

EDUCATION EVENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendee and Report Writer:

**Joseph Kerski, Geographer:
Education/GIS**

Event: **GIS Forum, Front Range
Community College.**

Event Purpose: **Exhibits, Panel
Discussion, Keynote Address, and
Forum for Colorado GIS Community.**

My activities at Event:
Keynote speaker at GIS Forum

Date: 4 December 2002

Front Range Community College began an ambitious GIS education program several years ago, and has been expanding it ever since, to meet the needs of what is probably the largest GIS community in one region—the Front Range of Colorado. They have three campuses—Westminster, Boulder, and Fort Collins.

The high amount of GIS activity in the region stems from the many GIS and remote sensing companies, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, colleges, and universities in the region.

Appearing in the panel before my presentation were several people whom we have partnered with in the education program: The Orton Family Foundation, Boulder County GIS, the Boulder Valley School District, and ESRI.

The following announcement appeared on the front page of the *Longmont Times-Call* on Tuesday, 3 December 2002. I spoke with its author about GIS and the article briefly on the day it was published.

GIS makes its presence known

Forum meant to profile Geographic Information Systems for the public

By Tony Kindelspire

The Daily Times-Call

LONGMONT — It has been around for 30 years, has a market value of \$1.5 billion to \$2.3 billion nationally, and influences the daily lives of millions of Americans. Yet, most people are not familiar with GIS — Geographic Information Systems.

On Wednesday, Front Range Community College will try to change that — locally at least — by sponsoring a GIS Forum at the Raintree Conference Center. The afternoon and evening will include exhibitors, a panel discussion and a keynote speaker.

“Our main purpose of doing this is to bring together folks who don’t really know what GIS is,” said Pat Schwarz, geography

lead instructor and GIS coordinator for Front Range’s Boulder County campuses.

There will also be door prizes and a scholarship awarded, according to Louise

Brown, the chairwoman of FRCC’s department of advanced science and technology for the Boulder County campuses. The idea for the forum was hatched by the community college’s advisory board.

GIS Forum information

GIS Forum: Careers and Technology for a Better World will take place Wednesday from 4:30 to 9 p.m. at the Raintree Conference Center. For information, call Pat Schwarz at 303-516-8035.

"We're real excited about it," Brown said. "It's the beginning of what we hope will be a series of forums focusing on careers.

"We're starting the ball rolling, and the different departments that have different career tracks will be putting on their own forums."

One of those taking part in Wednesday's panel discussion sits on the FRCC advisory board — Don Rodekoher, who operates his own consulting company. Another of the panelists will be Peter Curtis from ESRI, a company that has been involved in GIS since its inception three decades ago.

"We have a program currently in place that, within a year to 18 months, offers students a chance to earn a certificate and come out of that program prepared to work in GIS," Brown said. "And GIS is applicable in a myriad of businesses and industries."

Firefighters, politicians, planners and even large retail chains all use GIS in one form or another, Brown said.

She said all the area high schools have been invited to the forum, and the general public is also welcome to attend, especially those who might be looking for a new career path.

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I'm not sure how "dynamic and wonderful" I was (see article), but I chose "Real-Time GIS" as my topic. The presentation room was in theatre-style with rows of chairs that ramped up away from the speaker; an excellent facility.

In this presentation, my goal was to extend our current notion of what real-time GIS is, beyond being able to pull real-time data off the Internet to additional developments over the past decade that has enabled the expansion of GIS beyond natural resources into additional fields. These developments include the formatting of data to make it easier to use, the serving of spatial data on ArcIMS and MapGuide sites, expanded translation utilities, online indexes, and user-defined data sets in terms of both content and geographic extent. USGS developments that I mentioned during this presentation included The National Map, our efforts with Homeland Security, Geomac, our Earthquake and water real-time data, terraserver, and seamless data portals.

