URISA Heads to Sunny Southern California!

Interested in experiencing “Solutions to Challenges” (and an infrastructure tour of Disneyland, while you’re at it)? Get it all at the URISA International 2009 Annual Conference and Exposition in Anaheim, CA, September 29 – October 2.

This year’s event will uphold the solid educational and networking traditions from years past, in addition to bringing new methods of engagement. Attendees can “contribute” to, versus just “participate” in, this year’s experience. Cy Smith, Associate Conference Chair and Chair of the Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO), will be dynamically-facilitating discussion and continuity throughout the conference. Hilary Perkins, URISA International President, is promoting the use of social networking tools, such as Twitter and Facebook, to tweet and BLOG about individual and collective sessions in real-time. Danielle Ayan, Program Chair, is “repackaging” conference categories to have meaning for the masses. The new focus is on geospatial solutions for Healthy, Growing, Safe, Educated and Best Managed Communities. In addition, an innovative track of 7-minute “Quick Hits” will be videographed to capture and bring the intellectual capital of URISA International’s notable speakers to the world via post-conference Internet publication.

Many talents and ideas from the Conference Committee and URISA International staff have been channeled for this event, led by Mike Lovett, Conference Chair. The 2009 Conference Committee has been especially creative, generating session titles and descriptions such as “Slimming Down With GIS” and “Driving a Hybrid Integration.”

Below is a sampler platter of additional topics being offered:

- Federal Stimulus Funding, Parts I and II
- Core Competencies for Geospatial Technicians
- Essentials of GIS Programs and Project Management
- Enterprise GIS
- Distinguished keynote speakers include Dr. Barry Wellar, MCIP, GISP and URISA Past President (1978) and Michael Byrne, California’s first Geographic Information Officer (GIO).

No doubt, this is a lean economy and travel is often limited or restricted. Yet, this annual conference, in particular, offers value to geospatial professionals unmatched by any remote or online activity. Where else can you have access to over 500 peers/colleagues, Mickey Mouse, 70 geospatial solutions to challenges and the ability to engage with the sources of those solutions directly within 3-5 days?

More information: http://www.urisa.org

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Important URISA Dates to Remember

CONFERENCES

June 5–8, 2009
URISA's GIS in Public Health Conference
Providence, RI

August 4–6, 2009
URISA/NENA Addressing Conference
Providence, RI

September 29–October 2, 2009
47th Annual URISA Conference & Exposition
Anaheim, CA

November 16–18, 2009
GIS in Transit Conference
St Petersburg, FL

December 7–11, 2009
URISA Leadership Academy
Seattle, WA

The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) is the premier professional association for those involved in improving our urban and regional environments through the effective use of information technology. Professionals in planning, economic development, information systems, emergency services, natural resources, public works, transportation, and other departments within state and local government have depended on URISA for professional development and educational needs since 1963. Through its international, national and local chapter operations, URISA serves nearly 8,000 professionals.

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Article submissions, calendar items and industry news should be sent to wnelson@urisa.org
The URISA Board of Directors, staff, and dedicated volunteers continue to move our organization forward to better serve GIS Professionals. As the industry evolves and grows, so too is URISA growing to continually provide quality services to our members. One product of this commitment is the URISA Leadership Academy (ULA). The ULA is a five day program - the only leadership training program of its type - tailored to industry leaders and practitioners faced with unique challenges of GIS leadership and management, and who want to make a positive impact leveraging the power of GIS. The ULA represents part of URISA’s commitment to provide quality professional development training to GIS Professionals as their careers advance.

To register for the 2009 ULA, to be held December 7-11 in Seattle, please visit www.urisa.org/ula.

As GIS Professionals, we are often called upon to present information about our programs, budgets, plans for growth, or to convey technical information to the public and to decision makers. As our careers advance, the general content of these presentations may change, but the opportunity to speak in public remains a constant presence. As GIS Professionals, we have something important at stake when we stand up to present to a room – whether that room is filled with decision makers or students – effectively communicating the knowledge that you have is critical.

