URISA 2006 Vancouver Conference – One of the Best in Years!
By Dave Dubauskas, Alberta Capital Regional Alliance, 2006 Program Co-Chair (2007 Chair)

This past conference was one of the best in a long time. Perhaps it was the location, beautiful British Columbia, Canada; maybe it was the program, the guest speakers, networking opportunities, or perhaps the workshops? Whatever the reason, this year’s conference had over 700 attendees, making it one of the best-attended URISA conferences in years. Attendees were from all sectors of the GIS Community:

- Community & Economic Development
- Homeland Security & Emergency Services
- Environmental Management
- Land Records
- Public Works
- Public Health & Safety
- Tax Assessment
- Transportation Planning
- Urban Planning & Design
- Utilities

The thirteen free pre-conference workshops proved more than popular, providing forums and discussions on topics ranging from 3D implementation and database modeling, to GIS management and LiDAR applications.

The Vancouver Convention Centre, nestled on the water’s edge provided a great setting for the conference and easily accommodated the more than forty exhibitors, who showcased their products and services in the Exhibit Hall. Some vendors “put on a show” in the URISA Vendor Demonstration Theater while others provided hands on demonstrations of their products. This venue was also supported by a roundtable luncheon, where colleagues could connect and discuss topics of interest or simply walk around and meet with vendors and enjoy a boxed lunch.

The Networking Reception in the Exhibit Hall was sought after, having great attendance. This was followed by various Vendor Hospitality/User Groups meetings scattered throughout Vancouver.

Everyone I talked to stated that they really enjoyed the two Keynote speakers. Our opening keynote speaker, Ward Chapin, CIO for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Committee, relayed the meticulous planning involved in hosting a world-class event from an information technology perspective. The next morning, we enjoyed a futuristic look at GIS on the Internet by Michael Liebhold from the Institute for the Future. It was a refreshing if not enticing view of what GIS can do for society.

“I hope it doesn’t sound funny to say it this way, but our satisfaction from exhibiting at the conference stems largely from the “quality” of people who visited our booth. By that, I mean we gained exposure to many groups we hoped the conference would attract, and we seemed to be speaking with the “influencers” and “thought leaders” within those groups - people who were genuinely interested in learning more about our company and offerings, and with whom we felt a strong likelihood of doing business, down the road. The first steps toward that result were taken in Vancouver, where URISA provided us an opportunity to establish relationships with the kind people we’d hoped to meet.

This was our first experience at a URISA event, and the Vancouver conference proved an excellent investment for us, surpassing any expectations we had. Your group conducted a well-organized, well thought-out event, and it was our pleasure to attend. Your people made us feel welcome, and were a delight to deal with, at every turn.”

-Daniel P. Sullivan, Director of Sales, Facet Technology Corporation

Attendees listen to the opening keynote speaker, Ward Chapin.
Important URISA Dates to Remember

**December 22, 2006**
Last day to submit abstracts for URISA’s 2007 Annual Conference in Washington, DC

**December 31, 2006**
2007 dues renewal deadline date

**January 8, 2007**
Early registration deadline for Integrating GIS & CAMA Conference (save $50 on registration)

**January 31, 2007**
Early registration deadline for Geospatial Integration for Public Safety Conference (save $50 on registration)

**March 4-7, 2007**
11th Annual Integrating GIS & CAMA Conference
Flamingo Hotel - Las Vegas, Nevada

**April 2, 2007**
Deadline to submit applications for the 2007 Exemplary Systems in Government Awards

**April 15-18, 2007**
2nd Annual Geospatial Integration for Public Safety Conference
Marriott New Orleans

**May 20-23, 2007**
1st Annual URISA GIS in Public Health Conference
Marriott New Orleans

**August 20-23, 2007**
45th Annual URISA Conference
Washington Hilton in Washington, DC

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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.
Sessions, sessions, sessions, with more than 200 presentations. The number, breadth and depth of these sessions provided attendees with a potpourri of quality selection. High kudos was received for the new Professional Development Track, with professionals, such as Jack Dangermond of ESRI, sharing their wealth of knowledge and insight into what makes the GIS profession tick.

