

# Engaging the millennials

—FROM THE EDITOR

It's over. Gone are the speeches on the stump, emotion-pumped up rallies, meticulous get-out-the vote campaigns. We, the people, have spoken. We've elected the 44th president of the United States of America, a country that from its founding has seen itself as a special place, an example to other nations, a "shining beacon on the hill." I listened to Senator McCain's concession speech and I saw America's star rise far above all nations. I listened to President-Elect Barack Obama's acceptance speech and I saw people humbled by their power to finish what Lincoln set in motion more than a century ago. Most of all, I saw technology-wise millennials giddy at the idea of having "pulled it off." They have elected their first president who engages them in their own space. What's more, they want to be engaged, they expect it. Already there is talk of a movement among young people who, after using their mastery of the Internet to forge borderless social interactions are eager to roll up their sleeves and help transform the way government governs.

A writer much more eloquent than I recently wrote that "transformations rarely announce themselves with trumpets. They usually happen gradually, over time, and then—clang!—a singular moment chimes the news." We're witnessing one of those transformations; a transformation that every professional society would be well advised to take advantage of. I'm referring to the willingness by the younger generations to give time, talent, and passion to issues that they consider important.

Getting our country back on track is a goal before all of us in the U.S. We need to deal, in unison, with the various crises besetting us right now, for no president can do this alone. Within the microcosm of professional organizations there is another crisis—declining membership. The effect of technology on how peers communicate may be one reason for this troubling phenomenon; slower economy may be another; an apathy breeding self-interest—"what can my profession do for me, rather than what I can do for my profession—is the worst of these evils.

I'm not sure which factors most influence membership in ACSM member organizations; a review of our respective outreach strategies should help answer some of the questions we have about increasing membership. Chance encounters such as the one I had at the 2008 ESRI Education User Conference with Rylee Ellyson, a high school sophomore from Oklahoma, make me believe that a quiet transformation in our own profession is taking place—GIS with its highly visual message is capturing the imagination of the very young, and we should nurture this interest into a lasting commitment to the geospatial sciences (read Rylee's article on p. 10 of this issue).

Another sign that younger generations are engaging in our field is the recent appointment of the editor and associate editor of *Cartography and Geographic Information Science*. One born in Vienna, Austria, the other in Seoul, South Korea, both are in their early forties, and both feel that they need "to give something back to the society that has helped advance their academic careers." An interview with Drs Leitner and Seong is on pages 43-45.

Lee Ingram's article on pages 25-32 is a celebration of the 25th anniversary of South Dakota Society of Professional Land Surveyors. He writes with pride about three famous past presidents who, at one time, were surveyors. His paper contains a message for all those who decide to follow in the footsteps of these exceptional Americans—hard work, commitment, and love of our country are the values that make us strong and successful. I would like to hope that this message will stay with us well beyond the excitement of exercising our right to vote and elect our government.

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