

Foreword

Information is an essential agent of environmental protection, environmental planning and environmental policy. Protection and planning presuppose an in-depth and verifiable knowledge of ecological inter-dependencies. A poorly informed public will always experience the implementation of steps to protect the environment by way of environmental policy as nothing more than inconvenience or restriction. It follows that the provision of information on the state and development of the environment is an important vehicle in political lobbying. Only a well-informed public is in a position to weigh the ecological, economic and personal pressures and to help advance sustainable solutions to environmental problems. Environmental information for planners, politicians and the public is the motto chosen for the 14th international symposium on Informatics for Environmental Protection held in Bonn in 2000. The symposium focuses on the political and planning aspects involved in processing and presenting environmental information. The Informatics for Environmental Protection symposium has been hosted by different organizations since 1986 and is aimed at a broad range of experts. The conference has developed into a major platform for interdisciplinary dialogue between information technology specialists and environmental, planning and engineering experts involved in processing, analysing and interpreting environmental information, as well as for the administrators, business groups and politicians who put environmental protection into practice. The challenge, however, is not only to overcome barriers between disciplines and improve the dialogue between information communities. As European and worldwide links assume growing importance, it makes sense to correspond across national and linguistic frontiers. The symposium of the year 2000 sets out to document and debate the state of development of computer science for environmental applications, environmental information systems and their application in the international context.

The main themes addressed by the symposium in Bonn are:

- Public participation in information technologies for the environment, mediation, Agenda 21;
- Spatial planning and environmental information systems for sustainable regional and urban development;
- Geographic information systems as a support for environmental and regional planning decisions; an international perspective on information technologies for the environment.

This two-volume conference documentation contains a broad range of papers on the use of information technology for environmental protection, environmental planning

and environmental policy. Comparing its content with the thirteen previous editions reveals many of the latest development trends. The most important among these trends include a growth in the range of disciplines involved and the growing networking of information technology applications. Most notable of all, however, is the trend towards the more flexible provision of information which is itself increasingly aimed at broader, non-specialized user groups, this trend being associated with the development of third-generation, service-oriented, environmental information systems. Cross links between fields of information which were previously assessed and managed separately are of growing importance. Spatial references and geographic information are a very important integration tool in this context.

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The Editors