

## EDUCATION-COMMUNICATIONS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendee's Name: Joseph Kerski Title: Geographer  
Location: University of Northern Iowa (UNI)  
Other USGS Attendees: none  
Meeting Date(s): 15-16 June 1999  
Purpose of Meeting: Conduct 3 workshops at Iowa Geographic Alliance Summer Institute

### Summary:



The Geographic Alliance network was established in 1986 supported by the National Geographic Society. Each alliance is an organization thousands of classroom teachers, professors, administrators, professors, and interested citizens dedicated to promoting and improving geographic education in the schools and universities of Colorado. The coordinator of the Geographic Alliance of Iowa (GAI) is Professor Kay Weller (UNI). GAI sponsors summer institutes, teacher consultant workshops, offers small grants, provides scholarships for teacher training, and provides a clearinghouse for instructional materials.

Approximately 50 teachers attended the institute. I met the National Geographic Society alliance coordinator. My workshops were:

1] USGS Map Mysteries - Exploring cultural and physical geography based on USGS maps.

2] GPS workshop with field experience.

3] GIS workshop. How GIS can be used in the classroom.

In all workshops, I emphasized how USGS digital data can be used in the classroom. I also discussed how to obtain data, emphasizing the MCMC and their resources (Georgia and Kathy). I brought the standard USGS educational material and some of my own lessons based on USGS data.

Based on my observations here and at other alliance workshops that I have been active in (Colorado, Texas, Nebraska, Wyoming), I make the following recommendations:

1) These are exciting times for geographic education, with the resurgence of public interest in the subject, and the new national K-12 standards in geography. The presence of the lieutenant governor showed the link between educational outreach and legislative relations. Education receives a great deal of publicity. The state of Colorado has interpreted the national standards in their own state standards, and an emphasis now for schools is how to implement the standards. I believe that the USGS could play a role in this expansion of geographic education, by:

- producing a CD-ROM with base spatial data sets and thematic sets in modules, with one module for each of the national geography standards, and for different grade levels (primary, middle, and high school). Teachers need easy-to-use data that can be imported into an easy-to-use GIS such as Idrisi or ArcView. CD-ROMs still are preferred by some teachers over Internet sites.

2) An increasing number of primary and secondary schools have access to the Internet, and need to know where USGS Internet resources are. The USGS should continue its efforts in making spatial and metadata available and to educate data users as to their availability.

One idea we should pursue is:

- producing a pamphlet listing and describing our base data types (DLG, DEM, DRG, DOQ) and their applications in an easy-to-understand, non-technical format. Should this be published as a GIP, an open file report, or other?

3) GIS is being increasingly used in secondary and even primary schools. The USGS should continue to investigate the educational potential of GIS packages so that we can make informed answers to customers who seek to use our data in a GIS.

4) I recommend the other outreach staffers to become involved in the geographic alliances. They are one of the best means for us to “train the trainers”, maximize our resources, and get USGS products used in education. Many alliances house a materials clearinghouse. These clearinghouses need to contain USGS material, and it is up to us to contact them and get the material in the hands of the teachers.

**\*\*end of report\*\***