

President's Report to the 19th General Assembly of the ICA
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INTRODUCTION

This report covers several items for the General Assembly, the Member States and Affiliate members, and the friends and colleagues of the ICA. The state and health of the ICA as an international professional society is of the greatest importance and is presented first so that the great work that the organization does can continue onward. The second part focuses on the important programs of the ICA and the people that make them possible. Some colleagues will be mentioned by name, but many others contribute their time, expertise, and knowledge to making the ICA what it is – the International Society for Cartography and GIScience.

The Term 2019 to 2023 was unprecedented for the ICA and the world at large. In early 2020, the effects of the pandemic were swift and deadly across the globe. Some countries suffered more than others, but no one escaped the impact of such a virulent virus. Human interaction was dangerous, affecting the daily lives at home and at work. Travel was halted across borders. Economies suffered. The precision of supply chains was broken. Government responses were generally slow according to what was needed and the lack of adequate policies precluded effective action. In person events for the ICA, a hallmark of our professional existence, went dormant for over 18 months. But the ICA led the way for other international societies in our efforts to stand up the 30th International Cartographic Conference, one of the early hybrid events, in Florence in December, 2021. This anchor of achievement opened the door to other in-person events for the ICA. More on this and other achievements later.

The good news from this difficult time was the reality that the world got smaller. Technology made it possible not only to learn and work from home for many, but it also allowed and made possible connections with the distant world that previously had not availed itself of such interactions. Zoom, Teams, Meet and dozens of other streaming apps were made possible by an increasing internet pipeline. In some cases, this actually resulted in advances for developing countries that previously would have had limited access to people, information, and development that now was possible within their individual environments. Cartography and GIScience took a front seat to helping nations and communities by spreading information and leading to greater knowledge and understanding about the virus and its impacts.

The ICA is an organization of people, ideas, experiences, practice and research and, dare I say, fun. The people are the engine for the ICA. It is a collegiate experience among friends and colleagues that advance the art and science of cartography and geographic information science. It is exciting, productive, rewarding and together it impacts society, economies, environments and the overall well-being of our world. As a long-standing participant in the ICA beginning in 1987, I find myself drawn increasingly to the people and the organization. In reading parts of this report, I hope that you find similar interests.

PART 1: THE STATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CARTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

The president of the ICA is an agent directing the decisions of the General Assembly, is the leader of the Executive Committee, and an influencer of the organizational and programmatic components of the international society. This includes the commissions and working groups, the various committees supporting the work of the ICA, and the various administrative tasks required for an efficient and effective international organization. One thing I quickly learned is that regardless of the purpose of your involvement or your presence, the role of ICA president always travels with you. A consequence of that responsibility is that you also have a platform to advance the practice and science of Cartography and GIScience.

There are two main areas of responsibility within the ICA Executive Committee. The first, and most important, are the administrative issues or responsibilities that contribute to a successful international society. Without them, the ICA does not function. Most of the work in this area is accomplished by the president and most importantly, the secretary-general and treasurer. The full executive committee proposes, discusses, and approves or disapproves administrative actions necessary for the organization. Involvement by all assures transparency in the process.

ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN THE SOCIETY

The contributions offered by the ICA derive their benefits from three general areas. *People* are what make the ICA what it is. Involvement in a diverse set of opportunities advances the profession, the craft, and the science. Twenty-eight Commissions were approved at the 18th General Assembly while the Executive Committee formed 6 Working Groups to focus on particular topics, some as carry overs from the last term and additional working groups to address new areas of interest for the ICA. *Conferences, workshops, joint meetings* and other events that bring people together are another contribution. In addition to the International Cartographic Conferences, regional conferences are gaining in popularity. Specialty events arranged around the work of one or more commissions are a mainstay of the ICA's program. *Publications* of different forms, audiences, and levels of interest are another significant contribution by the ICA. The *ICA News* contains information about us as a society and what we are working on and what we have accomplished. It is an outlet for commissions, working groups, committees, programs and projects, and the leadership of the society to share information and updates about what is happening across the organization. The *International Journal of Cartography* is a scholarly, peer-reviewed professional journal that is gaining notoriety with each year in circulation. The society's website (icaci.org) is the principal means of communicating all things about the association, its program and people, and general information of interest to anyone who visits. It is the place to go for the most current information about the society. The *Proceedings* of the International Cartographic Conference continue to document the contributions of professionals participating in the ICC. Another publication outlet is *eCARTO News* which brings together interesting information, articles, and links of a very diverse range of topics and tidbits, some of which are core to our work and others are tangential (and fun).

