

ALGIM – LOLA CONFERENCE

24-26, November, 2014

Auckland, New Zealand

INTRODUCTION:

When traveling a long way, crossing many time lines, whether for business or pleasure, a little anxiety is inherent. Sleep is in short supply the night before (even though best), and the thought of arriving at a wonderful destination with a horrible “time-travel hangover” (Jet-Lag) sets heavy on one’s mind. Writing a report for the GEM is also daunting, and hoping it goes over well with readers, and wondering how can it all fit, while hoping reader’s won’t get a hangover. For the ALGIM-LOLA conference in New Zealand this year, it would be prohibitive (printing costs to the web and to your email would exceed theoretical limits) to record every detail of the conference and trip and include within this report. With this understanding, it is an honor and a privilege to serve as the GMIS International representative to our International Partners in LOLA.

Clark Rainer – GMIS International Director

TRAVEL TO NEW ZEALAND: (Left on 20, Nov. arrived 23, Nov 2014)

The flight from Atlanta to San Francisco would depart at 6:40 AM, and the drive to the airport was a little over an hour. Sleep arrived around 12:30 AM, and the alarm clock rang at 4:00 AM. In San Francisco there would be a 9 hour layover, which allowed for a little time to explore the city, but it was raining. A few sights were seen, and by the time the fourteen hour flight left San Francisco, it turns out being short of sleep was a good thing. After a glass of wine and an over-the-counter Tylenol product, I went to sleep on Flight #7 on Air New Zealand. When awakened, breakfast was being served, and Flight #7 had only 2 hours left to land in Auckland, New Zealand. Row 28, seat A literally raised both fists to towards the overhead compartments and gave a muffled “YES”. Good luck would greet me again at the Langham Hotel, where, because of my early arrival, was upgraded to a room eight hours early. The Kiwi’s did it right with this hotel. The Langham is a 5 Star hotel, the staff knew my name when I arrived, and their service was the best I have ever received. Our International partners who travel more than I do were equally impressed with the service. It was quite exceptional. The 18 hour difference in time, gaining a day (or losing a day depending on how you look at it), seemed to fall into place, and Jet Lag was a non-event.

SUNDAY 23 November, 2014 – Day Before Conference

This is typically the day during conference when International guests, and partner program participants enjoy and outing, tour, and learn their surroundings a bit. The Kiwi's took the lot of us by bus to large ferry which after a 30 minute ride landed on Wiheke Island, home of about two dozen vineyards, where we were forced to learn about various types of New Zealand wine (some of the best in the world BTW). The comment of the day . . . "Today does NOT suck". Of course not a single day of the conference or NZ "sucked", so the first day's comments stayed true throughout the ten days of my US expulsion. Following the tour of Wiheke Island, we had about twenty minutes to clean up and then it was off to a wonderful dinner at the Orbit 360 degree tower (rotating restaurant) in Auckland. A wonderful meal, with great friends and colleagues was served, following a night cap it was off to a great night's sleep to prepare for the start of conference the next morning.









Monday 24 November, 2014

Larry Irving – Just a Lawyer, NOT

The day before there was a gentleman that was on the boat, and bus tour of wineries. His name is Larry. He is a lawyer, and seemed to know a lot about New Zealand and wine; however, he is from the United States. I think everyone discounted “Larry” during the Sunday activity (could have been the wine), as being just another lawyer giving some depressing news about how we, as IT professionals should be afraid of everything we do. Well, I WAS WRONG!!!!!!

It turns out the honorable Larry Irving, who was just as down to earth as anyone I have met, who sat next to me on the bus tour on Wiheke Island, coined the phrase “Digital Divide”. It turns out that Larry was also the chief Technology Advisor to the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. It turns out that he might just be involved with turning this little thing called the INTERNET over to the public. Here’s one of his quotes from the Year 1990:

“Imagine you had a device that combined a telephone, a TV, a camcorder, and a personal computer. No matter where you went or what time it was, your child could see you and talk to you, you could watch a replay of your team's last game, you could browse the latest additions to the library, or you could find the best prices in town on groceries, furniture, clothes -- whatever you needed...”

“Imagine further: The best schools, teachers, and courses were available to all students, without regard to geography, distance, resources, or disability...”

To see the entire presentation from Larry Irving and all the presentations from the ALGIM, 2014 conference please check out <http://www.algim.org.nz/algim-events/algim-annual-conference/2014-international-algim-conference-smarter-local-government/speaker-presentations/>



Citadel-On-The-Move – Application Development for Open Government

Over the past several years we have been sharing information about a project called Citadel-On-the-Move which has mostly been an effort by our partners in Western Europe, and sponsored by the European Union.

