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**Intersect LIVE:  
Two Professions, Two Perspectives, Two Points of View**

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Allow us to introduce ourselves. We are “Surveyor Randy” and “GIS Janet” and we write a monthly column in *Professional Surveyor* magazine entitled Intersect. Through Intersect, we discuss and explore the ways in which surveying and GIS professionals are strikingly similar and wildly divergent, and how our two professions can best work together to bring the highest-quality, most cost-effective services to our clients.

Intersect was born at last year’s Survey Summit. At the conference, we presented a paper about an aviation project on which we were collaborating or “bridging the gap,” if you will. Quite frankly, our session was very poorly attended. Why hadn’t our session attracted a crowd? Or a dozen attendees? Or even a few? We were a bit discouraged as we made our way back to our hotel to debrief.

As we talked, we began feeling much more encouraged. More importantly, we were determined to do everything we could to bridge the gap between our two professions. We realized we faced significant challenges. After all, surveying and GIS can be vastly different:

- Surveying has been a profession for 2,000 years / GIS has been a profession for a few decades
- Survey professionals are very precise and detail-oriented / GIS professionals look for generalities, common ground, graphics as opposed to numbers

On the other hand, GIS and surveying share one common goal: to create accurate, user-friendly data for municipalities and the general public.

We both realized the best way for our professions to learn to work together is through open and honest discussion and dialogue. We’d tried that in a public speaking format and felt like we hadn’t connected with an audience. Had our presentation fallen on deaf ears? We decided that perhaps the written word was the way to go.

Our enthusiasm for change resulted in a column—a point/counterpoint kind of dialogue—that is published monthly in *Professional Surveyor* magazine and online in *GIS Monitor*. We named the column Intersect, representing our goal to converge our professions whenever possible.

Intersect debuted in October 2005. The first question we discussed was, “How do you make a GIS person understand the importance of data accuracy?” Surveyor Randy maintained that surveyors have a tough time sleeping at night if they don’t know the data is as accurate as it can

possibly be. GIS Janet argued that if GIS people waited until all the data in their hands was “the most accurate” before using it, they’d still be waiting.

We knew we’d struck a chord and connected with an audience when we started getting e-mails and phone calls from around the country. Month after month readers called and e-mailed us. Some wanted to share their own ideas and viewpoints while others asked our opinions on ways to intersect within their own companies or agencies. We’ve presented a live version of Intersect at several state conferences and have learned that a community college is using Intersect as an instructional tool within its surveying curriculum. This spring, one of our columns was the basis of a Web article.

To date we’ve addressed the following issues in Intersect:

- We speak the same language so why can't we communicate?
- Will GIS software become a technology surveyors routinely use?
- What are the optimal personality traits, training and experience needed to build a top-notch GIS/survey team?
- Metadata: Powerful documentation tool or gobbledygook developed by the GIS world?
- Together or separate: What’s the best plan for managing the businesses of GIS and surveying?
- In this fast-paced world, how do we keep up?
- Is education the best way to intersect the surveying and GIS professions?
- CAD: How do GIS and survey professionals use it to their benefit?
- Surveying calls them measurements and GIS calls them coordinates. Are we talking about the same thing or are we miles apart?

The Intersect adventure is still going strong, and we have learned a lot from writing it and from the readers who have responded. We’ve learned to never give up, and that something that appears to be less than successful may be the catalyst for something even bigger and better. We’ve learned to always look for ways to communicate. And we’ve learned that bridging the gap between surveying and GIS is important and worth every effort it takes.