New this year was a special presentation by the 2006 URISA Exemplary Systems in Government award winners, which showcased the winning systems. Our colleagues are doing some amazing things with technology!

The evening social event at the Steamworks Brewing Company was within easy walking distance of the host Hotel. First-class food, including fresh pacific salmon, and good times were had by all, with live entertainment, pool tables, outdoor patios, and great company.

Not all was play; business was also conducted in the form of the URISA Board of Directors Meetings, and the Annual Business Meeting. In addition, the Chapter Leaders Forum provided a venue where chapter officers could express and articulate their ideas towards making URISA a better organization and improving chapter operations.

The conference wrapped up with a Visioning Session. Participants in this facilitated session explored a number of areas including the website, professional development program, URISA’s part in policy leadership, international outreach, and the 2007 conference. The discussions provided URISA with fresh ideas, opinions, and

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DenverGIS is the centralized geographic information system (GIS) department for the city and county of Denver. It uses ESRI’s ArcGIS® software to provide GIS services that are aligned with the mayor’s service delivery goals. More than 34 city and county departments use the GIS for applications to generate a real return on investment. Applications range from tax assessment, community planning and development, and public works to public safety. Visit www.denvergov.org/gis.

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David Luhan, GIS Manager, DenverGIS

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Michael Locatis, Chief Information Officer, City and County of Denver

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President’s Column

The Real Value of URISA
By Ed Wells

Vancouver was billed as one of the most beautiful conference sites on the continent, and they were right. What I saw was amazing. It’s just a shame that I didn’t make plans to stay a few days after the conference to take in more of the sights!

Over 700 people attended URISA’s annual conference. Some came to network, some came to see what their peers were doing, some came to learn about new technologies and concepts. As always, the conference offered opportunities to make and renew connections, to learn and to teach, to meet and do business. Everyone took away different memories. Here are a few that have stayed with me:

- The Squamish prayer for peace that introduced one presentation, and invoked much of the spirit of the conference: to reach across boundaries and find common understanding.
- Sitting down at the social with someone I had never met, and finding she was a European scholar on the subject I was going to speak about the next day.
- Spending a day in a pre-conference workshop learning about transportation modeling from two leading experts in the field.
- The levels of participation and energy of our committees keep URISA vital and innovative from year to year.

Surprising, enlightening, energizing—the annual conference is URISA’s largest and most important event each year, but you don’t have to attend conferences to get your dues worth from URISA. In fact, if that’s all you do, you’re missing a chance to make your membership work for you year-round. The real value of URISA comes from participating in URISA’s committees and activities.

URISA has a proud tradition of open committee membership. You need not be an expert or to know anyone special in order to participate in URISA activities. The only requirement is an interest and a desire to contribute. Participation offers you a chance to learn new skills and take on new roles among a collaborative, supportive group of peers. You’ll be surprised at what you learn, and at what you have to offer. And location doesn’t matter—most work is done by teleconference, email, and interactive website.

So consider URISA’s activities as opportunities for your professional growth and development. Here are some of the possibilities:

- Chapter membership plugs you into a network of professional friends in your region. Join your local chapter, or start one if no one else has.
- Work on the Chapter Relations Committee, and you tap into a network of chapter leaders across the US and Canada.
- Conference program committee members review all the abstracts submitted for a conference, and they shape the program content—a great way to keep abreast of trends and technologies.
- Review a workshop. Become a workshop instructor. Write a workshop. Or join the Workshop Development Committee, and review any or all workshops and set the directions for new ones.
- The ESIG Awards Committee gives you a close look at the innovative, practical successes of your peers.
- The Publications Committee offers insight into online publishing and into our continued Website development.
- Work on the professional development initiative, and you will be helping to invent programs and educational materials to help all of us advance in our careers.
- GISCorps offers opportunities to volunteer, here and abroad: www.giscorps.org

In the past few years URISA has launched GISCorps, GISCI, a professional development program, and the address standard working group. Several new ventures are expected this year, including:

- A K-12 initiative to help promote GIS skills to youth and K-12 teachers.
- URISA’s first-ever GIS in Public Health Conference
- Support for the creation of a Caribbean Spatial Data Infrastructure.
- Expanding URISA’s participation in public geospatial policy and standards discussions in the US and Canada.
- In the past year we have completely rebuilt URISA’s website infrastructure. This year expect the content to change and the website to become more interactive in support of our activities.