How much professional development training have you had in effectively communicating through public speaking? If you’ve had any at all, that’s wonderful. Most of us learn by sitting down in front of PowerPoint and creating slide decks. That’s not a very good way to develop effective presentations. Breaking complicated technical information down into palatable portions can be a challenge. Often what we most want to do is to spark creativity, maybe generate a few laughs, have a conversation, and build a real, human connection.

The reality is that most of us stink at making effective presentations. And - this will come as no surprise - our audiences know it. We also know why: we read the slides, we jam so much text onto a single slide that it is impossible for the audience to read or understand it, we don’t make good color and font choices, we load down slides with distracting moving text and graphics, and we create complex diagrams or charts that are also impossible to read.

Consider that rarely is the mere passing on of information a satisfactory objective from the standpoint of the audience, you are there to persuade. So there are three big picture items to think about when preparing a talk that effectively conveys information: content, preparation, and style. Content is the technical information you want to present. Preparation is what you need to do to be ready for your audience. Style is how you get that message across.

Imagine you’ve been asked to make a presentation. Before sitting down at the computer to start drafting your slide deck, stop. Start analog. Start by making sure you understand the scope and the purpose of the presentation and how it fits into a larger scope. Take some time to think about who your audience will be and of their expectations of you. Consider what you want out of the presentation. The main points you want to articulate should flow from there. Keep in mind that you don’t need to do a full “data dump” to make your audience understand, so work to cull out the main points. Your audience needs information that is current, concisely presented, and that they can use immediately.

This is an appropriate time to start thinking about making your case. Research third-party facts and figures to add credibility to your argument. Provide information or tips you wish you had known when you first encountered the problem or project. Offer suggestions that might be transferable to other applications (techniques, problems, pitfalls). As you go through your preparation, think about your audience’s objectives and what controversies might arise, and be prepared to answer them. It’s OK to say you don’t know the answer to a question – just be sure to say you will find an answer and get back to them, and do it. Finally, prepare a strong conclusion during which you ask something from the audience. This might include a request for input or help, or perhaps a challenge for them to think about and consider.

To prepare for your presentation, I have but one word of advice: practice, practice, practice. Practicing calms the nerves and helps you convey a confident and knowledgeable persona to the audience. A confident presenter projects a stage presence, keeps eye contact with the audience, and is dressed appropriately. Keep in mind that your audience is looking forward to what you have to say, and likely do not want you to fall flat.

Other slide preparation tips:

- Make sure font, font size, bullets, and formatting are consistent between slides

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Tip: Bring an administrator or other decision-maker to the conference, invite them to hear pertinent content and introduce them to key people of influence.

Tremendous thanks to the 2009 Conference Committee:
Jason Amadori, GISP, Data Transfer Solutions - Orlando, FL
Carl Anderson, GISP, Fulton County - Atlanta, GA
Kathrine Cargo, GISP, Orleans Parish Communications District - New Orleans, LA
Tom Conry, Fairfax County - Fairfax, VA
Randy Fusaro, US Census Bureau - Washington, DC
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Cy Smith, GISP

To volunteer for the 2010 Conference Committee (Orlando, FL), please contact Wendy Nelson, URISA International Executive Director.

Overuse of special effects such as animation and sounds may make your presentation “cutesy” and could negatively impact your credibility.

Avoid acronyms
PowerPoint is a visual aid. It is the information you want to convey that is critical, not the marvelous things you can make PowerPoint do. Focus on the information you want to convey, not the words on the slides. Don’t place the bulk of your content on the slides, leave it for your actual presentation and use the slides merely as reminders. Please don’t read the slides to your audience. The slide deck should not make a lot of sense without your talk, and that’s really the point. Your PowerPoint should not carry the day - the content of your speech should. Slides are the most effective when used to present basic information, and not to convey passion and enthusiasm for your subject. Your words do that.

As GIS Professionals, our ability to present in public plays a significant part in career success. Start early, do it often, and retain a measure of self-awareness during the presentation. Afterwards, reflect on the successful aspects of your presentation and about ways to eliminate problems areas. Over time, you will have developed a genuine life skill.

