

EDUCATION EVENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendee's Name: Joseph Kerski Title: Geographer

Event: Colorado Council for the Social Studies Conference

Event Date(s): 11 April 2003

Location: Lakewood, Colorado

My activities at conference:

1. Operate USGS exhibit.
2. Conduct presentation on geocaching and confluences
3. Conduct presentation on Geographic Information Systems.

Background:

Why participate in social studies conferences? First, geography education is embedded in the social studies for the most part in the United States. If we want to reach geography teachers, this is where we need to be. Second, the USGS offers numerous resources for social studies educators. Social studies includes, besides geography, history, civics, and economics. We have, for example, historical maps and books such as the 1796-2000 elections map, the historical trails of Denver map, the Colorado 1894 map, economics assessments on energy resources, and other useful resources. Many states have a statewide professional society for social studies education, as does Colorado. The national organization is the National Council for the Social Studies; their annual conferences occur in November, and the USGS has exhibited at numerous NCSS conferences over the years.



Over 200 educators attended the social studies conference.

The theme for this conference was Social Studies: The Real Life Discipline. This conference was sponsored by the Colorado Council for the Social Studies, the Colorado Geographic Alliance, the

Center for Teaching International Relations, the Colorado Council on Economic Education, the Center for Education in Law and Democracy, and the Program for Teaching East Asia. These sponsors illustrate the diversity of social studies education.



One of two exhibit areas at the conference, which was held at the Lakewood Sheraton Hotel.



Teachers examining USGS historical trails maps of Denver that we offered at the conference.

Presentations

I conducted 2 presentations:

(1) Geocaching (www.geocaching.com) – GPS-based treasure hunts., and using the confluence project (www.confluence.org) as a global set of geographically located images and descriptions of the Earth's surface, landforms, population, climate, vegetation, and more.

(2) GIS in the Classroom. Sophia Linn, Colorado Geographic Alliance Program Coordinator, and I conducted a session on GIS: What it is, why use in education, what students and teachers are doing with it in Colorado and around the world, example lessons, future training opportunities, challenges and benefits, and a live demonstration illustrating population analysis.



Over 40 people attended my geocaching-confluences session, illustrating the interest that social studies educators have in GPS, GIS, and geographic technologies.

Exhibit

Approximately 210 educators attended the conference. The USGS exhibit featured resources for geography, history, math, civics, and economics education. Other exhibitors included Rand McNally, book publishing companies, software companies, and curriculum developers.



Joseph Kerski at the USGS exhibit, which featured maps, books, and posters for social studies education.



Tina Charnecki from the University of Colorado, works at the USGS exhibit at the conference.

Reasons for attending:

- 1) We have been active for years as a center and as an agency in promoting geography education.

As the nation's largest scientific organization, the USGS can and has provided great input to publications, data sets, software, and other items related to geographic education. This is particularly true in the area of bringing geographic technologies to the classroom: the USGS could be a leader in generating data sets that teachers can easily use at all grade levels. In so doing, the publicity generated from teachers and students across the country for the USGS could be enormous, particularly with the amount of media on the need for geographic knowledge.

2) The value-added in our involvement with the lifelong learning focus area of education is that we work with educators to demonstrate *how* our products can be used in conjunction with national science and geography standards. It is not enough to tell which products are available. Teachers already know how to find resources and they have a great deal of material. When we get involved with teachers--getting their input and working with them--we can understand how to best meet their needs.

Recommendations:

1) These are exciting times for social studies education, with more tools and resources available than ever before. I believe that the USGS should play a role in this expansion of geography education, by producing a modular CD-ROM that includes base and thematic spatial data sets, with one module for each of the national geography standards, and for different grade levels (primary, middle, and high school). Teachers lack the time to find sites for spatial data, and reformat that data to use in a GIS. They need easy-to-use data that can be imported into a GIS such as Idrisi or ArcView. We should also be pursuing the production of historical imagery and topographic maps for historical land-use change analysis for everywhere in the USA.

2) The presentations worked well in tandem with the exhibit, where we could answer additional questions following the presentations as well as direct attendees toward the presentations from the exhibit. I recommend at least one USGS presentation at this and all other conferences that we attend.

3) I recommend we remain involved with social studies education. This is an organization that is coming to us for guidance, telling us how appreciated we are, and wanting to increase its involvement with us.

Acknowledgements:

I appreciate the USGS' support of my attendance at this event. I thank Tina Charnecki, University of Colorado-Boulder geography-environmental studies student, for her assistance with our USGS exhibit and the presentations. I thank Sophia Linn for her support of geography education and for supporting my registration fee at this conference.



Registration area at the social studies conference.

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