So you don’t have to attend conferences to get a lot out of URISA…but you should sure try to get to the DC conference next August!
What You Need to Know About URISA in 2007

Conference programs and registration are now online for both the Integrating GIS & CAMA (March 4-7 in Las Vegas) and Geospatial Integration for Public Safety (April 15-18 in New Orleans) conferences. You should soon be receiving the printed programs in the mail, if you haven’t already.

Besides both taking place in wonderful locations, each conference boasts phenomenal educational programs.

Integrating GIS & CAMA – four preconference workshops; Jack Dangermond keynote address on “The New Face of GIS”; three targeted program tracks on Management, Modeling, and Systems & Data Integration; always busy exhibit hall; and a closing plenary session focusing on the affects on local infrastructure and government services when people migrate to younger and warmer metropolitan areas in the Southwest and South

Geospatial Integration for Public Safety – three preconference workshops; good mix of panel discussions and regular sessions; two postconference technical tours to the New Orleans PSAP and a Hurricane Katrina tour … and the conference is preceded by a FREE French Quarter Festival with amazing music and food! (Make travel plans accordingly)

And still to come… GIS in Public Health (May 20-23, 2007 in New Orleans) – nearly 100 abstracts were received for URISA’s inaugural Public Health conference. The Program Committee is currently reviewing and organizing the program. Chuck Croner, of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will be the featured keynote speaker for the conference.

URISA’s 45th Annual Conference (August 20-23, 2007 in Washington, DC) – stay tuned for frequent updates and announcements about URISA 2007. Coming off a very well reviewed and accepted conference in Vancouver, the conference committee is enthusiastically designing a conference program that will be the talk of the community!

URISA 2007 Exemplary Systems in Government (ESIG) Awards

The application for 2007 ESIG Awards has been posted online. To be considered for this prestigious award, applications must be received by April 2, 2007.

The EXEMPLARY SYSTEMS IN GOVERNMENT AWARDS, inaugurated in 1980 by the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, recognize extraordinary achievement by government agencies in the use of automated information systems. This achievement is defined as the effective application of computer technology that can be measured in terms of improved government services and increased benefits to citizens. The award competition is open to all public agencies at the federal, state/provincial, regional and local levels.

ESIG Award winners are recognized in two categories:

Single Process Systems

Systems in this category are outstanding and working examples of applying information system technology to automate a specific SINGLE process or operation involving one department or sub-unit of an agency. The system application results in extended and/or improved government services that are more efficient and/or save money.

Enterprise Systems

Systems in this category are outstanding and working examples of using information systems technology in a multi-department environment as part of an integrated process. These systems exemplify effective use of technology yielding widespread improvements in the process(es) and/or service(s) involved and/or cost savings to the organization.

Get recognized for your accomplishments…apply for a URISA ESIG Award! For more information, visit www.urisa.org or call Scott Grams at 847/824-6300, sgrams@urisa.org
Intergraph Corporation announced that the stockholders of the Company voted to adopt the merger agreement providing for the acquisition of Intergraph Corporation by an investor group led by Hellman & Friedman LLC and Texas Pacific Group at a special meeting of the stockholders held at Intergraph’s executive offices in Madison, Alabama. The proposed merger was announced on August 31, 2006 and is expected to close by the end of November 2006, subject to the satisfaction or waiver of the conditions set forth in the merger agreement. Under the terms of the merger agreement, Intergraph stockholders will receive $44.00 per share in cash, without interest, for each share of Intergraph common stock held.