One new membership was accepted by the Executive Committee, pending General Assembly approval for Saudi Arabia. Ten new affiliate members, which was a significant increase, were also accepted by the Executive Committee.

STATE OF THE SOCIETY

The International Cartographic Association is a relevant, vibrant and healthy organization. Interest in membership continues, the budget is balanced and supports the necessary programs and administration of the ICA, the program continues to strengthen the discipline in an international context, the organization is viewed highly by international partners, societies, and venues, and publications are important to the readership.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SOCIETY

ICA Executive Committee: The 10 member ICA Executive Committee was comprised of the President Tim Trainor (USA), the Secretary General and Treasurer Thomas Schulz (Switzerland), Immediate Past President Menno-Jan Kraak (The Netherlands) and Vice Presidents Andrés Arístegui (Spain); Temenoujka Bandrova (Bulgaria); Philippe De Maeyer (Belgium); Liqiu Meng (Germany); Terje Midtbø (Norway); Vít Voženílek (Czech Republic); and László Zentai (Hungary). As a group, the Executive Committee was called on many times to meet and accomplish a variety of tasks. I want to thank the Executive Committee for all of their efforts in advancing the society. We worked well together. These were extraordinary times. Under normal circumstances, each member of the EC would have a portfolio of responsibilities that would involve meeting with members of the community at workshops and other events. For the most part, due to the pandemic, those interactions were few. In place of that approach, the ICA EC met more frequently than any of our predecessors. There were 15 ICA EC meetings during this term, only 6 of which were in-person. For me, all of the EC members were a pleasure to work with. I must mention Menno-Jan Kraak, Past President, for his guidance and willingness to stand in when needed. Thomas Schulz receives my highest gratitude. No words can effectively describe my thanks to him for all that he has done as Secretary-General and Treasurer for the ICA. Thomas and I communicated very regularly. FaceTime meetings were frequent and our common bond for the betterment of the ICA was evident in our commitment and agreements throughout the term. My thanks to Thomas Schulz for his great work!

Commissions within the ICA: Art and cartography [Taien Ng-Chan, Canada]; Atlas [René Sieber, Switzerland]; Topographic mapping [Alexander Kent, UK]; Maps and graphics for blind and partially-sighted people [Waldirene Ribeiro, Brazil]; Mountain cartography [Dušan Petrovič, Slovenia]; Cartography and children [Carla Sena, Brazil]; Maps and the internet [Otakar Čerba, Czech Republic]; Marine cartography [Ron Furness, Australia]; Ubiquitous mapping [Yoshiki Wakabayashi, Japan]; Planetary cartography [Andrea Naß, Germany]; Cartography in early warning and crises management [Liu Jiping, China]; Map design [Ian Muehlenhaus, USA]; Education and training [Tao Wang, China]; Generalisation and multiple representations [Guillaume Touya, France]; History of cartography [Imre Josef USA]; Sensor-driven mapping [Jonathan Li, Canada]; Location based services [Haosheng Huang, China]; User Experience [Robert Roth, USA]; Geospatial Analysis and Modeling [Xiaobai Angela Yao, USA]; Cartographic Heritage into the Digital [Mátyás Gede, Hungary]; Map Production and Geoinformation Management [Peter Schmitz, South Africa]; Map projections [Lynn Usery, USA]; SDI and Standards [Serena Coetzee, South Africa]; Geospatial Semantics [Dalia Varanka, USA] Open source geospatial technologies [Silvana Comboim, Brazil]; Toponymy [Peter Jordan, Austria]; Visual Analytics [Anthony Robinson, USA, Arzu Çöltekin, Switzerland]; Cognitive Issues in Geographic Information Visualization [Amy Griffin, Australia]. Sadly,

during this term, Lynn Usery passed away and Sarah Battersby from the USA completed the term.

