EDUCATION-PARTNERSHIP REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Event Name:
Geographical Association 2004 Annual Conference

Attendee's Name:
Joseph J. Kerski, Geographer:
Education/GIS, Denver

Locations: University of Kent-Canterbury, United Kingdom

Event Date: 3-9 April 2004

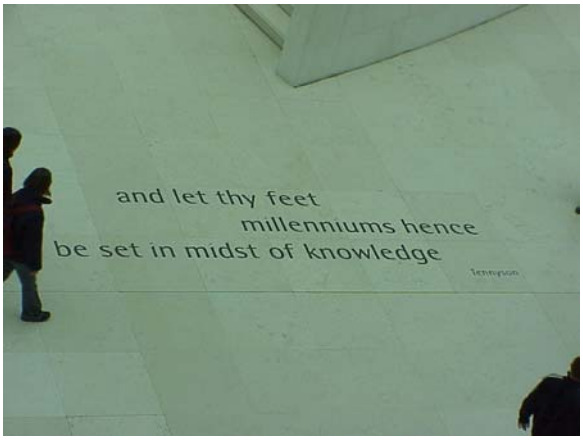
Executive Summary

I participated in the 2004 Annual Conference of the Geographical Association (GA) as a representative of the USGS. I attended also as a member of the Research and External Relations Board of the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). I did so to further the work I began in 2001 to foster educational partnerships among the USGS, NCGE, and the GA. In attendance were over 450 university professors, researchers, primary and secondary geography instructors, as well as those in government, nonprofit, and business who support geography education. I met with representatives from the Digital Worlds/Dakini Project, the Royal Geographical Society, the Ordnance Survey, and others, operated a USGS exhibit, and conducted a GIS workshop entitled "Exploring Europe with GIS."

One has to only look at the dozens of workshops at the GA conference to understand the strength and diversity of geography education in the United Kingdom. It was a pleasure to work with colleagues in geography education in the UK.

Description

The Geographical Association (www.geography.org.uk) is the largest geography professional association in the world, with a membership at over 10,000, reflecting the prominence of geography in research and education in the United Kingdom. Its mission is to promote the study and teaching of geography and its contribution to education.



This quote from Tennyson that I photographed at the British Museum in London seems appropriate in reflecting how much I learned at the GA 2004 conference.

This was the fourth year in which I participated in the GA conference. In addition, I joined the GA as a member in 2001 and encourage others to do so. GA

publications include the newsletter GA News, journals *Geography, Teaching Geography,* and *Primary Geographer.* In addition, the GA publishes an enormous amount of curricular resources, including software, books, teacher packets, posters, and more.

The GA is incredibly active in applying for and receiving grants that enable them to produce high-quality resources. For example, a branch of the government, DFID, granted the GA £ 60,000 per year for three years for its "Learning Places" project. This shows how active the GA is in obtaining funding for its research projects. This is even more impressive when considering that the GA, aside from a small staff at its Sheffield headquarters, is almost entirely run from its active network of geography instructors.

2004 Conference Site. The University of Kent-Canterbury was granted its Royal Charter in 1965 and the first students arrived during that year. Current enrollment is over 12,000.

This year's conference site at the University of Kent, set within 300 acres of parkland that afforded excellent views of Canterbury. Canterbury is a historically significant city in southeast England, having existed in some form since Roman times..

Past President of the Geographical Association, Chris Kington, left, introduces Peter Fox, 2004 President, for the Presidential Address. Peter Fox spoke about how images in geography have transformed the subject through various forms of multimedia since the mid 1800s.

It was excellent to once again see and speak with Chief Executive of the Geographical Association, David Lambert.

Joseph Kerski at Rutherford College, where the registration and exhibits for the conference were held.

Some of the over 400 attendees gathering for the opening session of the conference. Each GA conference offers professional development "pathways" to help attendees select lectures, workshops, and field trips.

It was a great honor for me to meet and speak with Vanessa Lawrence (left), Director of the Ordnance Survey (OS) (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) , and the OS Education Chief, Elaine Owen. The presentation was entitled "Geography Inside—The key to improved decision-making." The OS maintains 423 million features and updates 5000 of them each day. They fly 1/3 of the UK each year for aerial photography. We had a discussion about cost recovery versus free data. While I am a great supporter of freely accessible data sets, the validity of the cost recovery mode of operations that the OS has been following has allowed them to be extremely effective in providing the data that people

need for everyday decision-making. In education, the OS has given away 775,000 maps each year to Year 7 students. Each year, I find the OS supporting GIS in education more and more.

I met the main meteorologist at the BBC at the conference; he's quite famous throughout the UK as he is on television every night!

Ordnance Survey's Education Director Elaine Owen at the OS exhibit.