Orion Technology Inc. and GeoNet Technology Services recently announced that the two companies have entered into a Partnership Agreement to pursue opportunities in the Caribbean market for the OnPoint™ web-GIS suite. Based out of Kingston, Jamaica, GeoNet provides GIS enabled information technology software solutions for the land management, real estate and utility industries in the Caribbean. GeoNet will resell Orion’s OnPoint™ and provide software implementation services.

QCoherent Software, provider of Limitless LIDAR™ software tools, announced the release of LP360 version 1.3, the LIDAR extension for ArcGIS™. LP360 employs a specially designed ArcMap™ data layer to access and draw LIDAR points directly from LAS files. The unique architecture of LP360 supports enormous quantities of point cloud data. LP360 effortlessly facilitates the integration of LIDAR data with other GIS data types supported by ArcGIS™. New to version 1.3 is cross-section exporting, an embedded 3D viewer, and GIS fusion technology.

ESRI recently announced the availability of ArcGIS 9.2, a significant release of ArcGIS that includes new productivity tools, data visualization and analysis capabilities, sophisticated cartographic tools, high-precision coordinate storage, and expanded support for standards. This release also introduces a new workflow for authoring, serving, and using geographic data, allowing users to be more productive with geographic information system (GIS) technology. New client applications in combination with ArcGIS Server provide unparalleled access for a wide range of people including mobile workers, analysts, decision makers, and the public. Opening up geographic data and knowledge allows new and improved collaboration within organizations and on the Web.

Digital Data Technologies, Inc. (DDTI) launched the free download of its AccuGlobe® Desktop 2007 software at www.ddti.net. DDTI distributed beta versions of the program to clients attending its annual Users’ Group Conference last month.

Tele Atlas and GlobeXplorer® announced a reseller agreement that enables Tele Atlas partners and customers to enhance the richness of their digital map-based applications by incorporating high-resolution aerial and satellite imagery into their solutions.

PCI Geomatics announced the signing of an OEM agreement with Ambercore Software Inc. for the creation of Geomatica LidarEngine, a high performance data management, analysis, and visualization tool for LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) data.

Pictometry International Corp. announced that it has been named as Rochester’s third fastest growing company. The Rochester Top 100 program recognizes the area’s top performing privately held companies based on sales and percentage of growth over three consecutive years. This was the second year that Pictometry was eligible for the nomination process. Last year (2005) Pictometry ranked as number 11.

DTMI Spatial™ (DTMI) is partnering with GlobeXplorer to resell GlobeXplorer’s imagery service. Under the arrangement, DTMI will provide GlobeXplorer’s popular ImageConnect web mapping extensions to customers throughout Canada.

CompassTools Inc. has formed a new division as an Autodesk Value Added Reseller in Colorado and New Mexico. Based in Centennial, Colo., the CompassTools Autodesk Division will provide sales, support, training and solutions relating to the Autodesk geospatial product line.

MapInfo Corporation announced it has been named to the 2006 Forbes list of the 200 Best Small American Companies.

People News

Hank Garie, former Executive Director of Geospatial One-Stop, has taken a new position in the private sector with GeoAnalytics as the Director of State and Federal Practice.

Anthony M. Bonnici (B.Sc. Comp. Sci.) joined Pacific Alliance Technologies fulltime as a Principal Technical Consultant. With more than 20 years of practical experience in GIS and Asset Management, Anthony adds senior application, programming and domain knowledge to the team.

Dr. Barry Wellar, Professor of Geography (ret.) at the University of Ottawa was appointed Media Program Director, Geography Awareness Week, by the Canadian Association of Geographers. Professor Wellar is the recipient of numerous awards, including the President’s Award, University of Ottawa, for Service to the University Through Media and Community Relations, and the Canadian Association of Geographers’ Award for Geography in the Service of Government or Business.

Orion Technology Inc. is pleased to announce the hiring of two new members to the Orion sales team commencing November 2006. Tom Ismail will be the Sales Associate responsible for the Northeast US territory, and Sam Poliwoda will be responsible for Southeast US territory.

