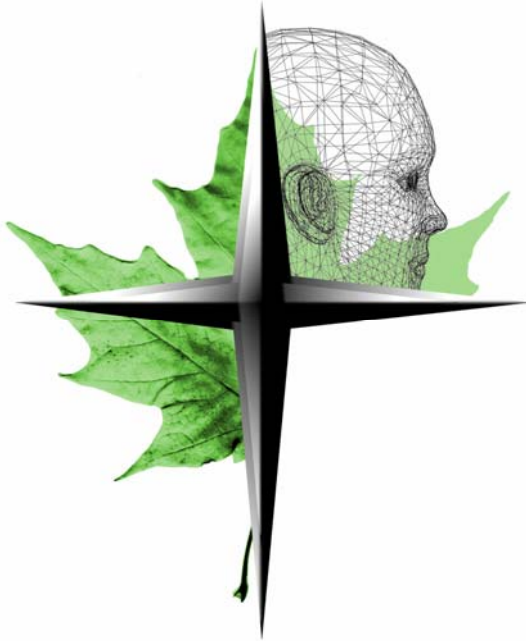


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New Zealand sabbatical gives Canadian academic new perspective on forest management

Remsoft Educational Partners Program fosters exchange of research and teaching ideas

An opportunity to travel and work in New Zealand for Thom Erdle, a University of New Brunswick School of Forestry professor, was a learning experience that has influenced how he teaches and thinks about forest management.

The academic and his family spent a sabbatical year in New Zealand in 2004. While there Prof. Erdle – an early adopter of the Remsoft Spatial Planning System for teaching forest management to undergraduates – had the chance to work closely with another academic user of the suite.

Remsoft helped to connect Prof. Erdle with Bruce Manley, Associate Professor at the New Zealand School of Forestry at the University of Canterbury. With years of experience working with Remsoft software, Prof. Erdle worked with Prof. Manley to build models that are appropriate for New Zealand's approach to forest management, its forest types and other attributes.

"Bruce is very knowledgeable about forest management and had identified his learning objectives for his course and I just helped him to set up the Woodstock models to deliver these things," he explains.

However, the time in New Zealand and working with Prof. Manley also proved influential on Prof. Erdle's way of thinking.

"It was illuminating to see the New Zealand approach to forest management and it certainly gave me ideas about what other issues I could be looking at using the software," he says, identifying financial modeling as one aspect that he is now incorporating more into the Woodstock models he uses to instruct forest management to undergraduates.

Comparing approaches to forestry

To Prof. Erdle's mind, the most notable difference between Canadian forestry and the industry in New Zealand is the rigid zoning approach New Zealand has for land allocation, whereby there are essentially two land bases – native forests and plantation forests – each serving a different purpose.



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“I think it is a testament to the software that it can be applied effectively to such different forestry applications as are the Canadian and New Zealand contexts.”

“It is interesting to note that New Zealand has taken most native forests out of production altogether and put these lands into reserves, while industrial forestry is carried out on intensively managed forest plantations.

“The plantations are commodity producers and the natural forests are managed for ecological, biological, recreational and conservation values.

He said this contrasts strikingly with the more integrated approach common in Canada where, for the most part, the attempt is to try and attain all these values from the same land base.

And while the New Zealand approach to land management may seem simpler on one level, it is more complex in other ways.

“From a modeling perspective, it means fewer trade-offs of conflicting criteria, but more detailed analysis in other ways – expanded financial detail and intensive treatment regimes, to name a couple of items,” Prof. Erdle explains.

By way of example, he points to the clear, knot-less wood produced by the New Zealand plantations for export and domestic markets. The high-value commodity requires intensive management and pruning regimes to produce and therefore requires detailed modeling.

“I think it is a testament to the software that it can be applied effectively to such different forestry applications as are the Canadian and New Zealand contexts,” Prof Erdle says. “And even though I’ve worked with the software for years, the work I have conducted with Bruce certainly opened my eyes to new ways of doing things and things to think about.”

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