

USGS Educational / Business Partner Event Report

Event: National Association of Interpreters (NAI) Workshop (Annual Conference).

Report Writer: **Joseph Kerski (RMMC).**

Other USGS Participants: Steve Reiter, Irene Simaner, Ben Lemberg (all RMMC).

Event Date(s): 12-15 November 2002

Location: Virginia Beach, VA

Description of Event: According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to *interpret* means to explain or tell the meaning of, or present in understandable terms. It also means to represent by means of art, or bring to realization by performance. To impart understanding of natural and cultural resources by means of art, music, explanation, drama, graphics, and other means is exactly what the 4,500 members of the National Association of Interpreters (NAI) do. The organization's web address is <http://www.interpnet.com>.

USGS Activities at Event: (1) Sponsor the conference (Silver Circle). (2) Conduct USGS products, mapping, and GPS workshop. (3) Operate USGS exhibit booth.

The NAI has grown from 2,200 members in 1990 to over 4,500 today, representing all states and 30 countries.



The 2002 NAI conference was held in the Virginia Beach Convention Center and the adjacent hotel, which proved to be an excellent venue. The region, too, provided many field trip opportunities for the attendees—to wetlands, historical villages, and other sites where they could practice and learn more about cultural and environmental interpretation.

Communication Focus Area Covered by This Event: Education Program; Business Partner Program



Attendance at this year's conference numbered 1,400, including interpretive guides, rangers, museum curators, nature center managers, students of environmental and social sciences, tourism professionals, signage professionals, educators, and federal, county, and state employees of land-based agencies. The conference theme was "Where Time and Tides Converge," reflecting the fact that interpreters work with both people AND the landscape.



L-to-R: Irene Simaner, Joseph Kerski, Ben Lemberg, and Steve Reiter chat with a conference attendee about USGS resources for interpretive use.

exhibit was in the perfect location—at the entrance to the exhibit hall. The exhibit was busiest immediately following the keynote presentations, which were given in the adjacent hall. During workshops, traffic was lighter, but we found that people often would stay at the exhibit for 20 minutes or more with specific questions.



We positioned our exhibit to face the bulk of the exhibit hall, and arranged the space to encourage the attendees to spend time inside it.



Our exhibit was quite popular with the conference attendees. We handed out Chesapeake Bay satellite image maps (the most popular item), educational packets, product overviews, fact sheets, and guidelines on how to use USGS data and products.



We displayed material on a table as well as on a rotating publications rack, which we placed on a corner location for maximum visibility. We also displayed our Internet resources on a laptop computer with an Internet connection, especially photo finder, Landsat imagery, DOQs on terraserver, wildfires, streamflow, and topographic maps.



Because of the way attendee traffic was routed in the convention center, our



Irene Simaner works with a potential business partner from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Workshop

Steve Reiter and I conducted a workshop during the first morning after the keynote speaker had finished. The title was “Earth Science Interpretation with the USGS” and a highlight written by Gene Jackson made the final “cut” to the US Department of the Interior, as follows:

USGS Earth Science Interpretation: USGS scientists Joseph Kerski and Steve Reiter gave a presentation at the National Interpreters Workshop in Virginia Beach, Va., on Nov 13. Workshop participants learned how to effectively use USGS products in their interpretive programs. Participants were guided through activities using current and historical maps and photographs and learned how to obtain USGS geographic, geologic, biologic, and hydrologic resources (Gene Jackson, Denver, CO, 303-202-4621).

The workshop also received pre-conference press due to the efforts of the IS branch in submitting its description to the online newsletter *Interpnet News*. The same newsletter also featured an article about the very successful GPS workshops that we conducted during 2001 at RMMC.

