

CLSA DESERT CHAPTER

THE TURNING POINT

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California Land Surveyors Association - Desert Chapter, P.O. Box 2826, Palm Desert, CA 92261-2826

Letter from the President

By Christopher Alberts

It's my honor to serve as the Desert Chapter's President for 2010. Even since my arrival to the Coachella Valley just 11 years ago, I've seen major changes in our infrastructure and I'm sure those of you who've lived here longer can relate to these changes. Change is a good thing and personally, I'm looking forward to where this decade's new technology can take our profession and the opportunity to offer our services.

Representatives from four southern California chapters of CLSA were in attendance at our 5th annual joint meeting with the Riverside/San Bernardino Chapter to hear about the newly formed Land Surveyors Advisory Council on Technical Standards (LSACTS). Their website is www.lsacts.com. Three members of the LSACTS executive board, Michael Pallamary, P.L.S., Michael Butcher, P.L.S. and Sean Englert, P.L.S.

State Business

By Doug Redlin

First, I want to give props to my fellow chapter board members for a great job, publisher especially, on the first initial newsletter, The Turning Point, Volume 1 Issue 1. It's been a long time in the works, but we finally pulled it all together and hopefully we can keep it going. It should be a good way for our chapter to stay abreast on our chapter business, as well as what's going on at the state level. Of course, it's my job to listen attentively while attending the meetings and bring back the highlights to disperse to our group. Looking back a few years, I wish I had paid more attention to when Harrison Barton, our long-term chapter representative, gave his reports on state business to make sure I'm

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from the President	1
State Business	1
Desert Chapter Officers	2
Mission Statement	2
Trig*star	3
Scholarships	3
Traversing the Technology	4
Important Dates	6

presented a slide show about their mission statement and overall efforts to improve our profession. Many topics were discussed, but the conversation of the night quickly turned to monument preservation, which seems to be a hot topic as of late and should be on the forefront of our discussions with anyone involved in a project with those requirements. Mr. Pallamary also introduced a new research website, www.tiepoints.com that can be a good resource for Please see **President** on page 3

covering all the bases. Please note that critique is welcome on this subject.

Since the July 2009 meeting, I've had the pleasure to attend two more quarterly meetings in O-Town. With each meeting it seems like I meet and talk to a few more people from the other chapters, most of which are very colorful characters, especially those who can recite Robert's Rules of Order from memory. During the November meeting, I attended with fellow chapter member Ron Moreno who gave his presentation "Building Information Modeling (BIM) for the Surveyor" and it was very well received. Many members complimented Ron on his presentation and the fact that he makes the point

Please see **State** on page 2

Desert Chapter Officers

President – Christopher Alberts [calberts@rbf.com]

Past-President – Ron Moreno [rmoreno@rbf.com]

President-Elect – Mike Spurkosky [mspurkosky@aol.com]

Treasurer – Eduardo Hernandez [ehernandez@msaconsultinginc.com]

Secretary – Elizabeth Chesla [echesla@rbf.com]

State Representative – Doug Redlin [dredlin@msaconsultinginc.com]

JPPC Members – Levi Cox [lcox@rbf.com] & Page Garner [pgarner@ci.palm-desert.ca.us]

*“If it keeps up, man will atrophy all his limbs but the push-button finger.”
~Frank Lloyd Wright*

Mission Statement

The purpose of this Chapter shall be to promote the common good and welfare of its members in their activities in the profession of land surveying, to promote and maintain the highest possible standards of professional ethics and practices, to promote professional uniformity, to promote public faith and dependence in the Professional Land Surveyors in their work. (2005)

State from page 1

that it all starts with us.....land surveyors. Since that meeting he's "taken his show on the road" and presented it to numerous chapters and groups. Very interesting information, thanks Ron.

As I type this the annual conference is going on in Reno, which is a joint CLSA/NALS conference. It will be interesting to see what kind of attendance is made with the current state of the economy.

At the November meeting, the board voted to make the CLSA Professional Development Program (PDP) a complimentary member (state member) benefit. I encourage everyone in our chapter that is licensed to sign up for this volunteer based program. Inevitably, I feel our state will require mandatory continuing education for professionals in the near future.