Brian Soliday has joined TerraGo Technologies as vice president of sales where he’ll be responsible for expanding use of the company’s popular geospatial data distribution format, GeoPDF. Soliday is a familiar face among GIS professionals. Prior to signing on with TerraGo, he has spent almost 20 years in various sales, consulting and business development management roles with Space Imaging, Autodesk, LizardTech and Trimble as well as start-up geospatial technology vendors.

Project Awards

Geographic Technologies Group, Inc. (GTG) announced that McHenry County, Illinois has procured additional products from GTG’s LG GIS software suite. The County will be implementing LGcrimes and LGaddress for Public Safety to expand the County’s existing LG platform which already includes other GIS applications such as LGMobile and LGDispatcher.

GeoDecisions recently completed its Geographical Resource Intranet Portal Version 3 (GRIPv3) project for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

Manatron, Inc. has been expanding its presence in Oregon. Manatron recently completed the implementations of its CAMA software in Crook, Gilliam, Lake, and Wheeler counties and is currently in the process of implementing its Property Tax software (Manatron Ascend®) in the same four locations.

MultiVision USA has been contracted by the Douglas County, Kan., Appraiser’s Office to create an aerial photo library of properties throughout the county. Located in northeast Kansas, Douglas County is a long-time user of geospatial technologies. With a commitment to deploying the latest technological advancements to the benefit of its citizens, the Appraiser’s Office selected MultiVision USA to acquire oblique imagery of its mostly rural land area for a variety of applications. The Appraiser’s Office operates a GIS/mapping division that provides mapping services for other county offices and the public.

Merrick & Company was awarded a contract by HDR, Inc. (San Diego, CA) to deliver raw and processed LIDAR data, 1-foot contours, 6-inch color digital orthophotography, and three-dimensional wireframes and footprints for 1.7 square miles of the University of California’s Riverside (UCR) campus.

Manatron, Inc. recently announced over $1 million of new business in Indiana, one of its core markets.

Tytler Technologies – Eagle Division has announced that the Washoe County, NV (Reno) Recorder’s Office will migrate to EagleRecorder with EagleOCR, EagleWeb and EagleQuickDocs.

Bentley Systems announced that Brisbane Water, one of the largest water utilities in Australia, has selected WaterGEMS V8 XE Edition, Bentley’s water distribution modeling solution, to manage the municipality’s complex water network. The network serves a population of approximately one million.
Welcome New URISA Members