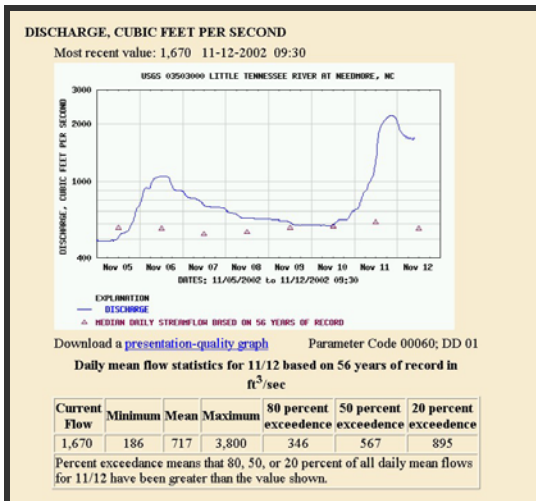


Steve and I were both pleased at the number of attendees in our workshop—about 60, packed in a small room with people standing at the back. We displayed on the wall large USGS thematic maps.

Steve and I designed the workshop in four parts. First, we gave a presentation of the USGS mission, offices, and the goals of the workshop. Second, we covered the categories of products, data, and resources offered by the USGS, how to obtain them, and how they might be helpful in interpretive work.



Joseph Kerski speaks about USGS products, services, and data during section two of the workshop.



During the data portion of the workshop, we highlighted USGS online (such as real-time streamflow, above) resources, CDs, books, leaflets, posters, videos, thematic maps, and topographic maps.

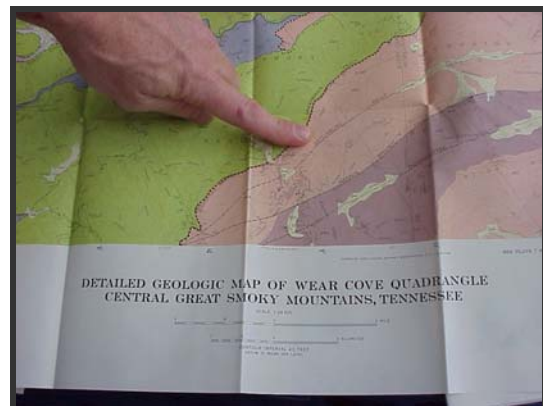
projection, symbology, and coordinate systems.



Steve Reiter begins the hands-on mapping component of the workshop. He is standing in front of the table that we used to distribute GIS material and guidelines that Steve and I wrote.



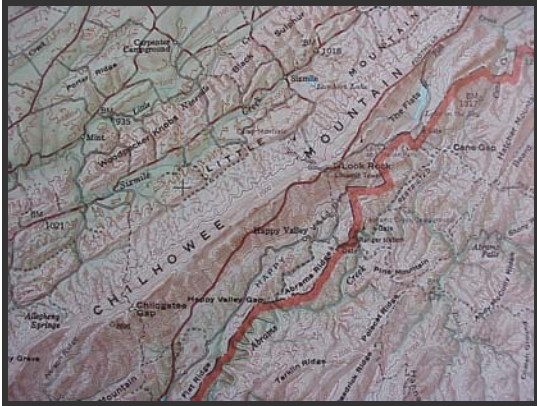
During the third portion of the workshop, we conducted a hands-on mapping component.



During the second portion of the workshop, we selected one National Park—Great Smoky Mountains—and showed participants the varied products of the USGS that interpreters could obtain.



The hands-on mapping component included work with revision dates, scale,



By extension, we hoped the participants would realize that they could gather a variety of USGS resources for whatever area they happened to be working in.



Joseph Kerski and Steve Reiter collecting GPS coordinates in preparation for their workshop at the conference.



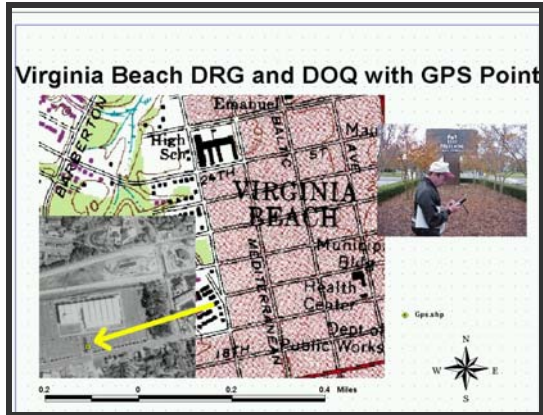
We also highlighted the use of USGS DRGs and DOQs from terraserver, on CD, and as paper prints.



