

EDUCATION-COMMUNICATIONS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Event Name:

2004 Intermountain GIS Conference

Attendee's Name:

Joseph J. Kerski, Geographer:
Education/GIS, Denver

Other USGS Attendees: Steve Reiter (USGS RMMC), Lance Clampitt, Lindell Baker, Laurie Temple (Montana Mapping Partnership Office), Tracy Fuller, Gene Dana (Idaho Mapping Partnership Office)

Location: Billings, Montana

Event Dates: 19-23 April 2004

Summary

I joined over 250 colleagues at the 2004 Intermountain GIS Conference, an annual event for the Idaho and Montana GIS user community. In attendance were GIS professionals from tribal, federal, state, county, and municipal governments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions (professors, teachers, and graduate and undergraduate students), and private industry. We conducted workshops, presented papers, operated an information exhibit, and learned from each other.

The conference was hosted by the Montana GIS Users Group, and they alternate with the Idaho GIS Users Group in hosting the conference each year. One has to only look at the dozens of sessions at the Intermountain GIS conference to understand the diversity of GIS applications in the region, and to grasp the high degree of collaboration among the organizations represented by the Idaho-Montana geospatial community.

Description



Billings, Montana, 19 April 2004, largest city in Montana, site of the 2004 Intermountain GIS conference.



Billings Sheraton Hotel, left, site for the 2004 Intermountain GIS Conference. The conference featured three concurrent sessions running for two days, a preconference set of 9 workshops, a postconference set of 6 workshops, and an opening day of 5 workshops and several plenary sessions. The Montana GIS conference is a good example of how a GIS conference should be run—providing many opportunities for networking, conducting and attending sessions, and pre- and post-conference

workshops. Attendees came mostly from Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Washington, and Colorado. I commend Annette Cabrera, Stuart Challender, Janet Cornish, and the others on the planning board for their efforts.

Plenary Sessions



Above, Annette Cabrera, GIS specialist from Yellowstone County and one of the conference organizers, greets conference attendees on opening day. Ms. Cabrera is the current president of the Montana GIS Users Group. I thank Ms Cabrera and the Montana GIS community for funding my trip to the conference.



Above, Chuck Tooley, Mayor of Billings, welcomes the conference attendees. I sort of “chased him down” in the hallway after his talk but he was very agreeable to spend a few minutes discussing GIS. I enjoyed talking with him and gave him a USGS map. I had heard him address the previous conference I had attended in Billings—that of the 2001 National Indian Education Association.

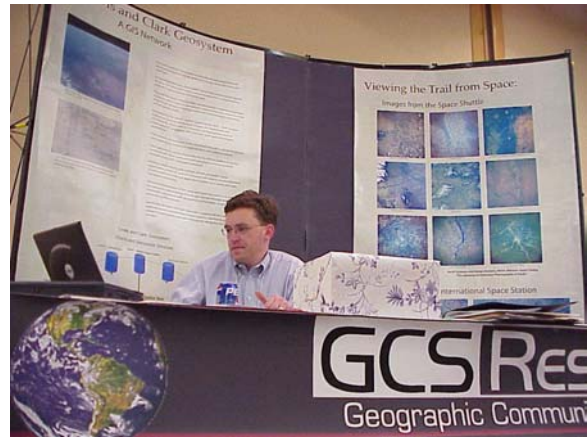


Wyoming's 30th Governor, Jim Geringer, who gave a plenary presentation entitled “Bringing GIS to the Front Office.” His term in office extended from 1994 to 2003. His presentation focused on the overlap between GIS and policy-making. I had previously met Geringer while he was Governor of Wyoming, and was amazed that a Governor was so interested in and knowledgeable about GIS. It makes perfect sense, as GIS is one of the tools that every state and local government uses. He is a perfect example of the kind of awareness of what GIS can do that every policymaker should know. Geringer now works for ESRI.



Above, Ralph Ehrenberg, former Map Librarian at the Library of Congress, shared fascinating stories of the mapping and surveying of the Lewis and Clark expedition, which passed down the Yellowstone River near the conference site.

Mr Ehrenberg has a wealth of knowledge about historical mapping. I spoke with him during the conference and we made plans for his historical map society to tour the USGS during their 2005 conference in Denver.



Above, Alex Philp of GCS Research, a partner on the National Map and an excellent colleague in GIS and education, was another conference organizer, as well as session moderator, speaker, and exhibitor.

