

## Farewell 2010

The dying days of December is one of my favourite times of the year. My organized self manages to come out of hibernation for a flurry of file sorting and frenzy of data archiving. I sometimes even dust. With yield mapping services put to bed and usually a gap in soil sampling activity, there is time to review the year's work. The moving of files from this year to archive locations puts a lot of interesting filenames under the mouse.

As my training clients know, I am a big believer in having a "Maps Incoming" and "Maps Outgoing" directory within easy reach. At the end of the year I stack them carefully in a velvet lined backup location like grandma's silverware after Christmas dinner, ready to be called back into active service if someone has misplaced a previously sent map. I have been doing this since 1994, so I have quite a stack of oldies.

We have changed some file formats since we began...our first GIS was in DOS and our first online file transfers were via a bulletin board system (BBS) from the days when the internet was still an infant, but there is a sense of continuity. As I sift through terabytes of stuff, deciding to move, store, pitch or leave as is, I come across a batallion of "test.shp" and temp dot something elses, in almost every directory on every hard drive; a testament to our let me try that attitude and unwillingness to accept any software at face value.

We often find a way to accomplish a mapping task that is not in any manual. I clear these bits of experimentation to make room for the next round. I also try to get into my "Interesting Stuff to Read Later" folder, stuffed with papers and links to fascinating threads that I did not want to chase at the time, but was intrigued enough to save. Only special stuff is here and if still interesting in December, then finally read. This year's attractions seemed to be links to CRM software, cool new gadgets, project management and location based business analytics whitepapers.

I was surprised to find there were themes to what always seems like a random act of 'save to folder'. One of my favourite finds is the directory where I store previously presented presentations. Cracking open some of these old nuts is often hilarious: we were ecstatic over finally achieving consistent 1-3 meter accuracy when they turned of SA (selective availability) for the GPS just over a decade ago. Map styles and graphic content have changed so much, as has the detail in imagery and the phenomenal advances in touch screen in-cab computing versus up arrow, up arrow, right arrow, right arrow style typing.

What has remained consistent is the central goal for all of the precision ag activities. I have found article after article pounding the same message over any of the last 16 years. I unearthed a document I made in 2001 that could easily stand in for a blog post that I would write today: It is all about the information. It is all about using the best we have at the time to make the best decision possible. It is about harnessing technology for knowledge and practical operations and diligent and informed management of the resources. It is about learning new skills to solve old challenges. And so my hard drive housekeeping reminds me anew that technology is a continuum, learning is a never ending process and in spite of feeling 'stop the world I want to get off-ish' at times, I can't think of a more exciting way of looking forward to getting up tomorrow morning. It will be Jan1, 2011 and I can't wait to see what I get to learn next!

*Karon*