Conference attendees collecting GPS coordinates during the last part of our workshop. They were good sports to be out in the rain—but a large part of their daily interpretive work takes place outside, anyway! We received many positive comments about the workshop immediately afterward and during the remainder of the conference.



Steve Reiter works with his group during the field work GPS component of the workshop. We split into two groups because of the large number of participants.



During the fourth and final portion of the workshop, we showed (1) how to bring in the GPS coordinates into a map viewing package or a GIS such as ArcView (above), and (2) how to hyperlink a ground photograph to a point collected with GPS. Our GPS coordinate was approximately 7 meters off from where we expected it to be based on the USGS digital orthophotoquad.

Personnel expertise required

Experience working with the public, with USGS products and services, with potential business partners, and with interpreters.

Display Items

We hosted one curved popup backdrop, featuring the prototype USGS Lewis and Clark map, Chesapeake Bay satellite image map, and reduced size USGS thematic maps that Gene Jackson had made. We also used a laptop computer with an Internet connection, one table, and one publications rack.

We handed out quantities of each of the following materials and information. Other items existed, but this list comprises the bulk of the items:

- Chesapeake Bay Satellite Image maps
- Virginia topographic map indexes
- Land and People education packet
- Exploring Maps education packet
- USGS pencils
- Ask USGS bookmarks
- USGS Information Sources
- USGS WWW Information
- Appalachian Mountains USGS video and booklet
- Aerial Photographs and Satellite Images
- Single-edition quad information (with USFS)
- Scientists in Action
- USGS GeoData
- West Nile Virus sheets
- Wild Animal Diseases
- Invasive Weeds information
- Science, Society, Solutions: An Introduction to the USGS
- Map Mysteries Activities
- How to Get Information from USGS
- Teaching with Topographic Maps Guidelines
- Terraserver download guidelines
- GPS information sheet
- GIS in Education Information Sheet

Acknowledgements

USGS success at the NAI conference wouldn't have been possible without the support of the following individuals:

My excellent colleagues at the USGS: Steve Reiter, Irene Simaner, and Ben Lemberg. They were knowledgeable and enthusiastic to work with, and I think we comprised a team that the conference attendees enjoyed working with.

Gene Jackson, Karen Eberhardt, Ron Lofton, and others who were involved in

the months of planning that led up to the event;

Mary Wadding, Gene Jackson, Jen Reisner, and others for materials, travel, and shipping support.

I thank the Branch of Information Services for funding my travel to this event. The partnership between their staff and myself proved to be very successful and enjoyable.

Recommendations

This was the second year that the USGS has participated in the NAI conference. I commend Gene Jackson for his role in recommending that we begin working with the NAI. I believe that this group of people is an excellent one to work with, not only for business partner purposes, but also because their work is interpreting the land and its people—their environment, culture, history, flora, and fauna. It would be difficult to find a more suitable organization for these professionals to be in touch with than one whose mission is to analyze the Earth—the USGS.

This conference showed the excellent results of a partnership between myself and the IS Branch, and I encourage RMMC to keep partnering us in future endeavors.

Once again, the difficulty in knowing about and obtaining USGS **biological resources materials and publications** was at the forefront, particularly with an audience such as this, with a high degree of interest in such publications. We could have really used a better assortment of BRD materials, particularly those dealing with invasives and with biodiversity. This needs to be resolved before we'll ever truly be a seamless organization in terms of our communicating to the public at conferences.

As in other conferences that we participate in, the combination of exhibit and workshop is an excellent one. From the exhibit, we routed people to our workshop, and after the workshop, people stopped by our exhibit to ask us additional questions for the next 2 days.