During this term the ICA Executive Committee proposed and approved six ICA Working Groups to pursue specific topics important to the society. The Working Groups included: Digital Transformation of National Mapping Agencies [Bin Jiang, Sweden]; Cartography and Sustainable Development [Britta Ricker, The Netherlands]; Cartographic Body of Knowledge [Terje Midtbø, Norway]; History of ICA, [Igor Drecki, New Zealand]; New Research Agenda in Cartography [Liqui Meng, Germany]; Ethics in Cartography [Aileen Buckley, USA]. Particular thanks go to Vice Presidents Terje Midtbø and Liqui Meng for directing and leading efforts to advance our disciplines with foundational work that was added to their normal duties. Great progress was made in these areas.

Committees of the ICA: Thanks are extended to everyone who contributed in substantive ways in helping to make the ICA work according to the Statutes and By-Laws. *Publications Committee*, chaired by Georg Gartner, managed coordination of publication activities. The Committee worked closely with the editors of the *International Journal of Cartography*, the flagship peer-reviewed publication for the ICA under editors Bill Cartwright and Anne Ruas. Other publications of note included the *ICA News* under Igor Drecki, and *eCARTO News* under David Fraser. The *ICA Statutes and By-Laws Committee* comprised of Derek Clarke (South Africa) and Christine Zanin (France) were collectively proficient in English and French respectively, which was very helpful in selecting appropriate wording and interpretation for proposed changes to the Statutes and By-Laws. The Chair of the ICA Selection of Award Recipients Committee for the 30th ICC, Ferjan Ormeling, had to step aside before evaluation and decisions leading to the 31st ICC. He was replaced by Evangelos Livieratos (Greece). Other committee were Liqui Meng (Germany), Anne Ruas (France), David Fairbairn (United Kingdom) and Takashi Morita (Japan).

The 18th General Assembly in Tokyo appointed two ICA Auditors: Hal Moellering (USA) and Bengt Rystedt (Sweden). In preparation for the 19th General Assembly, the Secretary-General and Treasurer Thomas Schulz worked very closely with the ICA accounting firm to ensure compliance with normal accounting procedures for the ICA. Thomas Schulz and I met with the accounting firm in May 2023 to assure that everything was in order in preparation for the 19th General Assembly. Bengt Rystedt was unable to take on the responsibility and sent his regrets. Hal and his spouse, Elizabeth, formerly Chief of Ohio State University Budget Office, carefully reviewed the records and issued their positive report.

Webmasters Manuela Schmidt and Felix Ortog managed the ICA website with speed and proficiency that served as the principal communication method for the ICA followers.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

During this time, we have lost several colleagues who made significant contributions in diverse ways to cartography and GIScience. We recognize their contributions and good fellowship. Specific names will be shared during the proceedings of the 19th General Assembly.

Several of our colleagues were recognized for their special achievements in cartography and GIScience and for their outstanding service to the ICA. Our website contains those who have

been recognized and will include those who will be recognized while in Cape Town (<https://icaci.org/awards/>).

MODE OF OPERATION FOR APPROVALS

No decision was made unilaterally by any member of the Executive Committee. For the efficiency of day-to-day operations, the President and Secretary-General and Treasurer met frequently to discuss any pressing matters that required action including decisions. Frequent email communication and text messaging was used for most immediate issues. The President and Secretary-General and Treasurer met on average each month via FaceTime to go over ICA business.

The Secretary-General and Treasurer has important fiduciary responsibilities for the ICA in maintaining the budget that include such tasks as maintaining bank accounts, managing accounts receivable and making payments. To assure agreement, accuracy, and transparency, at the beginning of the term the President and Secretary-General and Treasurer agreed to a two-factor review and approval process. Every fiduciary action had review, approval and sign-off by the Secretary-General and Treasurer with the President of the ICA.

Actions requiring approval by the Executive Committee were managed by the Secretary-General. Notice of the request, requirement, action etc. was sent to the EC via email or, when we met for a formal meeting, the information was provided during that meeting. Each member of the EC voted including the President. Votes were requested, cast, and tallied by the Secretary-General. This was an exceptionally smooth and successful process.