I’m about to embark on writing a URISA publication on making effective presentations. What tips do you have to communicate complicated information? What annoys you most about some presentations? Email me at hilary.perkins@gmail.com, or twitter @HilaryPerkins, and let me know your thoughts!

Volunteer Opportunity – URISA News Editor

URISA’s Publications Committee is looking for a member volunteer to serve as Editor of URISA News. This individual will serve as the Content Manager of the newsletter, soliciting and/or writing articles of interest to the URISA membership. URISA staff will continue to be responsible for the logistical aspects of the publication (design, printing, distribution, etc.) and will also provide advertising and regular columns, including association news. If you are interested, or would like to recommend someone for this volunteer activity, please contact Wendy Nelson at wnelson@urisa.org, 847/824-6300.
What’s in a Name?
By Kim McDonough, GISP

So what is in a name? I have been following a very spirited discussion about the GISP certification on an online forum and have been intrigued by much of the discussion as well as a bit taken aback at how vehemently some still criticize the GISP. I was an early advocate of this certification and participated in the discussion leading up to it. I, for one, have embraced the GISP and quickly applied for certification when it came available. Just recently, I renewed my certification. Why is it important to me? Maybe a little background is in order.

I started in this field when it was even more vaguely defined than it is now. I was a student in Landscape Architecture and a strong advocate of a design process put forth by a Landscape Architect named Ian McHarg. If you are using a GIS for overlay analysis of multiple spatial layers to determine preferred areas of land use, you are following the approach McHarg described in his book Design With Nature (1969, Natural History Press). The problem that I was finding with McHarg’s concept was that the analysis and results were extremely laborious to quantify. It involved extensive use of a calculator and a planimeter. Then, I took a course offered in the School of Forest Resources at North Carolina State (where I was earning my MLA) known as Computer Cartography. The combination of my passion for McHarg’s principals and the promise of spatial analysis was a defining moment in my life. I had found my life’s work. It wasn’t in design, it was in something people were calling GIS. I finished out my work for my MLA because at that time, there were no degrees in GIS. In fact, the geography department didn’t even use it. (A study of the evolution of GIS might help explain why some of us see the logic behind NOT having an exam based certification. But, that is not what my intention is with this letter.)

Since finding my passion, I have enthusiastically pursued it for over 28 years. It has carried me into areas of knowledge I never would have imagined in 1981. I have grown with the technology and, with time, saw what I did as more than just a set of skills. I have had to at least become familiar with, if not master, not just the technological components of GIS, but the science of the users that are trying to use it. Then there were also legal aspects of its use. Not for GIS specifically, but the process it was being used to improve. To manage GIS effectively for parcel mapping, I had to understand the particular demands of that use. Then digital ortho-photography became viable and I had to become knowledgeable about photogrammetry. Now, I work in a department of transportation and have had to take in linear referencing systems and dynamic segmentation. We store the spatial data in a very large relational database and have to support two different GIS platforms as well as a CAD. And so I have to ask, how would a test evaluate my ability to effectively bring GIS into these myriad processes AND convince them to talk to each other?

So why even pay the money just to put 4 letters after my name? (I was actually asked this by one individual.) For me, it was important to establish that recognition. I knew it would do nothing to enhance my career or increase my pay. But, I found this certification to be the first one that at least attempted to recognize all of my career work, and not just a particular aspect of it. I had looked at all the other certifications available to me and they all were closely tied to a specific aspect of my career or a relatively small skill set. The only one that really seemed to fit me was the GISP.

So, do those 4 letters mean I am more qualified that someone without them? Not necessarily. They do indicate that I have documented a history in the profession as well as a dedication to grow as the profession evolves and to adhere to a documented code of ethics. A Surveying License does not make one a good surveyor. It does establish a minimum level of competency and a legal liability. But, surveying has at least a few hundred or even a few thousand years of history to help define it as a profession with a very specific skill set. In our country’s early history, it was pretty easy for someone to claim the label of “Surveyor”. But the profession evolved and over time a rigorous set of requirements, as well as legal responsibilities, were established that defined who could be a surveyor and what they were supposed to do.