Judy Althoff, Regional Transportation Commission, Reno, NV
Christopher Bain, Borough of Chambersburg, Chambersburg, PA
Melissa Baldwin, Area Plan Commission Tippecanoe County, Lafayette, IN
Kyle Balke, Missoula, MT
Wendy Barto, City of Encinitas, Encinitas, CA
James Barton, Chen and Associates, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Stephen Biancardi, Fuss & O’Neill, South Windsor, CT
Alan Booker, Winter Garden, FL
Janet Brinker, Oakland County, Pontiac, MI
Gentry Carlson, Grand Rapids, MN
Bernard Catalinotto, Data Enhancement Services, LLC, Bethesda, MD
David Chater, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Victoria, BC Canada
Robert Cocking, Geological Survey of Canada, Vancouver, BC Canada
Steven Cudd, University of Washington, Sammamish, WA
Nathan Dansereau, Pittsford, VT
Laurie Darcus, Corp of District of Pitt Meadows, Pitt Meadows, BC Canada
W.T. Dawson, MAPCON Mapping LTD, North Vancouver, BC Canada
Fiona Dercole, North Shore Emergency Management, North Vancouver, BC Canada
John Detwiler, Allegheny County, Pittsburgh, PA
Richard Djukpen, Champaign, IL
Peter Durkee, New Braunsfeld, TX
Steve Ellis, The Corporation of Delta, Delta, BC Canada
Doug Finnson, City of Burnaby, Burnaby, BC Canada
Rafael Roa Frizell, Inadelsa Topographical Services, Managua, Nicaragua
Richard Fulton, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
David Gallaher, City of Boulder, Denver, CO
Murray Giesbrecht, Helion Software, Inc, Salem, OR
Chris Gray, Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC Canada
Geoffrey Greetham, Vicksburg - Warren E-911, Vicksburg, MS
Lesley Hampton, Central Savannah River Area Regional Development Center, Augusta, GA
Matthew Hering, John Deere Agri Services, Peabody, MA
Alanna Hetherington, City of Edmonton, Edmonton, AB Canada
Randy Hoffer, Information Management, Victoria, BC Canada
John Hollingsworth, Clear Channel Outdoor, Raleigh, NC
Chad Huntington, Township of Langley, Langley, BC Canada
Joyce Husseini, Judith Nitsch Engineering, Boston, MA
Jae Woo Jeong, Korea Telecom, Daegu, Korea, Republic of
Steve Johnson, City of Ormond Beach, Ormond Beach, FL
Tania Kajner, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB Canada
Dennis Klein, Boundary Solutions Inc, Mill Valley, CA
Kim Lieberman, Saint Paul, MN
Gary Luke, Lane County Public Works, Eugene, OR
Sunny Mak, UBC Geography, Vancouver, BC Canada
Robert Marros, HNTB Corporation, Chicago, IL
Troy Marsh, Brown and Caldwell, Atlanta, GA
Hussein Mashouq, Dahran Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia
Ross Mc Lachlan, Yukon Government, White Horse, YT Canada
Alvin Melton, Integrated Land Management Bureau, Victoria, BC Canada
Scott Mitchell, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON Canada
Hubert Morgan, Northeastern Illinois Planning Comm., Chicago, IL
Beth Nagy, Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati, OH
Lloyd Nakaq, NYC Dept of Housing Preservation & Development, New York, NY
Andrew Norton, Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA
Ray Ohien, BC Institute of Technology, Burnaby, BC Canada
Adrienne Perry, San Diego County, San Diego, CA
Lu Ellen Pettengell, Sacramento, CA
Nancy Prout, Regional Municipality of York, Newmarket, ON Canada
Thomas Reynolds, UT-Houston SPh, Houston, TX
Martin Rowe, Lorian Country, Elyria, OH
Christopher Seeger, Iowa State University, Ames, IA
Michael Slavnik, City of Calgary, Calgary, AB Canada
Gavin Smith, Northwestern Water & Sewer District, Bowling Green, OH
James Smith, City of Cookeville, Cookeville, TN
Samuel Soret, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA
Oksana Starchenko, Government of Saskatchewan, Regina, SK Canada
Scott Stocking, Patrick Engineering, Chicago, IL
Catherine Storr, Collingwood, Victoria Australia
Jerry Sumka, City of Edmonton, Edmonton, AB Canada
David Thackray, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Vancouver, BC Canada
Martin Till, City of Vancouver, Vancouver, BC Canada
Teresa Townsend, Carter & Burgess, Orlando, FL
Amanda Waltham, Bermuda Government, Hamilton, Bermuda
David Ward, Optimal Geomatics Inc, Bainbridge Island, WA
Craig Warden, Portland, OR
Reuben Weinshilboum, Wilson Engineering LLC, Bellingham, WA
Daniel Whittington, Woolpert Inc, Columbus, SC
Annika Wilczewski, Justice Institute of BC, New Westminster, BC Canada
Dane Williams, CH2M Hill, Atlanta, GA
Desmond Williams, Law Enforcement Alliance of America, Germantown, MD
Derik Woo, City of Burnaby, Burnaby, BC Canada
Joe Wyatt, JEW Consulting, Alexandria, VA
Sarah Aswathan Yedavalli, Colliers International, Cincinnati, OH
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SustainNet Software Solutions Inc
Systems Design Inc
Talon Positioning Solutions Inc
TerraGo Technologies
Tetra Tech - HAI
Tyler Technologies - Eagle Division
guidance towards making URISA a stronger, most effective organization.