After much work and effort by our partners and sister organizations in Europe, this year, and during the ALGIM/LOLA Conference in Auckland, the Citadel Application Generator was released !!! <http://www.citadelonthemove.eu/>

This tool, and the associated converters and index allows any government unit, in any partner country (GMIS International for example), to create MOBILE APPLICATIONS in both Apple and Android formats directly from an Excel Spreadsheet!!!!

This is a tool that YOUR Community can take advantage of today. Some of the examples that were given during the conference were Parking Applications, Parks Applications, Trash Pickup Applications, and even an application that uses GPS to help citizens identify and discover the types of trees planted in a “tree park” in the city of ISSY. They have planted many diverse trees, which has attracted many students, and arborists from far away to study a great diversity of tree types all in one park (which would never occur in nature).

One example was given of how a 9 year old girl created a mobile app using the tools provided without any adult supervision, which was then used by her community.

These tools are now available to YOU and YOUR Communities as a GMIS International member, and because GMIS International has supported LOLA, and the Citadel On the Move project since inception. PLEASE TAKE ADVANTAGE of this tremendous opportunity. The only thing you owe in return is to give credit and tell the folks at Citadel-On-the-Move what you have accomplished.

Monday was filled with many other great speakers, and learning opportunities. For a complete list of the presentations and agenda, please visit: <http://www.algim.org.nz/algim-events/algim-annual-conference/2014-international-algim-conference-smarter-local-government/>

Monday’s evening activity started with a tour of the Auckland Museum, which was introduced by a Maori demonstration (indigenous people of New Zealand) of several songs and a Haka!! You have had to have been there to understand. But here’s a link <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haka>

Monday evening completed with yet another great meal and a rather long oratory from “Thomas Edison”. There might have been a little fun, dancing, and then a bus ride back to prepare the attendees for a new day Tuesday.





Tuesday 25 November, 2014

Officially day two of the conference included a presentation from Richard Kerby, senior Inter Regional Advisor, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, who gave a presentation of the survey and results conducted on E-Government. I think the US has some work to do to match what is being done throughout the rest of the world.

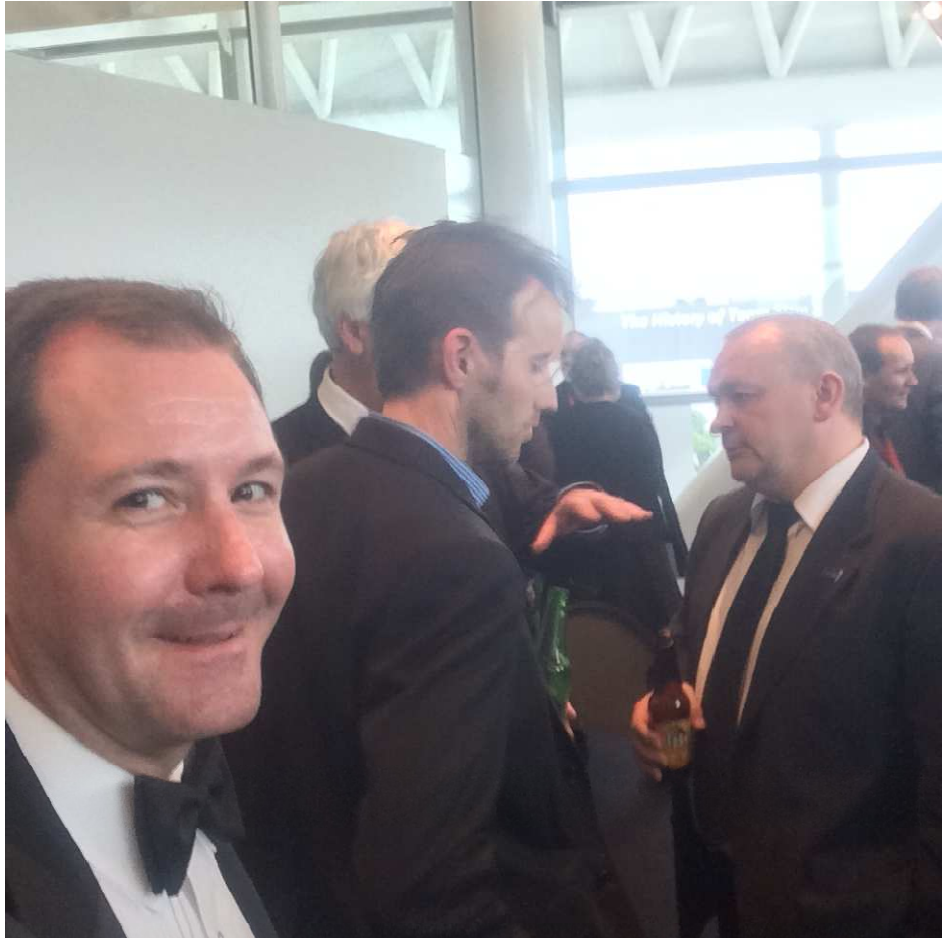
Other classes and presentations were given on Information Security, IT Resiliency, the Future of cities, 3D Printing, Cloud services, Citizen Engagement, and International Presentations by Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Canada, USA, and Australia (more to come about Australia).

