

**GIS Users Group  
Meeting Notes  
Tuesday October 25<sup>th</sup> 1:30 - 2:30  
Library 3112 (Evergreen Board Room)**

**Welcome and Introductions**

- Rita Pougiales - Likes the visual presentations of data and is interested in learning about and planning summer institutes.
- Dave Shellman - Facilities - Project management
- Susie Seip - Interested using for alternative commuting purposes.
- Ken Commers - On behalf of Extended Education, saw the uses of GIS at University of Washington, interest in what could be offered through Extended Education.
- Randy Rahn - Representing Administrative Commuting, interest in hearing what projects have in mind.
- Martha Henderson - Teaches cultural geography, plays significant role in environmental studies, get introductory students involved.
- Lee- Works in Scientific Database lab
- Paul McMillan - Reference Librarian, Interested in standard uses of GIS and more interested in layering of maps for teaching history.
- Carlos Diaz - Work with mapping in library, have GIS workstation, have a lot of data published by the government
- Jenni Minner - Realized that there are many exciting opportunities, wanted to facilitate the use among students, faculty, staff; data visualization in institutional research.
- Peter Impara - Landscape ecologist, GIS is a tool that uses, teach GIS, one of interfaces between students who want to learn it and what needs to be done, emphasize the geographic and cartographic aspects of GIS.
- Sylvie McGee - Director of Center for Community Based Learning and Action - GIS representations of partnerships with community-based learning, build common database, community-based learning partnerships, database with academic advising and student employment. Also a consumer of GIS data in consulting business, especially race, ethnicity, housing density, other planning tools.
- Bob Worley - Facilities
- Jo Vaughn - Advancement
- Apologies for anyone I missed!

**GIS On Campus**

Rip Heminway talked about GIS resources on campus. Rip explained there is a statewide consortium that pays into a centralized fund that gives unlimited access to all of the software tools that ESRI produces. He said that if a software package is developed with a third-party vendor then the institution must pay extra for it. He said that he is the contact if anyone would like to get Arc on their desktop. Rip said that he has also installed GRASS on desktops, a raster-based GIS system that was originally developed by the government and that it is maintained out of the University of Arizona. He said that it is free, open source, and that it can be loaded on Macs, Linux boxes. He said that he also has Idrisi but that the faculty that used it is no longer at Evergreen. He said that it is not the most current version. He has a finite number of those licenses and that he can provide it, but it is not available in the lab.

Rip also said that he has a lot of add-ins and scripts and that there are some great tools for doing coordinate conversions. He suggested that people talk with him if there is a specific function that they interested in. He also said that he has a data repository, some of which comes from Thurston County, including vector data, such as roads, wetlands, soils. He also said that LIDAR is available. LIDAR is a laser created digital elevation model that gives a picture of the county at very high resolution. He said that one can look at campus and that it gives one an intimate detail of the topography of the ground.

Bob Worley said that he maintains a site plan that is divided into layers. He said that there are roads, walkways, etc. The data has been converted to NAD83 coordinate system and then send to the CAL lab for background resources. He said that GIS is not maintained in facilities but that they do use AutoCAD.

Peter Impara said that in GIS projects that there is often a lot of repetition in terms of things that need to be done over and over again. He said that students who have learned GIS are resources on campus. He said that a lot of students take his class and then need more experience. Jenni also mentioned that a student intern had been doing some GIS work in Institutional Research.

Jenni mentioned some URLs of on-campus resources. Rip said that he maintains an ArcIMS server which provides internet based GIS services. He said that he is serving the Thurston County bike map, which is consortium that includes Thurston County, Evergreen, and Climate Solutions.

He said that for those who want to learn how to do ArcGIS that Evergreen is part of a part of consortium of Washington higher ed institutions and that there is a series of workshops that are free. These consist of up to 6 - 8 modules that take about 40 hours to do. He said that these modules are self-paces.

He also mentioned that Getting to Know GIS books are in the CAL lab and that the data for GIS exercises are on Sockeye. Peter said that he has a handout about where to get data.

Carlos Diaz said that he has created a website with links which is a kind of one-stop index in topical form. It has links to the Census, the Department of Interior, the Army Corps of Engineers, and has information not only at the federal but at the state level. He said that he has digitized some materials. He mentioned the digital maps archive and that there are some maps from late 19<sup>th</sup> century from the USGS. He said that he is interested in enhancing the collection and in trying to save maps and make then available using GIS.

Jenni talked about institutional research and the maps that have been produced about geographic origin of students. She also mentioned the mapping of commute trip data, in which addresses were mapped to estimate how far staff, faculty, and students commute. She added that Evening and Weekend offerings are great resources in-house and was excited about the possibility of Extended Education having GIS offerings.

Ken Commers passed out course proposal forms for those who might be interested in teaching GIS through Extended Education. He also mentioned the extended education website: [www.evergreen.edu/extendededucation](http://www.evergreen.edu/extendededucation). He said that this would not have to be for credit, but could be something that would interest community members and/or being for professional development.