It was excellent to speak again with the staff at the Royal Geographical Society, the oldest geography-related professional association on Earth. Their Unlocking the Archives project is making available wonderful historical geography resource. A few days before the conference, I visited RGS and met briefly with Judith Mansell, Education Coordinator (Center). I was inducted as a RGS Fellow in 2003, which was a tremendous honor, and would like to work with RGS on an educational project, possibly a GIS-related project.

I met and talked at length with the new education staffperson at geomatics.org.uk, Tom Bramald. This nonprofit organization has done much to support the use of geospatial data and tools in education. In my opinion, we need something equivalent to this organization in the USA.

Attendees arrive at conference registration at the University of Kent-Canterbury. As usual, the GA staff was excellent to work with for the exhibits and the workshops.

International Reception

The GA is an international organization, and as such, is active in working with an international community of geography educators. Each year, an international reception is held at the conference that provides excellent network opportunities.

Dr Tony Binns from the University of Sussex was the master of ceremonies at the International Reception. A few years ago, I was the fortunate recipient of this award. Other countries represented included The Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, France, Portugal, Ireland, and others. I was the only American in attendance.

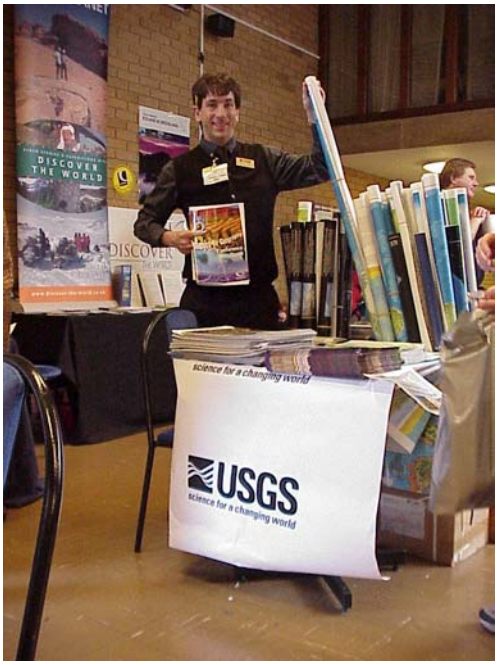
Some of the international guests at the conference, including two from South Africa, at right, who won the International Delegate travel award to attend the conference.

Exhibits

Exhibitors at the Geographical Association conference included businesses, government organizations, universities, field work centers, and nonprofit organizations. Several nonprofit organizations and charities such as Oxfam and ChristianAid impressed me with their fully developed geography education resources on issues such as population and sustainable development.

Diana Freeman's (from the Advisory Unit Computers in Education) efforts with the AEGIS geographic information systems software and training have done much to further the adoption of technology by geography instructors and their students.

USGS exhibit, from above. The paragraph I submitted to describe the exhibit was, "The US Geological Survey publishes nearly 100,000 titles of topographic and thematic maps, books, and satellite images, aerial photographs in paper and digital form, excellent for teaching about watersheds, earthquakes, volcanoes, population, coastal processes, geology, biodiversity, landforms, historical settlement, and water resources.



Joseph Kerski at the USGS exhibit. I distributed maps, posters, curricular materials that I and others at the USGS have written, books, fact sheets, and booklets. One item I highlighted was the Europe Global GIS CD.

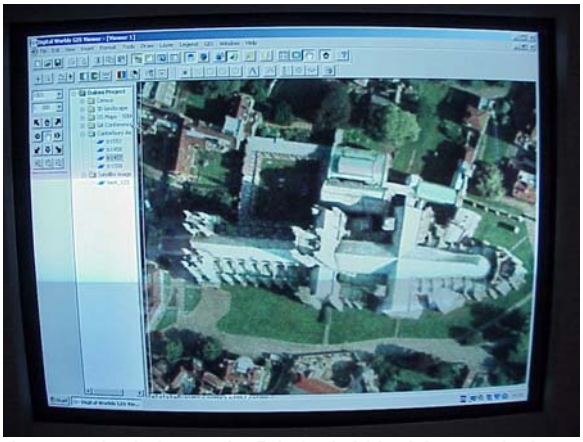
As usual, the maps I brought to the conference were the most popular item of all. Despite the position of the USGS exhibit in the overflow area, it was almost continually crowded with conference attendees. Many of these attendees came back each day and some stayed for in-depth discussions.

Digital Worlds / Dakini Project Collaboration

I met with the two principal developers of Digital Worlds GIS and spoke with others on the staff as well. Digital Worlds GIS is mapping software for teaching Geography, History, ICT, Mathematics, and Citizenship in Primary and Secondary Schools. Digital Worlds GIS is a cross-curricular Geographic Information System specially created for education. The Digital Worlds GIS combines easy-to-use but powerful tools with local area data specific to a school and community's area of interest.

It is remarkable that the project coordinators have created their own GIS software, modeled upon Leica's MapSheets software. Digital Worlds (www.digitalworlds.co.uk) works in conjunction with the Dakini Project to support educators and their students' inquiry-based education.