USGS Activities at the Conference

- 1) Lance Clampitt presented a paper on *The National Map* implementation in Montana.
- 2) Steve Reiter, with assistance from Joseph Kerski, Lance Clampitt, Laurie Temple, and Lindell Baker, conducted a workshop entitled "How to Use a GPS with USGS Topographic Maps."
- 3) Joseph Kerski presented a paper entitled "Ten Years of Progress in GIS Education."
- 4) Tracy Fuller presented a paper on county and state initiatives in Washington and Idaho with regards to *The National Map*.
- 5) Joseph Kerski conducted a workshop entitled "Making Sense of Federal and State Base Spatial Data within ArcGIS."
- 6) All USGS staff assisted with operating a USGS information exhibit.

Public Night



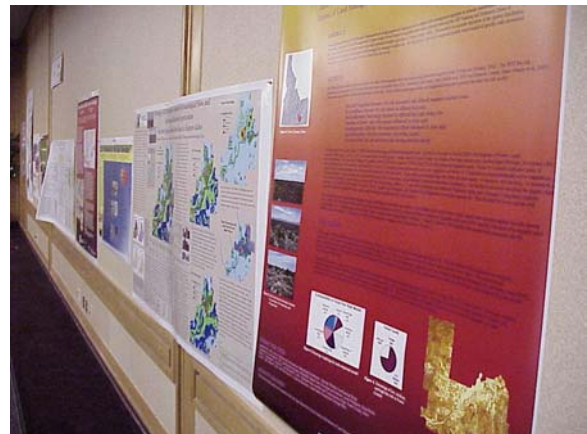
Above, Public Night is one of my favorite activities at the Intermountain GIS conference. It provides an opportunity for community members to learn more about how GIS plays a role in everyday life, and how it is truly used all around them in the community.



Above, Joseph Kerski and Margie Lubinski (US Forest Service) at public night. Margie has done a great deal to further GIS education in the state. We are holding up sections of the Geospatial Trunk that Margie loans out to schools, which include GPS receivers, lessons, books, CDs of data, and more.



Above, Joseph Kerski with two of the excellent ESRI Staff--Heather Diaz and Chen Li from Olympia, Washington.



The poster sessions are always a highlight of the Intermountain GIS conference.



One of the posters displayed during the

conference was an impressive Landsat mosaic of Montana.



I stopped by K-Bear Radio to talk with the staff about the Intermountain GIS conference in the hopes that they would conduct an interview and investigate the conference. I enjoyed meeting two of the Disk Jockeys and gave them a map.



A very clever idea: A silent auction (raffle) was held featuring numerous interesting GIS-related and non-GIS items.

Exhibition



The exhibit hall at the conference featured geospatial information, data, and applications from government agencies and private industry.



Above, Joseph Kerski, Lindell Baker, Steve Reiter, Lance Clampitt, and Laurie Temple at the USGS exhibit. Our exhibit featured free maps, guidelines to geospatial data, information about The National Map, brochures on maps, aerial photographs, satellite imagery, water quality, biodiversity, urban growth, and more.



Above, Laurie Temple talks with a conference attendee. The exhibits were open for nearly three whole days, allowing plenty of time to interact with everyone in attendance. Our exhibit was well placed at the entrance to the exhibit hall.

Workshops and Papers



Above, USGS Mapping Liaison to Montana, Lance Clampitt, discusses The National Map.



Lance's session was full, reflecting well on his work over the past several years with the geospatial community in the state and their degree of collaborative work.



Above, Tracy Fuller, USGS mapping liaison to Idaho, discussed Washington and Idaho county implementation of The National Map immediately after Lance's session. These two papers fit together nicely as they provided a national overview, a state overview, and an example of a county implementation.

My paper on A Decade of Progress in GIS Education was also well attended, which I appreciated. I was preceded by Lee Weldon, teacher from Townsend School District, who has been working with students on an incredibly innovative noxious weeds mapping project using GIS and GPS.



Above, Steve Reiter enjoys discussing datums and GPS during our “How To Use a GPS with a Topographic Map” workshop.



Above, attendees in the GPS workshop work inside and outside. We were pleased to note that the workshop was full, at 33 attendees.



The first part of the GPS workshop was held inside, where we covered map reading, coordinates, map projections, GPS functions, and other topics. This was held on the 23rd floor of the hotel, probably the tallest building in Montana, one of the most spectacular settings for a workshop that we’ve ever had. The second part took place “in the field”—urban field work in downtown Billings, that is!