Typically at the first quarterly meeting, this year it was on January 23rd, it is the changing of the guard. The New Year's officers were sworn in and the outgoing president, Matt Vernon (now the immediate past president), is honored for his term, which started four years prior when he started the journey

as Treasurer. Thanks for the great job Matt and my hat's off to everyone on the state board when they run through the ranks. It's quite the commitment and is very admirable in my book.

Be sure to check out the revised CLSA website at <http://californiasurveyors.org/>. Many publications and resources are available on the website to CLSA members, so be sure to check it out. One item of interest to all of us is the new 2009 BLM Manual. You can purchase it through CLSA ("while supplies last") for a significantly reduced fee, so please order yours today. Also, the website is set up so each member can log in and modify their profile, adding information about you, your company, what your areas of expertise are, you can even add a photo of yourself. Please check it out today!!

I'll be attending the next quarterly meeting which is scheduled for Saturday May 1st in Oakland. If anyone has any questions, please feel free to contact me either by phone or email. Daytime phone is (760) 320-9811 and email address is dredlin@msaconsultinginc.com

President from page 1

us all. Please note LSACTS is NOT affiliated with CLSA.

The March meeting had Derek Hood, P.L.S. present Part 2 of "The Tale of Two HOA's". Mr. Hood presented Part 1 at the August Meeting last year and we enjoyed the follow-up and his results.

Imperial County has a new County Surveyor, Joan Carr, P.L.S., P.E. Joan was active in the Cascade Chapter prior to her relocation. We look forward to welcoming her into the Desert Chapter and holding a meeting in her neck of the woods later this year.

The Desert chapter is joining with the

Riverside/San Bernardino chapter 2010 Golf Tournament on Friday May 21, 2010. The proceeds from this event go towards both chapters' education funds & scholarships. Please see the attached Flyer & support the student by participating in the tournament.

The Voluntary Professional Development Program is now FREE for CLSA state members, so I encourage all of you to participate. It takes roughly 15 minutes to complete the form and the units are easy to accumulate. Anyone with questions, feel free to contact me about details as I just received my confirmation letter from CLSA a few weeks ago.

Respectfully,
Christopher Alberts, P.L.S.

Desert Chapter Scholarships



The Desert Chapter sponsors two \$750 scholarships through the California Land Surveyors Association Education Foundation. These scholarships are focused on students enrolled in an associate degree program in surveying, surveying engineering, geomatics, or geomatics engineering with the intent to attend an accredited surveying course baccalaureate program or pursue a career in the land surveying profession.



The recipients this year are Christopher Gibson from the College of the Desert and Patrick Unrein from Santiago Canyon College. They were honored at the 5th annual joint meeting with the Riverside/San Bernardino Chapter. Both students have shown the dedication to surveying and to CLSA.

We wish them luck with their continued studies in the surveying field.

Trig*star

Trig*star is an annual high school mathematics competition based on the practical application of Trigonometry. Students that participate are not only provided with an opportunity to earn awards, but also leave with a better understanding of the technical profession of Land Surveying and Mapping. We are looking for someone to be a chairperson for our Trig*star program in the Coachella Valley. If you are interested please contact Elizabeth Chesla at echesla@rbf.com



Traversing the Technology

By Benjamin Egan

Harnessing the benefits of Geocoding.

Surveyors very much rely on modern technologies to perform the profession. Imagine for a minute that you no longer have a total station, GPS equipment, data collectors, calculators or electric lighting and air conditioning. In almost every task in the profession, we have realized significant competitive advantages from the advancement of technology and put them to good use.

The only exception to this seems to be the professions records. Every surveyor still takes hand notes in the field, files them in books and indexes them by hand. Maps are put on Mylar on filed in drawers in a recorders office. It is believed the Egyptians developed papyrus around 5000 years ago and modern paper was developed in China as early as the 2nd Century AD. So this is pretty old technology. And while the law requires paper records be maintained, history shows fires, floods and other disasters can put these at risk. Land records of entire cities have been lost this way.

These days, many counties are scanning the records and some firms are scanning their field notes. That is great for duplication and having a backup, but for most it does not make the data more accessible. Almost every surveyor still has to locate the valuable information available in previous surveys and field notes using an antiquated indexing system. Even if the index is on a computer, it is usually maintained in the form of a spreadsheet or database with no geographic connection. For surveyors, this is huge shortcoming in our present systems. Just the other day a colleague and I were preparing a proposal for a survey and knew we had done work on a property adjacent to the project in question. The only problem was neither of us



could remember the client name, the project name, or the project number. Has that every happened to you? About then I was thinking it would have been pretty handy if we had made a little google placemark with even just the project name and job number for all our projects. The firm had good records, and good indexes, but nothing was on a map. We needed the data on a map, because that is how we work.