Tuesday included the annual LOLA (Linked Organizations of Local Authorities) Meeting. (www.lola-ict.org). We (you, me, us) are members of LOLA by virtue of being members of GMIS International. This LOLA meeting was one of the most productive, and was the first meeting after LOLA was officially incorporated as a NPO (Non-Profit Organization) last year. The incorporation of LOLA has meant we are now eligible for international funding from the European Union, and other International funding sources. This also means that we have been

noticed by international companies such as Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, Google, etc. which are interested in our next large project which includes establishing data sharing standards across international borders. These "Borders" are not just geographical in nature, but are also language borders. Even the nuances between the UK and USA and NZ create substantial challenges to sharing data on an international basis. Each country whether English speaking or Flemish, or German, or Swedish, etc. have differences in how data is formatted, thus making sharing data between systems difficult. It is the goal of LOLA to establish standard data dictionaries for sharing information between countries, and languages world-wide. I cannot emphasize how important this is for all of us who operate now in a world-wide economy. All our International Partners are working towards these goals, and we hope to establish standards in the next two years.

Did I mention that Australia was at the conference, and participated in the LOLA annual meeting? Well, the LOLA Executives have voted to invite and include Australia into the Linked Organization of Local Authorities, sharing the same rights and benefits as all other national organizations. The Australian delegates from MAV (GMIS Equivalent) the Australian state of Victoria, and includes 80 councils. The entire MAV membership will need to ratify the delegate's intention to join LOLA; however, we feel this is a formality and expect that GMIS (and the other LOLA member nations) will soon have yet another International partner organization to share with. We certainly look forward to having our friends from MAV and Australia as partner in GMIS International and LOLA.

Following the LOLA meeting, it was off to put on Black Tie wear, and get ready for another incredible meal, and experience with friends from near and far.





Wednesday 26 November, 2014

Inspiration is a critical part of any successful conference. Those of us in the IT sector of government should never be satisfied by the status quo, and we have all heard the words “because that’s the way we have always done it”. Sometimes we try to match technology with the status quo of “How things are done”, but many times we use our positions as IT leaders to institute CHANGE to better our communities, our colleagues, and our leaders. Wednesday at the ALGIM-LOLA conference was all about how to institute change.

Our keynote speaker was Shannon Spankake, previously the Director of Innovation for the City of San Francisco, and who currently works in a similar capacity for Planet Labs (a company that sends up satellites into space). The idea that a city would even have a position of “Director of Innovation” is foreign to many of us, but I believe it to be pivotal in the success that San Francisco has had in attracting some of the most relevant High Tech firms in the world. Shannon spoke and showed examples of how the city of San Francisco was able to use technology to CHANGE THE WORLD. One example was of how the city sponsored a homeless man who developed a program to teach technical skills to other homeless people, thus

changing them from being a burden on society into productive members of society. Another example was where the city sponsored a program that educated inmates in technology skills, and turned a prison from a place to throw people to be punished into a place where people were rehabilitated through knowledge, accomplishment, and understanding that success is not an overnight endeavor, but a long term goal. Recidivism rates for the inmates in this program produced results of less than 5%, which I believe truly encompasses the idea of “Teach a man to fish” versus “give a man a fish”. I think all our communities have something to learn from these examples.



Following Shannon’s inspirational Keynote address, the conference was over. Well, almost. The LOLA delegates from the UK, USA, Australia, Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, and New Zealand had one more task to undertake.

