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Item 12

Topic: **Secretary-General's report 2011-2015 / Secretary General's report 2011-2015**

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This report presents an account of activities undertaken by the Secretary-General and some of the associated work of the Executive Committee during 2011-2015.

Executive Committee and other committees

The Secretary-General was elected for a four year term at the General Assembly in Paris in August 2011. I was not originally planned to be nominated for this position, but the nomination of my predecessor for this period was withdrawn a few weeks before the General Assembly. I was asked by the acting and forthcoming presidents to run for the position. I had not too much time for preparation, but I really felt privileged to be asked for nomination to this really important position.

The support from the Hungarian ICA National Board, and that of my employer, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest in allowing the nomination to be tabled is acknowledged, but they were not able to offer financial or other support. My predecessor David Fairbairn explained and interpreted the procedures and all the duties to me, and he offered me the opportunity to ask for his contribution at any time. I have also relied on the support of a friendly and effective Executive Committee (EC) 2011-2015 for advice and assistance. It is clear that the relationship between the President and the Secretary-General is crucial to the success of the ICA, and I have benefited from the input, direction and personal contact offered by the current President, Georg Gartner. We had several face-to-face meetings mostly in Vienna to prepare for the Executive Committee meeting or just to discuss ongoing issues. However, during this 4-year term I got more than 4000 e-mails from him (nearly three messages every day on average). I extend my thanks to him for his input and advice, and my admiration for his dedication and commitment to the ICA.

The work of the other committees appointed by the ICA – the Awards Committee under Mike Wood, the Statutes Committee under Bengt Rystedt, and the Publications Committee under Mike Peterson – must also be acknowledged. I always had the opportunity to ask for their advice and contribution.

Communication

Much of the day-to-day work of the Secretary-General in fact relies on contacts with people other than those listed above. Maintaining communication and ensuring effective information flow with the members of the ICA is clearly the priority of the Secretary-General. I have been pleased to engage with helpful and interested members of the cartographic community from various countries from all over the world. It has been a pleasure to receive messages from around the world each day: I tried to reply them quickly, but sometimes the valid answer required more time. The number of e-mails received has increased steadily in recent years. Wherever I travelled, I always tried to be on-line and check and respond my e-mails continuously.

The traditional letter circulation is very low: only a few national and affiliate members request traditional paper letters, but the invoices and the important messages are also sent out in postal letters (unless the member declared that they would accept all communication in e-mail).

Commissions and Working Groups

The other major correspondence for the Secretary-General has been with the Commissions and Working Groups of the Association. These organizations are the driving force behind the ICA's commitment to advancing the discipline of cartography. I am grateful to the chairs of Commissions and Working Groups for their voluntary participation and valuable contribution to the ICA, and for responding to my requests for information when asked. The regular reports from Commissions and Working Groups to the EC form a useful summary of the progress of our discipline, and their websites (linked to the main ICA website) reflect this activity. I would like to particularly refer to the contribution of the Commission on Cartography and Children, especially to commission chair Jesus Reyes, who managed two Barbara Petchenik Children's Map Competitions, a highlight of each ICC in the 2011-2015 period. This is a complex operational job that I have been pleased to confidently leave to these experts. Jesus Reyes also helped me a lot to manage the Spanish language messages.

Altogether, I got about 2150 e-mails from the commissions in the past 4-year term.

Website and outreach

An important initial task for the new Secretary-General at the end of 2011 was the production of a new Directory, which records the Statutes, Terms of Reference, useful contacts, and other information of record.

It is through the ICA website that we advertise ourselves to the world. The ICA must be constantly indebted to our webmasters, Felix Ortig and Manuela Schmidt from the Technical University of Vienna, who have, from 2007, re-designed, launched, managed and maintained an exemplary website of which ICA should be proud. They also successfully moved the website service to a professional company to guarantee more stable and powerful access to our website. We created an internal section on the ICA website, where commission chairs can access travel reports, commission reports and commission expenditures' statistics. A new website for International Map Year was launched, first managed by my PhD students, but later the management was passed to the ICA webmaster. I have got access to the website and the ICA Facebook page, so sometimes I myself make changes, updates on the website or publish photos on the Facebook page.