Finally I must make mention of the dedicated staff of URISA whose devotion and hard work made this conference a reality. Work is already underway from what I believe will be an improved and exciting conference in Washington DC, for 2007. If you have any ideas or suggestions for the conference then please do not hesitate to let us know!!

Abstracts are being accepted now for the 2007 conference. The deadline for submissions is December 22. Don’t delay… the conference committee is already scheduled to meet to develop the program on January 12 in Washington, DC!

Sincerely,
Conference Chair – Sandi Majewski,
City of Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Program Chair – Mark Sievers, Sievers & Associates LLC
Program Co-chair – David Dubauskas,
Alberta Capital Regional Alliance
Wishing you and yours a holiday season filled with joy!

Best wishes for a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year!

FROM THE URISA STAFF
The 3rd Caribbean GIS Conference, hosted by URISA, took place in the Bahamas, October 29 through November 2, 2006 at the beautiful Atlantis Hotel on Paradise Island. There were nearly 300 attendees from over 20 countries. The two previous URISA Caribbean GIS Conferences were held in Jamaica (Sept 9-12, 2001) and in Barbados (Sept 13-17, 2004). The current Conference theme was “Shattering Barriers... Building Bridges” and its objectives were:

- To inform a broad cross-section of Caribbean users about GIS technology and applications
- To share experiences regarding GIS implementation and management issues
- To establish new relationships with the vendor/consultant community
- To provide workshops and sessions that are application driven, and are relevant to the Caribbean community of GIS users
- To foster a Caribbean GIS network
- To assess the state of readiness of national and regional Spatial Data Infrastructures

The Committee Chairperson was Ms. Carolann Albury, Director of the Bahamas National GIS (BNGIS) Centre in the office of the Prime Minister. Ms. Albury was ably assisted by the Conference Program Committee, a capable cadre of 20 GIS professionals from the USA and 5 Caribbean countries (namely the Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago).

There were three concurrent eight hour URISA Workshops on Monday October 30, on GIS Program Management, Asset Management, and a new course on Caribbean Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI). I attended the SDI workshop which was chaired by Jamaican GIS Consultants Valrie Grant-Harry and Garfield Knight. There was excellent interaction amongst the participants. One recommendation coming out of the workshop was the need for a National GIS Committee in countries where the key Government departments which should be contributing towards the SDI are under different ministries. Much progress towards a national GIS with SDI from several contributing agencies has been made in the Cayman Islands and in Jamaica in particular.

The opening ceremony of the Conference, on Tuesday morning featured a keynote address by the Right Honourable Prime Minister Perry Gladstone Christie of the Bahamas. A strong supporter of GIS, he gave an excellent speech (without notes), subsequently highlighted by the local newspaper, the Nassau Guardian, in an article accessible online at: http://www.thenassauguardian.com/national_local/293331314236345.php

Peter Croswell, past president of URISA, greeted the attendees on behalf of URISA, and the participants were treated to performances by a local color guard, a primary school choir and the Bahamas Police Force band.

Along with several vendor exhibits, there were 79 presentations over the 3 days of the main conference. A highlight of the Conference was the Thursday keynote address by Jim Geringer, former Governor of Wyoming, who gave a highly informative overview of the role and trends of GIS in policy making, and how policy-makers should be introduced to GIS as an important tool to solve practical problems they are facing.

The Conference finished with a plenary session on the way towards a regional SDI, followed by a closing ceremony embellished by a boisterous and colourful calypso-style band (see photos).

The Conference participants were in general very pleased with its overall standard, and are looking forward to the 2008 Conference. All Caribbean GIS professionals should make a special effort to attend these well-organised and informative URISA Conferences.
Your business card advertisement can be seen here for $50 per issue.

Easy RFP Distribution

Remember to email your technology-related RFPs to info@urisa.org for FREE distribution to URISA’s corporate and business members. Save lots of time and effort. We have a list of contacts who are pleased to receive your RFPs. Take advantage of this free service often!