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE SOCIETY

There were significant challenges during this period that were successfully addressed. The challenges are divided into two categories: administrative and programmatic. The administrative challenges included a lack of formal domicile, a lack of an established address for the society, banking risks, and statute and by-laws omissions that affected the operation of the society.

Provision for a domicile is accounted for in the Statutes by action taken during each General Assembly (“The domicile of the Association is determined by the General Assembly”). The difficulty rests with the omission of the location of the domicile, further complicated with no address for the society. In today’s climate of strict banking and tax laws, having no address for the society is no longer tenable. During this term, the ICA was notified that its current banking institution would no longer service the ICA. Seeking a new bank uncovered several modern-day challenges. Sister societies were contacted to learn of their experience. At the completion of much research, contact with banking institutions in many locations, the Secretary-General and Treasurer was able to secure a workable solution in the founding location of the ICA in 1959, Switzerland. This challenge was of paramount importance as the society must have a way to accept and disperse funds. Without a bank, this is not possible.

The ICA is governed by its Statutes and By-Laws just as other organizations are administered by their governance procedures. This term was plagued by two events that uncovered deficiencies in the Statutes and By-Laws of the ICA. The first event was the pandemic. The current statutes

require in-person meetings of the General Assembly. If the pandemic were raging at this time, we would not have the 19th General Assembly in Cape Town. I do not know what next steps would be taken as there is no provision for exceptions. Clearly, with modern technology, the requirement to meet can be addressed in more than one way. The second event is the war in Ukraine. Professional societies were faced with the question of what actions, if any, should be taken. This question uncovered a second deficiency in the Statutes. The ICA had no option to take any action in which a member did not honor the aims or code of conduct of the ICA. It can only take action on members whose dues are in arrears. In addition, there was no provision for an exit option for a member wanting to relinquish their membership.

Regarding the war in Ukraine, the ICA followed the guidance offered by the International Science Council (ISC) and was one of the first international professional societies to post a position on the ISC's website.

The International Cartographic Association expresses its shock and dismay at the incursion by Russia into the sovereign state of Ukraine. Violation of a sovereign nation is unacceptable. Without provocation, innocent victims within the borders of Ukraine suffer unbearable intrusion and danger causing loss of life, intolerable pain and suffering on children, women and men, mass migrations to neighboring countries, and unnecessary destruction of property. The violent interruption of normalcy undermines global security and stability for every part of our world watching these horrible events unfold. The International Cartographic Association calls for an end to all actions stemming from the forceful intrusion of Ukraine's borders and a resolution for restoring the sovereignty of Ukraine and its people. The International Cartographic Association is in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and specifically with cartographers in both Ukraine and Russia who can contribute to protecting the sovereignty of Ukraine while beginning a path back to normalcy.

Other suggested improvements to the Statutes and By-Laws are submitted by the Executive Committee to the 19th General Assembly for their consideration. There are 18 categories of proposed changes that range from adapting the statutes to current circumstances to membership related matters to the society functioning in the digital age. I want to thank the ICA EC for all of their hard work in coming together with these important proposed changes that strengthen the ICA and modernize the statutes to our current times. Collectively, the ICA EC worked on the proposed revisions for over one year. A special note of thanks to Thomas Schulz for successfully organizing this complex effort and explaining the changes for the members of the General Assembly.

One observation to share with Member States in the General Assembly is the enormous set of responsibilities required of the Secretary-General and Treasurer position. I remind you that these two positions are assumed by one person and the person in this position is a volunteer like all other officers of the ICA. The workload level for this position increases with time. Take one example of meetings of the Executive Committee. During this term the EC met 15 times. The number of documents that are required to prepare for each meeting number as few as 10 and other meetings exceed 40 documents. The SG is not preparing all of the documents, but they must be organized and presented to the EC. Banking, membership, thousands of emails,

correspondence, preparing agenda and minutes of EC meetings, managing many details and questions from Local Organizing Committees of the ICC, and preparing all of the work to conduct a General Assembly as well as many other tasks are the norm for responsibilities. The current Executive Committee is aware of the demands of the position and information has been shared with the nominated incoming president.