GIS, as a profession, is just a baby. We still have a lot of growing to do and I believe our certification will grow with it. Some sort of testing will likely be introduced down the road, but I see that as being relevant to specific specialties within GIS, similar to what we see with Engineering and medicine. But, there likely will always be some GIS practitioners that don’t see the value in those four letters of GISP. That’s OK, we can never be all things to all people. Really, over time, the real value of the GISP will not be established by a rigorous exam. The value of the GISP will be established by those of us that choose that path of recognition. If we live up to the spirit and intent of the GISP, over time, its value will increase. The certification process will improve and become more rigorous in more than one way. But for now, we at least have a beginning. Those four letters mean a lot to quite a few of us. What they mean to the rest of the world is up to us who have earned them.
GIS Tutorial Updated for ArcGIS 9.3
Workbook for ArcView 9, Third Edition

Written By Wilpen L. Gorr and Kristen S. Kuraland
ESRI Press
380 New York St.
Redland, CA 92373-8100
ISBN: 9781589482050
456 pages

It was particularly difficult to review a tutorial in ArcGIS having worked in the field of GIS for over 15 years using ESRI software. I tried to review this book and go through each chapter of the tutorial as though I was a novice in GIS. I was trying to analyze the book from the perspective of an intern learning the basics in GIS and thought that the book was easy to read for a beginner.

GIS Tutorial is a result of several years of testing and practice. It had been used for several years at Carnegie Mellon University before it was published by ESRI Press. Over the years, the feedback from the students and the teachers has helped to strengthen the tutorial. The authors have also received feedback from academia that has used the book at other teaching institutions. The book has been further tested by a team from ESRI before it went into publication.

The book is perfect for a training room. For a self learner, there are instructions at the end of the book to load data and install software. If a user already has ArcGIS 9.3 installed on the desktop, they are all set to begin the tutorial.

The book has 11 chapters and Chapter 1 is a general introduction to ArcMap software. The chapter describes how to add and browse for layers, how to turn them on and change their properties. It also elucidates the basic use of each of the tools in the main tool bar like zoom, pan, identify and select. Towards the end of the chapter it tells you how to save using relative path names instead of absolute path names which is really necessary for a student who may be working on different computers while working through the tutorial. It is an essential tip for any user.

Chapter 2 is about how to make a map and actually covers all the major aspects of creating a map. It starts with how to add a layer, change its properties, create group layers and guides the user to be able to create a choropleth map. Choropleth maps are colored or shaded maps to display data attributes.

Chapter 3 guides a student through all the essential elements of map making and printing maps. Ample illustrations in the unit explain the process of adding legends and other map elements. An additional tip for a complete beginner would be to have a panel explaining the browse directory symbol. I think many people who are new to computing are taking this class to enter the world of GIS technicians or data recorders and precise tips would be helpful. The chapter describes how to export data to excel, create graphs and add the same to the map layout.

Chapter 4 dwells into the basics of geodatabases, the default data layer for ArcGIS. There are instructions on how to create a database, import shapefiles, add fields, delete fields, calculate field values, join layers and export layers. All basic ArcCatalog utilities are also briefly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 provides tips on how to add data to your map document from different data portals available on the internet. It goes on to describe the different major formats in which GIS data is available like shapefiles, coverages, interchange files, annotation layers, cad files and xy event files.

There are useful illustrations on how to convert from one format to another. There are notes on how to identify and change map projections. I think a little detail on basics of map projections would be valuable. There are instructions on how to view metadata for data layers and how to import and view different types of attribute files.

Chapter 6 concentrates on digitizing and editing a layer. It explains how to create an empty layer in ArcCatalog, add it in ArcMap and edit it. It expounds on how to digitize a new polygon and how to edit an existing one, move vertex points and add more vertex points. The tools on the advanced edit tool bar have been given a brief introduction. Along with polygon editing, steps to create a new point layer and line layer using ArcCatalog and ArcMap are mentioned. The chapter has directions to create an attribute table. Snapping, an important feature in digitizing has been given sufficient coverage. Digitizing using aerials as backgrounds has been explained well in the unit.