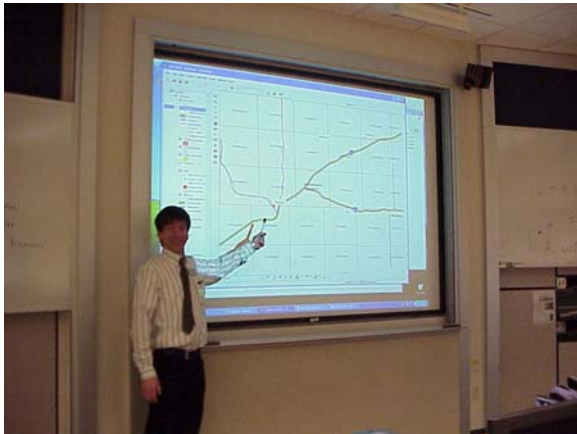


Above, Steve Reiter talks with the participants as we prepare to navigate to coordinates at the edge of the Billings West

topographic map, 108.5 degrees west longitude. What could be cooler than walking to the edge of the quadrangle?



Above, setting for the "Making Sense of Federal and State Data within ArcGIS" workshop, held in a computer lab on the Montana State University-Billings campus.



Above, Joseph Kerski points to a data set covering Billings during the GIS class. I am grateful to Steve Reiter, Kris Larson, Laurie Temple, and Lindell Baker for their assistance during this workshop. I am especially grateful to Kris Larson for helping me with SF3 Census data manipulation during the conference and for suggesting that we co-teach this workshop over one year ago.

In the workshop, we accessed and used

data from the Montana NRIS, GIS Data Depot, Terraserver, seamless.usgs.gov, The National Map, The National Atlas, US Census Bureau, Geography Network, Geospatial One Stop, and other sites. Kris Larson ended the workshop with a detailed examination of SF3 Census data.



Above, attendees at the GIS workshop, which included academia, private industry, tribal, state, and local government. The emphasis of the course was to provide confidence in locating, formatting, and using data from sites in a GIS setting.

After the conference, I received the following very kind note from one of the attendees in the GIS workshop. Notes like this make it all worthwhile!

Just a quick e-mail. I was reviewing my notes Sunday and just had to tell you how amazed I was at all the data that you imparted in just those few hours. It was a wonderful seminar and I'll be putting the data to good use. It's so wonderful to get the help. I realize I still have a lots to learn but that also there are nice folks out there that are willing to share their knowledge.



Above, I investigated Nomad's impressive mobile field lab at the conference. It was first used in fire reconnaissance.

I also attended the Geoprocessing in Arc9 workshop by ESRI, and Yellowstone County's presentation on mapping registered offenders.

I found out about Igage Mapping Corporation's impressive All Topo Maps digital maps and tools.

Recommendation

The Montana GIS community is one of the closest-knit I have ever seen, with a high degree of cooperation and collaboration. It was a pleasure to work

with them and I recommend that we continue to do so in the future. This includes conducting workshops, papers, and an exhibit at every one of their conferences.

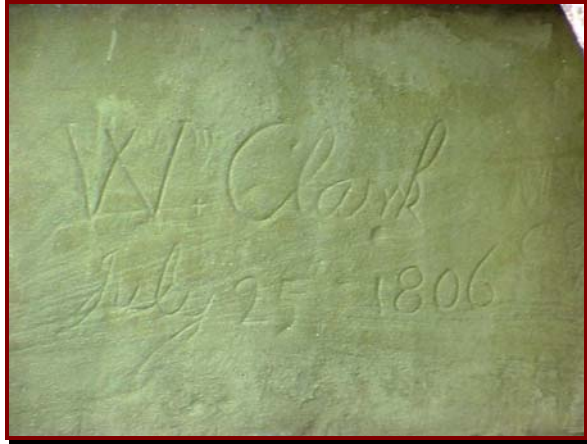
Field Trip



After we set up the exhibit, we visited Pompey's Pillar, site of the only on-location record of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The record is Clark's inscription from 1806 as part of the group was traveling back to St Louis.



Clark's inscription is carved on this rock. Near this site, we also walked from UTM Zone 12 into UTM Zone 13. This was quite exhilarating!



Clark's inscription from 1806 at Pompey's Pillar, photographed 19 April 2004. We spoke with BLM interpreter Suzy Havener at the national monument.

*** End of 2004 Intermountain GIS Conference Report***
