can learn something they didn’t know yesterday.”

James Thompson of ESRI Canada, a colleague of Duffy’s on the GITA Ontario board, said he was impressed by the number of questions asked by delegates during the panel discussion on open-source software.

“When you go to one of these conferences you want to understand what’s at the leading edge of GIS,” Thompson said. “I think we have delivered that.”

Delegates heard how geospatial technologies can be applied to:

- Information management practices, from Hatch Mott MacDonald;
- Business intelligence, from Enspiria Solutions;
- Location intelligence, from Genworth Financial Canada and DMTI Spatial;
- Critical IT infrastructure, from ESRI Canada.

For some delegates, the Fall Forum was a networking event as much as an educational one.

“This is a unique chance to reconnect with people and get awareness of where they’ve been and what’s happening,” said Warren Rafuse, a GIS professional from Toronto.

Anthony Valentini of the Region of Peel said the GITA Fall Forum is one his favourite conferences because of the “top-notch” people it attracts.

“When you get individuals from the public and private worlds contributing and sharing information and knowledge and experience, it’s a beneficial conference, no question about it.”