INFORMATION:

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"This would be perfect for people who are very computer literate," said Brown. "They're the most technologically advanced computer programs that we run" at FRCC.

Wednesday's keynote speaker will be Joseph Kerski of the U.S.

Geological Survey.

"Everybody that's heard him speak says he's just dynamic and wonderful," Brown said.

While Wednesday's forum at the Raintree will be much smaller, the recent "GIS in the Rockies" — the 15th annual in Denver — drew more than 700 attendees and 75 exhibitors.



Event Flyer:

GIS Forum: Careers and Technology for a Better World

December 4
4:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Raintree Conference Center
1640 Industrial Circle
Longmont
(Behind the Raintree Hotel)

Schedule of Events

- 4:30 - 6:00 GIS Exhibits Open & Door Prizes
- 6:00 - 6:30 Official Welcome & Scholarship Award
- 6:30 - 7:15 GIS Career Panel Discussion: Local Applications of GIS
- 7:15 - 8:00 Keynote Address by Joseph Kerski, GIS Director USGS
- 8:00 - 9:00 Meet panelists and Industry Representatives

Food & Beverages
Door Prizes

Geographic Information Systems

For more information, contact Pat Schwarz at 303-516-8035

I ended the presentation with several challenges for the GIS community. I encouraged spatial thinking, arguing that it is every bit as important as economic, mathematic, and other kind of thinking that we seek to encourage in our society. We need people who can integrate data and make decisions with GIS, not just push buttons and confine themselves to thinking "within the software." We need people who can tap into geographic thinking, methods, and processes that may not exist in any particular GIS software—spatial analysis methods predate GIS. I mentioned that we all need to encourage our state educational systems to strengthen geography, science, and environmental studies education. I also encouraged the audience to get involved—in professional societies, in the literature, in conferences, in education.

Recommendations:

- 1) More than 30 years after its inception, these are still exciting times for GIS, with new GIS tools, services, companies, and Internet services abounding. GIS is receiving more and more publicity. Front Range Community College is just one example of
- 2) The USGS should continue to pursue educational venues such as these to network with our data users, policy makers, educators, and the general public. We will only have credibility to the extent that we interact with them—we cannot rely on merely the provision of data. We need partnerships and visible work with the community.

I received the following kind comments following the presentation and have responded to several data requests:

Hello Joseph:

Thank you so much, it was an honor having you address our guests at Front Range! Sorry to keep you so late. You said several things that I always think about, and each time I see you speak you say something new and interesting. That is one of the things - we are always learning in this field! I really appreciate your enthusiasm!

I am inspired and challenged by your talk... again - I do try very hard to get my students to be critical thinkers and to not get overly concerned by the technology (which button to push), but to get them to think through... "what am I trying to accomplish, and what problem am I trying to solve"? with a little practice the pointing and clicking is the easy part.

It is interesting that way back in the early eighties I used to deliver training on Control Data's Mine Modeling/Evaluation software, I often would find myself saying "you are only limited by your imagination and your knowledge of the commands, If you come up with something you want to accomplish, we can likely come up with a way to make the software do it". Now I see a very similar quote on the home page of the ESRI website, and feel silly using that statement as I feel like I am plagiarizing. but it is true. Teaching, it is much easier to get across which buttons to push...helping people to gain understanding is the key.

Thanks again - the presentations of the technology were great, then your address really brought things all together, and made for a truly meaningful

and successful event for Front Range.

Sincerely,

I very much enjoyed your presentation last night at Front Range Community College and the presentation you gave at the "GIS in the Rockies" conference.

As I mentioned in the voice mail message that I left for you this morning, I would like to meet with you to discuss GIS as it applies to water resources, management, and conservation. I am in the process of starting a GIS consulting practice with this focus and would like to get your input on the use of GIS as it relates to these water topics.

I look forward to hearing from you about a convenient time for us to meet.

I appreciated being a part of this event and a part of the GIS community in Colorado.

end of report