President's Inaugural Address

President Graham, ladies and gentlemen. Rather than a 1-hour address, I promise to keep this to no more than 10 minutes, so I hope we don't see a rush to the exits.

I believe I am the oldest person to take this office for which I will not apologize since you are the ones who elected me. I hope that my professional experience, which started with World War II, may be of practical value to this Society. If you want to know more about me, it is laid out in the ballots you have seen, and I believe reappears in the March or April issue of *PE&RS*.

It is indeed an honor to be the President of ASPRS, particularly when I look at those who preceded me and those who will follow. But I did not seek or accept this job for the honor—I did it because I felt I might help ASPRS achieve some of its goals which in turn might be of benefit, in some small way, to our entire Society. I have been a mapmaker for nearly 50 years, and I believe that we in the mapping sciences have a lot to contribute to the general welfare.

To me, this is a time of real challenge to ASPRS, and I believe we are prepared to face it. This challenge is simply adding the fourth dimension of time to our products. The average published map is at least 5, and usually 10, years out-of-date, and this is no longer acceptable. Today's technology permits us to enter new data into our files and retrieve it—all in a matter of nano seconds. From the practical standpoint, we should be able to produce new maps in a matter of hours, or at least days, just as the morning paper now prints out the weather maps. Furthermore, we can now combine unlike data sets in an endless array of GIS, LIS, and other displays. Information processing and dissemination is being completely revolutionized, and ASPRS (and ACSM) are right in the middle. We have an enormous role to play to make sure that new information sets meet appropriate standards, particularly in the spatial realm. We, the professional societies, must set such standards and fight for their compliance. If we can successfully do that, we will definitely contribute to the general welfare.

There is another point that to me is obvious—but apparently is not obvious to many decisionmakers. Our Earth is not all that large, and it is the only home we have. Furthermore, it has limited resources and a fragile environment. We have to learn to use those resources without irreparable damage to that environment. To do so requires both basic and continuing knowledge of the entire Earth which, to date, has not yet been properly mapped. To map and monitor this Earth, we need a good space system with capabilities equal to or better than Landsat and SPOT. For the US Government to now fail to support such an operational system is to me incomprehensible. But such a failure is also a reflection on this Society. Obviously, we have not done an adequate job in justifying a system which will provide both cartographic integrity and thematic information. We can do better, not only for the US, but also for the whole world community. I intend to do everything possible to push this concept. At the same time, I want to point out that a satellite system is complementary rather than competitive with conventional aerial surveys. Today Canada uses Landsat to determine where higher resolution images are really needed, and aerial surveys are going strong. But now the aerial photography is more productive than before the Landsat era.

This Society is strong, is on the right track and has a great potential future. My only wish is that I were 50 years younger in order to see the many things I can foresee come to pass. At any rate, I promise to do what I can to make at least some of them actually happen.

—Alden P. Colvocoresses