Chapter 7 is focused on geocoding, an important aspect of GIS used in everyday applications. Various ways to geocode have been elaborated on. The first example illustrates geocoding by zip code. Notes to build an address locator are accompanied by plenty of visual diagrams. The section on Geocoding by streets has been laid out in detail. There are three ways to accomplish this: 1) by address locator 2) by manual individual address entries and 3) by geocoding a batch of addresses. Correction of unmatched addresses by manual interaction is referenced as well.

Chapters 8 and 9 discuss spatial queries and analysis extensively. One of the major methods of spatial query is to select by attributes through the attribute dialog box. The selection could be displayed on the map and even converted to a shape file. Steps to use the select feature tool and clip tool have been discussed. The dissolve and

continued on page 8
Do you want to develop or fine-tune your skills as a GIS leader?
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GISCI GISP® Points for Attending Part I of the ULA = 0.63 EDU Points.
Points for attending the full ULA = 1.25 EDU Points.

What was the most valuable part of your attendance at the ULA?
“Networking with other professionals who deal with the same issues I have. This is the first time I’ve been able to interact with, almost exclusively, GIS managers, coordinators and GIOs.”

“Comprehensive and organized interchange of experiences being facilitated by experienced professionals that work in the same field I do.”

“It was a great experience!”

The ULA will only presented one time in 2009…don’t miss it!
append tools for geoprocessing have been given major coverage. In one of the illustrations for the append tool box there is an instructional step to select a schema type, I think more explanation on this would be very effective. The details on model builder at the end of Chapter eight are very significant in the world of automation. An additional tip here on how to save the model in script format would have been absolutely great. Chapter nine takes the student into an in depth look into spatial analysis. It enlightens the reader about the buffer tool. The chapter explains how to buffer around points and polygons and lines. The chapter ends with a detailed explanation of apportionment (make splits of) and the variety of statistical and spatial analysis which can be done with the aid of this tool.

Chapter 10 is on 3D analyst, an extension of the ArcGIS software. I think this chapter has some immensely useful directions for any user to begin working with 3D analyst. I substituted the data with data from our own county and it worked perfectly. The chapter begins with how to add 3D to ArcMap and create triangular irregular network (TIN). It guides the user through each of the major tools. For example the navigate tool lets you drag the map to view the scene from different angles. It lets you drape other features over it and create 3d buildings from buildings data. With 3d analyst you can also fly through a scene and create multiple views. While you fly through a scene it can be recorded by clicking on the animation option. The animation can be also exported to a 3D video. One can add other 3D symbols like trees.

The last chapter in the book deals with Spatial Analyst, another extension of ArcGIS. It covers some basic uses of the extension like creating hillshades, density maps and scatter plots. I think a little explanation of raster data in the beginning of the chapter would help. Spatial Analyst and 3D Analyst are the two chapters which are for the more advanced user and the addition of these chapters in the present edition of the book takes the student to a different level of expertise.

This book is meticulously laid out and at the end of this eleven chapter course the reader would be well educated to use ArcGIS 9.3 at an intermediate level. Instructions to install data and software should be in Chapter one, in that way the user does not fumble for it. I think all the chapters should have more explicit snapshots of the symbology dialog box. The assignments at the end of the chapter are thoughtfully designed and every student using the book should work on these diligently. I recommend it highly as a text book in all centers of learning and should continue to be used to promote GIS skills in middle and high schools.

Reviewed by: Chaula Jain, GISP, Mecklenburg County Government

GIS Tutorial for Homeland Security
Written By Susan Lindell Radke
Eddie Hanebuth
ESRI Press
380 New York St.
Redland, CA 92373-8100
423 Pages, Paperback
ISBN 978-1-58948-188-6

At first glance one might mistake this book as a textbook for a class on the various uses of GIS in a homeland security context; however its usefulness extends outside of homeland security operations. This book is designed in such a manner that someone with little or no knowledge of GIS could start from the basics (learning the ArcGIS interface and the various types of data) and continue to build upon those skills until they had sufficient knowledge to utilize GIS for homeland security operations. What allows this book to stand out from textbooks is the step-by-step scenario-based instructions that allow users to accumulate GIS skills at their own pace without the need for an instructor-led class.