#### **GIS Resources off campus - ERSI, conferences, etc.**

Jenni mentioned GIS resources off-campus. She said that a consulting firm, GIS3, had offered a training about mapping the census. She also mentioned a workshop of demographic analysis using the 2000 Census. She passed out a hand out with some additional resources. She mentioned open houses at the Olympia ESRI office. She said that ESRI also hosts the International Users and Educational Users conferences. She said that ESRI also has a GIS Higher Education industry specific group. She said that she also has some additional information about downloading Census data.

Rip mentioned that there is an open GIS group that works on developing open source alternatives. He said that if one googles "Open GIS" that they will find the webpage for this

group. He also said that the Northwest Environmental Training Council also does environmental trainings and GIS trainings.

Bob Worley said that if interested in paper maps - available through office in facilities.

Rita Pougiales asked if there are many programs where students can learn GIS. She asked how long it takes to learn GIS and the depth of GIS in the curriculum. Rip said that the only full-time person teaching GIS was Jim Stroh and that he folds it into the environmental analysis. Peter said that he is teaching in the Evening and Weekend Studies. Rip said that he does workshops for faculty that would like their students to have the opportunity to learn about GIS. He typically does 3-4 sessions that are geared toward the program, but that these are at a very superficial level. There was some additional discussion about faculty who have integrated GIS in their program. Two other faculty were mentioned who are running workshops.

Rita asked if GIS is a big commitment for a program. Peter said that he is teaching GIS in a course that is 4 hours for 10 weeks. He has students do another 40 hours outside of class with a project. He said that this provided an introduction to GIS. Rip asked if Rita meant a big commitment for faculty or for students. It was clarified that she meant both. Sylvie McGee said that there are a lot of ways to have GIS. She said that she is a heavy user, but that there are a lot of materials that are pretty easily available. She said that anyone who is teaching or learning about planning or social analysis and who is not using GIS is missing a piece of what they could be doing. She said that she uses it in her own consulting work, such as maps that show concentrations of poverty in Thurston County. She said that it depends on at what level one wants to use GIS, whether it is programming or whether it is using existing datasets.

Peter said that in ecology or natural resources that it is getting to be difficult for people to get a job without knowing GIS.

There was mention of parallels between GIS and Excel. Students can pickup how to fill in cells in Excel, but that there are many more features in Excel. It was noted that to actually use the power of GIS that one must be proficient in manipulating that data going beyond the first level. A cursory overview is possible in GIS, but to really use the power of GIS time to develop skills.

Peter said that incorporating GIS into a program is like incorporating statistics, in that it takes focused program time. Jenni mentioned that it might be possible to incorporate some geographic literacy or quantitative reasoning without incorporating a lot of GIS software skills. Sylvie said that it is like getting students to read statistics and to think critically, that this is skill set that is distinct from doing statistics. She said that one could do some critical thinking with maps that might be more appropriate for first year students or beginning students while additional GIS work might be at a greater level of depth.

There was a question about how data formats and interoperability issues. Rip said that Arc is basically the Microsoft of GIS. He said that their data format is the predominant format and that one needs to be able to convert from and to Arc. He said that one can read Access data directly into Arc and that tiff files are readable by GIS. He said that vector data is still governed by ESRI and that it is becoming easier to transfer data around. He said that there is always converting that happens and that one of the most time consuming aspects of using GIS is managing data and converting it. He said that there are ballooning data management requirements. He also said that there are a lot of conversions of coordinate systems and projections in looking at spatial relations. He said that analyzing spatial relationships is only possible if there is a shared a coordinate system. He said that coordinate systems and projections are often complicated concepts to get across for some students.

#### **Evergreen GIS Users Group Communication - Listserv, web pages, blogs**

Jenni asked if the GIS Users Group is a group that people wanted to sustain and if so, how should people communicate. She mentioned different options such as a listserv or bulletin board. Rip said that he could host a bulletin board. Sylvie said that she prefers a listserv. Jenni suggested keeping a listserv, but for those of who would like to discuss more technical questions that they could have discussions on the bulletin board. Rip suggested that the listserv be used for non-technical stuff and routine announcements.

#### **GIS Show and Tell - Projects around campus, schedule future presentations**

Jenni asked what the Users Group could do at future meeting and what people were interested in. Two people expressed interest in geocoding. Rip suggested addressing specific needs or topics and also doing future presentations of GIS projects. Bob Worley said that he is interested in what others are doing relative to the campus and how that could help Facilities. He mentioned for example a Salamander study that would be useful in informing Facilities about some landscaping and maintenance routines and projects.

#### **GIS Day ([www.gisday.com](http://www.gisday.com)) - November 16, 2005**

There was some discussion about celebrating GIS day and the possibility of getting SPSCC and Evergreen together. There was also mention of the University of Washington - Tacoma GIS certificate.

#### **Next Meeting - Timing Preferences**

Meeting times and preferences were discussed. Jenni said that she would send out an e-mail soliciting ideas and timing preferences.