

Welcome and Official Opening of the Workshop

John M. Dow
Chair, IGS Governing Board

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues of the IGS,

It is with particular pleasure that we return to Bern for an IGS Workshop 11 years after the seminal meeting of March 1993 in which the initial Terms of Reference of the Service were drafted and later proposed for adoption to the International Association of Geodesy in August of that year. The 4th Meeting of the “IGS Oversight Committee” held in Bern around the workshop set the stage for the establishment of the IGS as an IAG service.

From the beginning, workshops have been one of the central keys to the success of the IGS. They are the occasions when all active elements of the IGS have the opportunity to present the latest developments, highlight problems and formulate recommendations to the various coordinators, to the Central Bureau and to the Governing Board. The Proceedings of the IGS Workshops represent an essential and invaluable record of our organisation as it develops from year to year, and a resource which many colleagues outside of the IGS take advantage of in their own work. While some IGS Workshops have concentrated on specific aspects, this one falls in the tradition of those which aim to cover (if only partially) the broad spectrum of IGS activities. The 1993 Bern Workshop was the first in this line. (It was rapidly followed by an Analysis Centre Workshop in Ottawa and a Network Operations Workshop at Silver Spring, Maryland, in consecutive weeks in October of that year.)

Yesterday in the Faculty Room of the University of Bern we held the 24th Meeting of the IGS Governing Board. Among the topics discussed was an update of the IGS Terms of Reference (the last update stems from 1999) to re-align them with the current structure and operations of the Service and with the Strategic Plan for the years to 2007. There have been many important developments in the IGS in recent years, including the gradual decrease in latency of the products – several weeks in the early days, towards real time products today; a growing interest in Low Earth Orbiter missions using Global Navigation Satellite Systems as their means of navigating in near-Earth space; and of course the continuing development of the GNSS infrastructures themselves, in particular the entry on to the scene of a major new European system, viz. Galileo. The IGS aims to provide a world standard service in support of these and other developments and applications, and I believe that we have largely succeeded in creating and maintaining an organisation which does exactly that. We can all be proud to be associated with the IGS. This does not mean that our task is complete. The challenges associated with operating, improving and making use of Global Navigation Satellite Systems do not diminish with time, simply because of the ever-increasing applications of the systems, which (apart from almost unlimited scientific applications) permeate many aspects of everyday life and make GPS a term which everyone recognises.

The organisers of the Workshop, including in particular the Bernese Local Organising Committee, under the chairmanship of Werner Gurtner, the IGS Central Bureau and the session chairs, have done a remarkable job in setting up a very impressive programme and the necessary infrastructure to support it. This Workshop promises to be an occasion to remember, as it deserves to be after 10 years of IGS as an official service of the IAG. All of the major areas of concern of the IGS today are on the programme, but in the course of 5 days of intensive discussion among such a gathering of world class experts, who knows what new ones may crystallise?

Thank you all for participating in this 10th Anniversary Workshop (and Symposium). I wish everyone a very fruitful and enjoyable week.