Jason Sawle (left) and Richard Pole at the geography department of Canterbury Christ Church University College. I have known them for over a year now. It was also a great pleasure to meet the geography department head and the vice principal of the college. One of them, Peter Vujakovic, is the editor of The Cartographic Journal. *I am very grateful for Jason and Richard for funding much of my expenses at the conference and look forward to working with them in the future. I plan to conduct a GIS workshop using their software, data, and tools in Colorado on 24 April 2004.*



I attended Jason's Digital Worlds workshop and was quite impressed at the ease of use of the software and the versatility of the tools. Above, aerial photograph of Canterbury Cathedral as examined within the Digital Worlds software.

My Workshop

I conducted a workshop on Exploring Europe with a GIS. This is based on the data and software available from the USGS Global GIS CDs, with the curriculum I have been writing on rockyweb.cr.usgs.gov/public/outreach. The lessons include earthquakes, population, water resources, and minerals. The data sets are distributed through the American Geological Institute.

I conducted this workshop in a computer lab and there was a great response from the full house of 30 attendees. The Global GIS data is one of the most wonderful spatial data resources, in my opinion, ever produced. The data is accompanied by ArcReader GIS software, which allows for a decent set of tools and analysis.

GIS software available for educational use in the UK includes, but are not limited to: Digital Worlds, ArcView from ESRI UK, AEGIS, Local Studies, and MapMaker Pro. In addition, John Hume at Pebbleshore and the staff at the Wildgoose Aerial Imaging have also been very supportive of GIS in education.

As in the USA, educators in the UK face curricular constraints to running GIS in the classroom. Training and data are critical factors in its success. However, the National Curriculum includes GIS and spatial analysis. I commend these teachers for their enthusiasm and innovation.

Other Workshops Attended

I attended one of the several GIS-related sessions conducted by Ken Lacey and others from the Ordnance Survey's education team.

Karl Donert from Liverpool Hope College, whom I refer to as "Dr Europe," conducted an excellent workshop entitled "The Place of Geography in an Enlarging Europe."

I had an excellent talk with Roy Laming and the other ESRI UK staff. They have launched a fee-based ArcIMS service for schools.

I attended Dr Bowden's Innovation in Geography and ICT workshop.

Comments

GA is the largest geography education association in the world, **and** it is an international organization. It is an excellent organization to work with, full of enthusiastic people who love geography.

I continue to pursue collaborative efforts with the GA and its members as a USGS and NCGE representative because of the organizations' (1) continuing emphasis on international activities; and (2) increasing emphasis on educational partnerships. The NCGE is probably the second largest geography education association in the world. The USGS is one of the world's largest science organizations.

Like the NCGE, the GA is dedicated to promoting the development of geography as

a subject. The GA believes that geography makes both a distinctive and a wide contribution to education and that it is an essential component in preparing young people for life in the 21st century. The GA is also committed to providing support to all those who are engaged with it—either for professional reasons or personal affinity with the subject. Opportunities for partnerships with the NCGE range from inviting and funding GA leaders to NCGE conferences, allowing GA members to purchase NCGE publications at a discount, showcasing NCGE publications in GA literature, formally sponsoring each other's members for our annual meetings, and working on curricular development projects. Opportunities with the USGS include research in geographic education and creating curricula for the educational community.

The GA seems fairly well known, even among the general public, no doubt in part due to high visibility projects involving standards-based education and field projects such as the 1996 Land Use UK. This involved 10,000 students who mapped one square kilometer cells for the entire country.

I met a variety of excellent students from the University of Kent. I was impressed at how many students work at GA conferences and how seriously they take their responsibilities.

Coordinating internationally for a conference is a bit more difficult than in the USA, but I was very thankful that all of my materials arrived and that the software and data for the computer labs worked!

Joseph Kerski carting the exhibit materials to the conference site.

Field Experiences

A large part of geography is getting out there and experiencing the land! Below are some of the places I visited.

Canterbury Cathedral, parts of which are over 1000 years old, from the main gate.

Canterbury provides an interesting geographical study as it blends the new with some of the oldest buildings in the country.

Private school just west of the campus looked magnificent when lit up at night.

It is gratifying to see the value place on open space in the UK, evident in the above photograph I took just 250 meters east of the conference site..

Canterbury is located in Kent County, in southeast England, which also includes the magnificent South Downs and wonderful villages such as Elham, above.

Magnificent yellow field of rapeseed (canola) east of Canterbury.

Fish and Chips was a definite must for a field trip.

Visit to the Royal Geographical Society headquarters, London.

Before my visit to the Royal Geographical Society, I felt compelled to pilgrimage to Abbey Road, London.

Gordon Spence and I visited 51 degrees north latitude and 1 degree east longitude immediately after the conference. As is evident in the above photograph, we had to do so via a commercial fishing boat, as this intersection is in the English Channel!

*** End of 2004 Geographical Association Annual Meeting Report ***