I thoroughly enjoyed the NAI conference. It was a change of pace from the mapping/GIS/geography conferences I more typically attend, and it is good to know that one can get a great field-based job with a history or environmental studies degree, as evidenced by the attendees. I made several good contacts—one of whom was a BLM employee in Grand Junction, where we will hold two GIS-related training events during 2003. I also talked with the director of the Association for Partners of Public Lands, which Gene Jackson began working with last year; we operated a USGS exhibit at their conference as well. The director was extremely complimentary about the USGS presence at NAI and APPL.

I attended one workshop on Lewis and Clark that was conducted in the first person with an interpreter in full 1800s clothing of a blacksmith, and then a fur trader. I am developing a few Lewis and Clark resources pages on the Internet as part of the USGS L&C team.

The NAI conference is structured as follows: Day 1: Setup and preconference workshops. Day 2: Keynote, workshops and exhibits. Day 3: Keynote, workshops and exhibits. Day 4: Field Trips. Day 5: Workshops. The two days of exhibits were just right for the size and scope of this conference.

Our data and products are best explored in a hands-on mode. If we want to do a GIS hands-on workshop in the future, which I think would be a good idea, the

USGS should invest in 10 laptop computers in 2 shipping cases for this purpose. This is exactly what ESRI has done for all their off-site workshops, and it would serve us well for all of the conferences and training events that we conduct outside of our own facilities.

I recommend that we write an article for the NAI journal *Legacy*. We should also submit several tips for the *Interpretive Tips and Techniques* book due out in 2003—I will submit one that highlights terraserver and USGS imagery.

I recommend we pursue work with some of the chapters of the NAI, particularly with the one that focuses on Native Americans.

We might think about exhibiting at the Rocky Mountain region of NAI. This conference will include over 200 attendees and take place in Colorado within driving distance from Denver from 27-30 March 2003.

Have we thought about exhibiting at the Society of American Archaeologists (www.saa.org) conferences? Several SAA representatives were in attendance at NAI and I asked them about their own events.

Acorn Naturalists are opening up a new Center for Science and Environmental Education. I recommend we work with them to ensure that USGS resources are a part of their new building in Tustin, California.

The only thing that would have made our workshop better is for the convention staff to have set up the room in classroom mode (with tables), rather than in theatre mode (with chairs only). Fortunately, Steve brought a computer projector from Denver, which, it turned out, we definitely needed. We could have brought more business partner packets and more educational packets,

but I realize that much of the latter is out of print and only on the web.

I'm glad that I had saved some of the Chesapeake Bay satellite image maps—these were extremely popular, especially given the conference location. We should consider making this and other satellite images a standard for-sale product. I recommend we hand out a selected number of thematic maps with each conference. At one point, it seemed like 1/3 of the people in the exhibit hall were carrying a USGS map.

Given the increasing emphasis on USGS partnerships for product sales and also for educational work, we should exhibit and conduct at least one workshop at the NIEA 2003 conference. It will be held 11-15 November in Sparks (Reno) Nevada. The 2004 conference will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Each conference is hosted by a different chapter (region) of the NAI.

Thanks for allowing us to represent the USGS.

Other Exhibitors



One of my favorite exhibits was from Folia Industries in Quebec. They manufacture custom-imprinted floor and wall tiles such as this giant map. This would be a great addition to any USGS visitor center floor or wall space.

The other exhibit that especially caught my eye was a large map from Fiber Optic Systems that told an engaging story of the American national expansion through fiber optic (dots of light) technology.

The approximately 50 exhibitors in four aisles may be categorized as follows:

- 1) government agencies with a lands emphasis, including USGS, FWS, NPS, USFS, EPA, BLM;
- 2) nonprofit organizations;
- 3) companies that manufacture display items for interpretive centers and museums,
- 4) companies that produce items to be used by interpreters. These included Skulls Unlimited (yes, skulls), Owl Pellets (the regurgitated mouse remains from wild birds that can be analyzed in a biology class);
- 5) sections of the NAI, including African Americans, Native Americans, Environmental Education, and Cultural Interpretation.

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