Another observation for future consideration by Member States in the General Assembly centers on diversity. Each organization benefits from diversity. This is true for the ICA. Geography, gender, race, and professional diversity are factors that add to a more holistic perspective and a variety of viewpoints. Having representation from a developing country also would benefit the ICA, but this has been very difficult because of the lack of financial support needed to participate on the Executive Committee. This Executive Committee was Euro-centric with only the president from outside of Europe. As an international society, we should be more geographically representative. The slate of candidates for the next term is a mixed record. Of the 10 members of the current EC, only three were women while there are only 2 female candidates standing for election for the next term. This is not representative of our profession. Of the 10 current members, 3 were practicing professionals and 7 were academics. Having national mapping agencies put forward candidates for key ICA positions would help in balancing this ratio. During my term, I have spoken openly and directly with different organizations about the need for greater diversity.

PART 2: THE PROGRAM OF THE INTERNATIONAL CARTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

The second area of responsibility for the president focuses on the program of the ICA. While this work is directed by the executive committee, all of those involved in the ICA, through the work of commissions, working groups, conferences, competitions, publications, and other communication, drive the interesting, rewarding, and contributory aspects that benefit society.

The theme of my address at the Tokyo ICC Closing Ceremony on July 20, 2019 was “The Relevance and Importance of Cartography: A Call to Action.” My intent for the program was that cartography would reflect an active role in addressing the many challenges that society faces.

ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN THE ICA PROGRAM

The notable achievements for the ICA during this period included the 30th International Cartographic Conference in Florence Italy, regional cartographic conferences, a record number of scholarships offered to participate in ICA events, publications of the ICA, efforts by Commissions and Working Groups to keep the program moving forward in a period of global health uncertainty, and frequent communications through the ICA website.

Following the lead of the President of the International Science Council, Dr. Peter Gluckman, who offered a recorded address to the 30th ICC in Florence Italy, I embraced and promoted his emphasis on actionable science by applying it to the notion of Actionable Cartography and Actionable GIScience within the ICA and in each engagement with others. This approach was consistent with my new president address in Tokyo.

One of the greatest achievements that strengthens the program and future of the ICA is the number of scholarships awarded to attend ICA events, with the greatest emphasis on the International Cartographic Conferences in Italy and South Africa. This is an investment in the future of the ICA. The excitement in the ICA and appreciation voiced by the award recipients were reassuring reactions of a successful ICA program. Congratulations to the ICA scholarship recipients!

During this term, I focused on both cartography and GIScience. New domains were coming into being. The UN-Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (<https://ggim.un.org/IGIF/>) was beginning to be endorsed by national mapping agencies as the next chapter in National Spatial Data Infrastructures (NSDI). The Geospatial Knowledge Infrastructure (GKI) is another example of a current development where cartography and GIScience should play a role. Cartographers work is knowledge transfer. Representing the ICA, I was most active in the early days of discussion, planning, communicating, and determining the next steps on both of these initiatives.

ICA Commissions and Working Groups

I encourage everyone to visit the depth of information on current and past ICA Commissions and Working Groups on the ICA website. This is your window into much interesting and informative detail on the work of the ICA. One member of the EC oversees the activities of a commission or working group. The EC developed a template for reporting on progress and events that has helped streamline and simplify a responsibility for chairs leading these groups.

International Cartographic Conference

The 30th ICC was proposed, approved, and planned long before Covid came onto the world stage. Original plans had to be modified in significant ways to maintain a workable plan during a period of terrible uncertainty ranging from not knowing near-term impacts of the virus, constantly shifting government travel, quarantining, and vaccination policies in many countries, suitable planning for the safety of ICC conference participants and many, many other concerns. Communications between myself and the Secretary-General, Thomas Schulz with the LOC in Florence were very frequent. I felt it paramount that the ICC be held, not only for the ICA, but also as a statement that society was beginning to emerge from the pandemic, in whatever form that could take. The LOC was brilliant in shifting from the original venue to the University of Florence which accommodated so many requirements including the necessary safety precautions, technology for hybrid communications, and physical facilities to meet these concerns.