Perhaps the strongest point of this book in a tutorial sense is the way the exercises integrate the acquisition of data from a variety of sources. The book of course comes with the standard data disk needed to complete exercises, but some of the exercises require that the user explore data acquisition over the internet through sites that offer data pertinent to homeland security. While the data acquisition techniques utilized will likely offer little to the experienced GIS user, it can certainly allow beginning and intermediate users to gain an understanding of the multitude of data sources that are available. This aspect of the book alone extends its usefulness to a variety of subfields that utilize GIS (rather than just homeland security). This book may be of particular interests to organizations whose users regularly interact with state and federal agencies to obtain data either directly or through web-mapping applications.

GIS Tutorial for Homeland Security is divided into 7 chapters. The first 2 chapters provide an introduction to the uses of GIS in a homeland security context and demonstrate how such data can be visualized. The remaining 5 chapters guide the user through scenarios specific to steps within homeland security (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Respond, and Recover). Each of the chapters features a robust exercise that allows the user to experience exactly how GIS can be implemented to assist in the tasks associated with each step. Throughout the book users gain hands-on knowledge of how to utilize various tools within GIS and experience in how their results can be presented in various formats. The exercises do not focus solely on ArcMap, but also extend to the other programs in the ArcGIS suite. The scenarios featured in the book range from preparing for the possibility of a chemical or explosive attack to restoring critical services following an earthquake.

Although this book is useful in a variety of settings (including as an addition to any GIS users reference library), it is well designed for use in an academic setting. The introduction offers a comprehensive set of notes for instructors on how the book
can be implemented in a variety of educational settings (including varying semester lengths). Included on the book’s data CD is a set of 7 PowerPoint presentations that summarize the concepts conveyed in each chapter. The presentations also provide introductory information for the scenarios. The book’s authors propose two situations in which the book can be utilized as a textbook. In the first situation, the authors suggest the book as an “application resource for a course in GIS applications in homeland security”. In the second situation, the authors suggest the book as a “professional development tool for homeland security administrators, first responders, and GIS professionals”.

It is important to understand that GIS Tutorial for Homeland Security reserves most of its potential for those users who are just sitting down to use ArcGIS for the first time and need a primer that can get them up and running with the program. Of particular interest to the new user is the 180-day evaluation copy of ArcView 9.3 that comes packaged with the book. Some of the scenarios presented would be helpful to even the more experienced users as they demonstrate how GIS can be integrated into homeland security measures rather than leaving it up to the user to bridge the gap. The chapters are divided into sections that allow the user to digest the information and allow them to learn the material without having to make it their sole focus. If you have an interest in homeland security this book will show you the potential of GIS. Even those outside of homeland security can take advantage of this book’s simplistic format to expand upon their current knowledge and pick up a few new skills.

Reviewed by: Josh O’Conner (josh.oconnor@gmail.com)
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Free Membership for 2010!

Mark Gatti, GIS Supervisor for the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in Philadelphia, recently participated in the online URISA member survey and was randomly selected to win a free membership for 2010. Congratulations Mark and thanks to everyone who participated in the survey!

Preconference Workshops:
- Introduction to Next Generation 9-1-1
- Addresses and IS/GIS Implementation: Key to GIS Success
- Advanced GIS
- Exhibits & Networking Opportunities

Keynote Address:
Cheryl Benjamin - New York State Office of Cyber Security & Critical Infrastructure Coordination

Closing Plenary Address:
Improving the Geographic Information Used by NYC’s Public Safety Agencies - Jim Hall, GISP

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- Address Data for the PSAP: Creating and Maintaining Good MSAG Data
- GIS and Next Generation 9-1-1
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