

RALPH J. (R.J.) THOMPSON

HONORARY DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE
AWARDED MAY 5, 2007



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BROOKINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

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CITATION FOR THE HONORARY DEGREE DOCTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Ralph (R.J.) Thompson was born in Pierce, Colorado (near Fort Collins). Mr. Thompson earned his bachelor of science degree in computer science in 1969 and pursued his graduate studies from 1969 to 1970 at the University of Missouri at Rolla.

In June 2002, after nearly forty years of service with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), R.J. Thompson was named Chief of the Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Data Center. Prior to this important appointment, Mr. Thompson had a distinguished career preparing him for this challenge. Mr. Thompson began his career with USGS in 1962 in Rolla, Missouri, in the field of photogrammetry. In 1971, he accepted a systems analyst position in the Computer Center Division at the USGS headquarters office in Washington, DC, and then transferred to EROS in September 1971, as a senior systems analyst responsible for developing the database and information system for the initial Landsat Satellite Remote Sensing Program. From 1974 through 1993, he managed implementation and operation of computer systems devoted to image processing and archive management and was responsible for establishment of the Center's computing infrastructure. From 1990 through 1998, he worked with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to support USGS cooperation in NASA's Earth Observing System and Landsat Programs. He served as the USGS Landsat 7 Program Manager to prepare for and manage the USGS Landsat 7 Mission.

Mr. Thompson has received numerous awards for his contributions to the scientific community, including the Department of Interior Meritorious Service Award in 1989, the Department of Interior Distinguished Service Award in 1994, and the USGS STAR award for excellence in his contributions to the Land Remote Sensing Program in 2000.

R.J. Thompson is a distinguished leader in the scientific community and has played a key role in establishing eastern South Dakota as one of the world's true leading centers for remote

sensing research and scholarship. He has also played a vital role in developing, enhancing, and merging the teaching, research, and service capabilities of South Dakota State University and the EROS Data Center into the Geographic Information Science Center of Excellence (GIScE) located on the campus of South Dakota State University. Without his strong commitment to this project, the development of the Center would not have been possible.

In addition to his vital role in establishing the Geographic Information Science Center of Excellence, R.J. Thompson has also provided outstanding leadership and support for the efforts of the SDSU Image Processing Lab, EROS Data Center staff instructional offerings and contributions to SDSU classes, numerous student internships, career opportunities for numerous SDSU alumni, and in the creation of the team of Senior Center Scientists for the GIScE.

R.J. Thompson has given of himself in a tireless and selfless manner to his profession. He has always put the task assigned to him before his own interest, is always a team player, and always recognizes others' contributions before his own. South Dakota State University wishes to recognize Mr. Thompson's contributions to science, his profession, South Dakota State University, the state of South Dakota, and our nation. For these reasons it is most appropriate that South Dakota State University recognize R.J. Thompson for his extraordinary contributions. Therefore, South Dakota State University confers upon Ralph J. (R.J.) Thompson the Honorary Degree, Doctor of Public Service.