The 31st ICC is aligned with the 19th General Assembly in Cape Town, South Africa in August 2023. The Local Organizing Committee was in place prior to the ICC in Italy and began their work in earnest immediately following the successful Florence event. As was the case the last time the ICC was held in South Africa where the organizers proposed some novel approaches, this event will also see a new approach for the International Map Exhibition. We look forward to observing reactions from conference participants. I proposed to the UN-GGIM Africa Region that they consider having their annual meeting in alignment with the ICC. They agreed to move the date to accommodate the ICC timing. Many national mapping agencies in Africa will attend the UN-GGIM meeting and arrangements have been made to have participants partake in various parts of the ICC schedule. This will be the largest number of participants from Africa to an ICC. In addition, I proposed that the SDG Data Alliance (sdg.org) plan two workshops so that ICC

participants, particularly those from Africa, can see examples of work from African countries toward developing a Country-level Action Plan (a next generation NSDI) as well as a SDG Data Hub that can be used by countries to advance their Sustainable Development Goals.

Regional Cartographic Conferences

Many conferences were approved by the EC for endorsement by the ICA. This is a huge benefit in broadening the work of the ICA regionally and locally and is viewed as important by the organizers of events receiving the acknowledgement. Three regional cartographic conferences to highlight were EuroCarto 2020 (virtual), EuroCarto 2022 in Vienna Austria and AutoCarto 2022 in Redlands California. These events encouraged Commissions and Working Groups to come together to share their work and to learn from one another. Even with the significant downturn in events due to the pandemic, the Executive Committee approved endorsements for many conferences aligned to the ICA from countries including, but not limited to: Croatia, Bulgaria, USA, Argentina, Norway, Czech Republic, etc.

Barbara Petchenik Children's World Map Competition

This competition is a hallmark program within the ICA. It is a wonderful opportunity for next generations to share their views on themes of global importance. In this period, as a special tribute to the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the National Geographic Institute of Spain, the Institute published *The World drawn by children*, representing competitions that took place in 2017 and 2019. This was made possible by many people across the globe. Special recognition goes to Pilar Sanchez-Ortiz, Jesus Reyes, Carla Sena, and Temenoujka Bandrova. During this term, agreement was made with Esri to publish future children's competition books that will take into account new publication methods to increase dissemination, particularly to school children.

Publications and Articles

Mapping for a Sustainable World was made available in both print and online during this period. The design, writing and production was accomplished in earnest during the last period, while its availability, distribution, promotion and translations were highlighted during this current term. This collaborative product with the United Nations will be relevant through time for the ICA. It is an example of a basic textbook in cartography that uses a single theme, the Sustainable Development Goals, as examples throughout the publication. The hard copy book was offered at several events where local printers were used, thereby adding to the local economy, including Cape Town. The book has been translated into French and Arabic and a version in Japanese is in the works. *Mapping for a Sustainable World* is an example to be copied for what each country can do in showing their progress toward achieving the goals. Another ICA publication, the long-awaited Atlas Cookbook, was published on-line and is available on the Atlas Commission website.

ArcNews During this term, I published 14 articles in ArcNews which has a distribution of approximately 1 million readers. This is an important outreach opportunity for the ICA. The titles and articles at (Tim Trainor, Author at Esri) include:

- The Importance of Institutions
- How Cartographers Generalize Data
- Countries Need an Integrated Geospatial Information Framework
- Cartographic Creativity and Ingenuity on Display

Stay the Course, and Seize the Moment
Experience the World of Maps and Mapping at the ICC
New Book Highlights Importance of Cartography in Achieving SDGs
The Early Evolution of Cartography
Cartography in the 20th Century
Cartographers Advance Science at 30th ICC
Cartographic Engagements in a Postvirtual World
Cartography Remains Critical in the Digital Mapping Age
Cartographers, Cape Town Is Calling
Getting Geospatial Data to Meet the Needs of Today and Tomorrow

Thanks go to our ICA Vice Presidents who authored articles for *GIM International*, another outlet for advancing the work of the ICA.