LOLA Data Collection Project:



The Kiwi's and Canadians have been working on a project similar to one that GMIS International has been working towards. GMIS International has been working on a project of data collection that would gather information from all members that would aggregate information on systems, software, vendors, laws, etc. This information will be available to all our members, and certain (non-member specific) information would be available to sponsors. Member specific information may be available to members (with member consent) such that members could search against the database and see which members are using specific technologies, hardware, software, etc. to enable us all to be able to quickly be able to research comparative data on who's using what, where, when, etc. technology. LOLA has a similar project that would expand this capability to the international level, so that we could see what is being utilized on an international basis. NZ has been collecting this type of data for over ten years now, and with Canada, is working with a firm to write an application that would allow for international participation to share this information. We at GMIS are hoping that our efforts will easily integrate with this effort moving forward. The possibilities of sharing this information with one another both on a domestic basis (in the US) and abroad were very well received by all the delegates from all seven countries. US delegates came back home and suggested that GMIS consider immediate participation in the LOLA initiative for data collection, but the majority of GMIS board voted to move forward with the GMIS initiative with the hope that it will integrate with the LOLA initiative at a later date.

GMIS committee members will be available to “look over the shoulder” of the MISA (Canada) ALGIM project and provide input as the LOLA project develops.

Wednesday evening was a very special time for the LOLA Family. And I say “LOLA Family” for a reason. Those of us in the LOLA Executive who only see each other as a group only once a year or so, are deeply connected in social media, email, phone, and spirit. We truly care for one another, and take great care in keeping up with the non-work related part of our lives. It is truly a special relationship that we have with each other. On Wednesday evening we had our closing dinner with all the LOLA Executives, and their families present at a little Italian restaurant just across from the Langham hotel. Each person took a turn at making a toast which were all well received, and genuine in how much we love each other as a family. As if this were not enough to end our ALGIM-LOLA meeting for 2014, our dear friends from Sweden, Torbjorn Larson stood up and said that he had waited a long time, and that he saw no better place and with no better friends than his LOLA family. He then proposed to his long-time girlfriend, Carin Sundin in all of our presence. Carin said “YES”, and something along the line of “it’s about time”. It was a magical moment for all of us who have called LOLA a Family. And then there was Champaign!! Torbjorn and Carin were able to buy a ring and many more items in Hong Kong on the way home. So much so that I think they had to buy two extra suit cases!!!! Many things and experiences in New Zealand were special, but this moment was hard to beat!







Thursday - "The Next Monday" - The After Conference

Janet Claggett and I were fortunate to be able to spend a little time following the conference traveling around the north island of New Zealand, along with Geoff and Alex Hogan from Canada. We rented a car, and in NZ they drive on the left side of the road. This was my first experience driving on the left, and what an experience it was. BTW the windshield wipers are on the left and the blinkers are on the right. Luckily we had an automatic, and the pedals are in the correct positions. The round-a-bouts were a little tricky, right turns also, but the trickiest part was all the one-way bridges!! I finally got the hang of it after about two days, and following Wando. I only got honked at once 😊.



Many, many thanks to our friends Mike Wanden and his lovely wife Rose for their warm hospitality, for sharing their home, the "Batch", and for the "inside tour" of Otorohanga. Mike Wanden has been the President of ALGIM for years now, but this was his last year as President. He will continue to serve on the AGIM Executive (board). Mike and Rose took us on an amazing journey around the area that Mike and Rose call home. We were able to see amazing waterfalls, a natural bridge where students were repelling from the crest of the bridge, and the next day we were treated to a private tour of the Waitomo Glow-Worm Caves which were discovered by Rose's family. This was a special treat. In addition to these wonderful experiences, we were able to share several toasts with Mike, Rose, Alex and Geoff at the world famous Otorohanga Club.