Of equal importance to the website is the regular publication of ICA News. ICA has been fortunate in retaining the services of Igor Drecki, University of Auckland, who has edited a significant number of volumes of ICA News. Igor's skills in initiating, requesting and presenting material about the ICA are exceptional and the end product of his efforts is a shining example of the creativity and attention to detail, which is the hallmark of all cartographers. Along with the printing and dissemination team in Hong Kong, the burden of preparing a regular ICA bulletin has been taken off the shoulders of the Secretary-General, for which I am grateful.

David Fairbairn, my predecessor was so kind and managed the regular, monthly submission of the ICA page in the GIM International magazine. This opportunity to promote the ICA in this leading international trade journal in geomatics is very useful for our association. Georg Gartner, ICA President has submitted similar columns to ESRI's ArcNews.

Visits and meetings

Each Commission and Working Group of the ICA has a liaison member from the Executive Committee to ensure that their activities are being undertaken effectively. ICA is grateful that Commissions and Working Groups have invited EC liaison members to their meetings, and many such visits have been made by colleagues.

I had the opportunity to take part in some outreach activities: I visited Iran twice in this term (2012, 2015), I discussed the advantages of the ICA membership in Trinidad and Tobago with our new national member (2015). I took part in the InterCarto-InterGIS-20 Conference in Rwanda in 2014 and presented the ICA for the conference participants.

I took part in the AutoCarto Conference in 2012 in order to help promoting ICC 2015. I was also invited to several national and regional cartographic events: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, and Russia. I took part in three International Workshops on Digital Approaches to Cartographic Heritage (2013-15), mostly because my department organized this workshop in 2014. The ICC 2013 was and 2015 will be a very challenging event for the Secretary-General. Being responsible for so many different issues, keeping deadlines on my mind, solving problems, meeting ICA officers and national delegates were always not only challenging but inspiring too.

Strategic work

The work of the ICA Secretary-General is often channelled through the Executive Committee. EC members have taken responsibility for and reported on the working 'environments' of cartography: Science, Society, Education, Professional Practice, and Art. The draft Strategic Plan and the Research Agenda, in particular, have benefited from the understanding of these environments which EC members have brought.

In many other ways, the 2011-2015 EC worked effectively on behalf of the Association. Diverse tasks such as refereeing conference papers, promoting the ICA in specialist meetings (including United Nations, Joint Board of GIS, ICSU), undertaking outreach in workshops, and liaising with national and regional mapping agencies are further evidence of the role of the EC members. We have advised conference organizers on issues from exhibitions, we have initiated, approved or endorsed successful regional cartographic symposia, we have signed Memoranda of Understanding with various organizations, and we have agreed to promote cartography through a wider use of the Solidarity Fund – maintaining Travel Award (Research Scholarship) winners' attendance at international conferences, but also setting aside funds to support outreach workshops to less developed countries. Although the EC meets together infrequently (nine times in four years), we have been able to correspond regularly by electronic means: the geographical distribution of the EC members has spanned all continents, and the ICA benefits from this diversity. The use of chat, e-mail and the web has ensured efficient management of ICA business.

Although we have not updated our most important strategic documents in this term, we have reached several important strategic goals: started our scientific journal with Taylor and Francis, ICSU accepted our ICA as a union member, several Springer books were published, and launched International Map Year.

Future

After being familiar with all duties of the Secretary-General, it was more and more logical to seek re-election for a second term as Secretary-General; enjoying the support from my national organization, a nomination was made by the Hungarian national representative in the first part of 2015. However, the main reason of seeking for re-election is due to Menno-Jan Kraak, the applicant for President in the next term. He has also asked me to continue as a Secretary-General. I am convinced that we together will successfully work for the ICA.

Budapest, 11 August 2015