United Nations collaboration

The former UN Regional Cartographic Conferences eventually morphed into the UN-GGIM which eliminated any duplication and reflected a transformation to new directions for national mapping agencies. In the late 2000 decade, Fraser Taylor (ICA past president) and myself served on a small group of experts to recommend a new governance model for addressing the diverse mapping needs of Member States in responding to the growing demands and interests in cartography, GIScience, and geospatial information management. From those discussions, the United Nations formed the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in 2011 and has had a notable impact globally. The UN-GGIM has been highly successful at promoting the importance of national mapping and national geospatial organizations. The ICA has been an active member since its inception and took a leadership role in the Geospatial Societies Thematic Group during three different terms, beginning with Past President Bill Cartwright. The most current work focuses on a new framework for national mapping agencies to better respond to the increasing needs for their expertise. The United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) has been endorsed by many nations. The ICA has played a role in its formulation and continues to be active. More is needed and I see this as a body of work that will benefit our global community with particular emphasis on developing countries. I encourage everyone to learn more at (<https://ggim.un.org/IGIF/>).

Sister Societies

In 2022, the ICA and the International Map Industry Association (IMIA) signed an affiliate partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) which brings together topics of common interest. One recent achievement focuses on collaborations on ethics in cartography where the ICA and IMIA jointly participated in several meetings and presentations on ethics in cartography.

In May, 2023, the ICA and EuroGeographics signed a Memorandum of Understanding that brings the two organizations closer together. As EuroGeographics brings together the national mapping organizations of Europe, we have many common experiences, making this is an important regional alliance for the ICA.

GeoUnions of the ISC – Meetings of the GeoUnions group allowed leaders of the various international bodies to share experience and discuss issues that were helpful particularly during the difficulties during this period, specifically the influence of the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Learning how each organization was addressing these topics was helpful for the ICA.

During this term, Serena Coetzee (South Africa), in leading the Commission on SDI and Standards, recommended that the ICA joined the Open Geospatial Consortium at a membership level. This increased ICA's influence in the standards arena. ICA has always led in standards work and this relationship adds to ICA's effective participation.

The ICA currently has 3 seats on the FIG/IHO/ICA International Board on Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers. This is an important certification program in which the ICA participates. For the next term, a fourth seat for the ICA is available.

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TAKEN

One outcome of the pandemic that impacted both ICCs in Italy and South Africa was the introduction of a hybrid conference – a mix of in-person and remote participation. This was all new to most conference organizers where past participation was only in-person. In Italy, because the pandemic was very active in December 2021, hybrid options included presentations by remote participants and communication between in-person and remote participants during the conference. In South Africa, all presentations are in-person with remote viewing of the event. In the future, the ICA Executive Committee in concert with a Local Organizing Committee will have to decide on a direction on the question of hybrid conference programs. There is no substitute for meeting in person – there are so many personal and professional benefits in various social interactions. But hybrid has also opened up the possibility for those who never would be able to attend an ICC, enabling their participation in whatever way possible. There are many factors that must be considered in weighing an approach for the future. This is something for the EC to consider.

CONCLUSION

The ICA is in good standing as an international professional society. Everyone should feel proud of what we collectively contribute to society through our professional interests in cartography and GIScience. Our long-standing achievements continued through this period. Engagement in assuring a smooth transition for the next period with the next president, Georg Gartner, holds great promise.

There is a resurgence in national mapping agencies. The days of standard map product providers have shifted to a user-centric model that provides national mapping agencies with greater responsibilities and opportunities. The ICA program is aligned with this transformation.

A personal note: Everyone is influenced in our lives by special people. Bob Marx, the Geography Division Chief at the U.S. Census Bureau, supported me from the very beginning. My agency saw the value in working with a professional society like the ICA. For me, within the ICA, Bengt Rystedt set the stage to work hard, be relevant, and advance cartography through

new technologies and cartographic practice. Ferjan Ormeling reminded me of the basics in cartography while emphasizing the need to go further in supporting developing countries. Eva Siekierska from Canada was the outlier who challenged us in unconventional thinking. We were the “gang of four” within the Atlas Commission that began in 1987 in Morelia, Mexico. Having such a unique experience catapulted my interests in my professional work and was the beginning of many enjoyable experiences within the ICA. Special people also include those closest to us. My wife, Adrienne, always encouraged (and insisted) that I do my part within the ICA even while many Thanksgiving dinners were missed and managing a household of three growing boys.

Thank you to everyone for your support. It is greatly appreciated. I look forward to seeing what the ICA will accomplish in the future.