



Volume 15, Access and Participatory Approaches (APA) Number 1 Special Announcement

URISA is pleased to announce a "bonus" issue of the URISA Journal on the topic of "Access and Participatory Approaches". This issue of the Journal will only be published electronically, on the URISA website.

Access issues and participatory approaches in using geographic information have been persistent and growing areas of research focus across the globe over the past decade. The proliferation of spatial technologies, growth of geographic databases, pervasive use of the web, and expanding use of mobile communication networks are providing exciting opportunities for increasing personal access to virtual and physical resources and enabling broader participation in decision making. Yet these same changes are exacerbating existing social inequities and giving rise to new access problems. There are at least two major research themes in addressing issues of "access" within the geographic information science (GIS) research community. The first involves spatial concepts and theories that relate to access to goods and services generally. The second involves the notion of access to geographic information as a source of wealth and power.

This special issue on "Access and Participatory Approaches" is a result of a "Workshop on Access and Participatory Approaches in Using Geographic Information" that arose from research discussions among university members of the University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS) and the Association of Geographic Information Laboratories in Europe (AGILE). In the Fall of 2001, a workshop with participation by United States and European researchers was held in Spoleto, Italy to assess the current state of research on access to geographic information and on geographic access theory, to evaluate the impact of evolving policy and legal trends in the U.S. and Europe on access to scientific and technical data generally and geographic data specifically, to assess the current state of research on participatory approaches surrounding the use of geographic information, to explore commonalities and differences in U.S. and European directions of research within these arenas, and to develop a joint U.S./European research agenda on geographic information access and participatory issues.

The articles in this first and a second special issue of the URISA Journal (to be published electronically later this year) arose from papers presented at the Spoleto Workshop, as well as from a subsequent call for papers on the topics of the Workshop.

Each article has completed the Journal's rigorous review process and the Journal Editors are pleased to make this available to URISA members and the greater GIS community. Again, this special issue is available online.