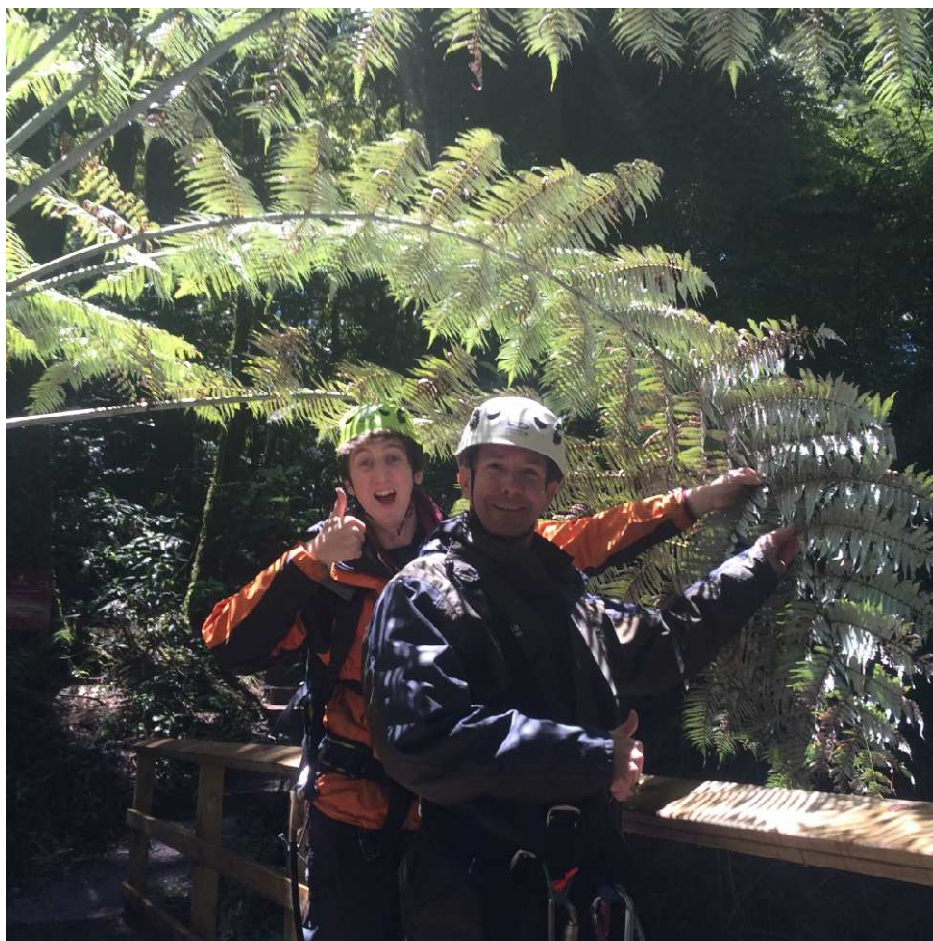
Following a tremendously fun time in Mike and Rose Wanden's home town of Otorohanga, we were lead on a car trip to the beautiful Coromandal Peninsula where we were treated to gorgeous views of the Pacific Ocean, and where we were fortunate to stay in one of Mike and Rose's friends "Batch" (a beach house). While on the tour we by chance ran into Martin Furguson from the UK, who was able to join us later on that evening in the "Batch" for dinner and a drink.



The next day we took a mile or so hike to the Cathedral cove, and Geoff and I took a few extra tours including the pebble cove. It was very interesting how the temperature changes from being very warm (almost hot) to cool while in the shade. The Pacific ocean was quite cool, but the hike was intense, so we warmed quickly on the way back. Rose was keen on finding a Silver Fern which I was able to take a picture with several leaves on the crest of the hiking point. The Silver Fern is the NZ symbol, and is prevalent in all things seen as New Zealand. Rose was very proud to show us and share these ferns with us. It is easy to tell this is a very important plant that represents growth, prosperity, and rejuvenation. At night, Mike and Rose cooked a wonderful NZ steak dinner for Geoff, Alex, Janet and I, which we shared with great NZ wine, cheese, and wonderful conversation and sharing.



Geoff and Alex were to leave the next day, and so Janet and I were off to our own two day adventures. Janet and I drove to Rotorua after a stop in Matamata where we toured the home of Hobbits (the set where Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit) were filmed. In Rotorua we found a great meal and were off to bed. The next day we found a full day, beginning with a tour at Waiotapu volcanic thermals. Next we were off to a Zip Line tour of a Native NZ forest (<http://canopytours.co.nz>), and then we were off to a wonderful evening dinner and Mauri show. It was a lot to take in all in one day, but it was well worth it. So much more to do in New Zealand, and I certainly will plan another trip.



The next morning we were back to Auckland, where we had a wonderful lunch at “Why Not” at the pier, took in some great sights of some expensive boats. Finally I was able to find a “local” cookbook which was my souvenir. While not a local cookbook, this is what New Zealanders equate with what we in the US have in a Betty Crocker cookbook. It’s a staple of NZ cuisine.

A long trip home, but memories and value to bring back to my office, my colleagues, and friends for a life time are treasures that are hard to put a value on. I look forward to my next encounter with my LOLA friends in person, but will certainly be staying in touch via Facebook, Email, phone, etc. until then. The next LOLA meeting is in Belgium next year, and I can hardly wait. I strongly encourage any of our GMIS members to get to know our International member partners at the next GMIS conference. It will change your world, and our world.

Many thanks to Mike Manson, Mike Wanden and all the ALGIM Executive Board for a tremendous conference, which will be hard to match!!!

Cheers,

Clark Rainer
GMIS International Director