Perhaps, our falling behind the technology is best illustrated by discussing how old some of the methods and technology are. According to Wikipedia, the earliest use of the Geographic Analysis Method, what we are discussing here and the foundation for modern GIS systems was way back in 1854 by John Snow, a British Physician. He depicted a cholera outbreak in London on a map using points to represent the locations of some individual cases. This study of the distribution of the disease led to discovery of the source of the disease, a contaminated water pump. He was able to stop the disease by disconnecting the pump and hence terminated the outbreak. So over 150 years ago, about the same time the first PLSS surveys were being performed in California, a British Doctor was using an early form of GIS.

The inefficiency of some of our filing methods becomes obvious when one considers that every surveyor probably starts their research for a project by taking a look at the site on Google Earth and looking it up on the County Land Information System. That's exactly what I was in the middle of doing when I realized we had an adjacent project survey, but did not

Please see *Traversing* on page 5

Traversing from page 4

know where to find it in the hundreds of projects the firm completed over the past several years.

Well, how does one fix this problem? The process of adding data to your records so they can be displayed on a map at the correct location is called Geocoding and that is what Surveyors need to look at doing with their records.

But like me, maybe you already have thought of this and have decided it takes way too much time to go back through every record, map and field note you have created over your career and Geocode all of them into a modern GIS system. Well, you're absolutely right, that would take too long. But that does not mean we're done yet. You may not realize it, but you probably already did geocode your records.



Land records have the benefit of having some sort of information about where they are located on the planet. Whether it's an address, intersecting cross streets, nearby geographic features, PLSS designation or something else, upon inspection we know where these are. And for this particular task, we don't need the position to be of first order accuracy, within a couple hundred feet would be fine.

Let's say that you have been maintaining a spreadsheet with a list of job numbers, clients' names, and project addresses. To get this information to plot in google earth, you need to

convert the address to a Lat/Long based on the WGS84 Datum. Great news! There are free online utilities that will geocode your data. For example, if you point your favorite web browser over to <http://geocoder.us>, you can punch in an address and it will give you lat and long for that point. Of course, it would take forever to do these one at a time. If you take a look at <http://www.batchgeocode.com>, you can batch convert a properly formatted spreadsheet. This site has very easy instructions, and will walk you right through the process all the way to creating a google earth KML. If you do an internet search for geocode or geocoding, you will find numerous utilities to help you.

What if you don't have addresses, but you have PLSS Range, Section Township Data, and you need to convert that to Lat/Long. Turns out, the BLM and National Interagency Fire Center had the same problem. Check out: http://www.geocommunicator.gov/GeoComm/Isis_home/townshipdecoder/index.shtml and you will find their tool for converting a PLSS ID to a Lat/Long. Again, an internet search for "geocode section township range" yields numerous helpful sites to address this problem.

While it is beyond the scope of this article to address every possible source for geocoding your records, a brief search on the internet will yield numerous results for almost any geocoding problem. It seems ironic that Surveyors seem to be late adopters of these technologies, but instead of dwelling on that, get off the sidelines.

A final note, even if you are not going to make the effort to geocode your old records at this time or lack the staff or resources to start a project like this, I think you can see the case for starting to geocode your new projects. It does not take that long to add a latitude and longitude entry column to whatever you're using to index your projects and records. Down the road someone will thank you for making the effort.

CLSA Desert Chapter

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**Important CLSA Dates**

April 28th Desert Chapter Meeting – JPPC Board

May 21st Desert & Riverside/San Bernardino Chapters 2010 Golf Tournament (see flyer for more information)

May 26th Desert Chapter Meeting

June 23rd Desert Chapter Meeting

July 28th Desert Chapter Meeting

July 31st Full Membership Roster Due

August 25th Desert Chapter Meeting (Nominees for Board of Directors Due)

September 22nd Desert Chapter Meeting

September 30th List of Chapter Officers & Representatives Due

October 27th Desert Chapter Meeting

November 17th Desert Chapter Meeting

December 31st Annual Report Due

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