

Supporting the Lone GIS Professional

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2008 Washington GIS Conference

May 6, 2008



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Program

- Presentation 1: *The concept and rationale* – David Howes
- Presentation 2: *A federal agency perspective* – Jan Benson
- Presentation 3 – *A solo consultant perspective* – Allison Bailey
- Discussion

David A. Howes

- Geospatial Information Scientist
- Compliance Services International, Lakewood, WA
- Education:
 - Ph.D. Geomorphology (State University of New York at Buffalo, NY)
 - M.Sc. GIS (University of Edinburgh, Scotland)
 - B.Sc. (Hons.) Geography (University of Salford, England)
- Years Working in GIS: 17
- Primary interest in GIS: Physical environmental processes/spatial analysis



Jan Benson

- AFSC GIS Coordinator
- NOAA-Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle, WA
- Education:
 - M.S. Cartography (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
 - B.S. Zoology (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Years Working in GIS: 17+
- Primary interest in GIS: Data visualization, education

Allison Bailey

- Principal
- Sound GIS, Seattle, WA
- Education:
 - M.S. Marine Studies/Remote Sensing and GIS (University of Delaware)
 - B.A. Biology, cum laude (Carleton College, Northfield, MN)
- Years Working in GIS: 17+
- Primary interest in GIS: Spatial analysis, GIS for marine resource management



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The Concept and Rationale

David A. Howes

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Background

- General observations since the late 1980s
- Recent conversations at an EPA NHDPlus workshop
- 2008 ESRI Developer Summit Presummit Seminar

Background – Developer Summit

- Presummit presentation: *Introduction to Planning, Developing and Maintaining ArcGIS Applications* (available from <http://edn.esri.com>)
- Excellent presentation geared towards development teams
- Much of relevance to the lone GIS professional
- Triggered an intense four-day informal survey of conference attendees leading to the current ongoing effort

Objectives

- Consider the plight of the lone GIS professional
- If their experience can be improved, try to help them to be more successful
- Be positive

Types of Lone GIS Professional

- Full-time GIS professional
- Part-time GIS professional with other responsibilities
- Professional in another field using GIS to organize/analyze/present data

Rationale for “Lone” Status

- Choice
- Project requirements
- Staff shortages
- Funding limitations

Many Globes to Juggle

Technical	Administrative	Application
Programmer/ developer/tester	Accountant	Trainer
System administrator	Marketer	Author
Designer	Consultant	Domain specialist
Researcher	Manager	
Analyst		

Life As Atlas

- Increasing
 - weight of data
 - number of tools/options
 - technological complexity
 - number of stakeholders
 - responsibilities
 - possibility for error
 - expectations
- *Googlization* - make maps/
data available on the web

Consequences

- Fear of new software/methods - use old versions/standards
- Fail to capitalize on value of new capabilities
5% rule – most of us are probably (guilty of) using about 5% of the capabilities of most programs
- Overload
- Discouragement
- Where to start?
- Isolation

Are We Trying To Do Too Much?

- Alan Cooper – *Design Engineering: The Next Step*

http://www.cooper.com/insights/journal_of_design/articles/design_engineering_the_next_step.html

- Interaction designers
- Design engineers
- Production engineers

Simplify Things

- Gordon Ramsey – *Ramsey's Kitchen Nightmares* (BBC)
- Focus on something and be the best at it

Resource Concerns

- Overwhelming amount of information
- Too many possibilities
- Tool focus as opposed to task focus
- Lack of community focus
- Domain focus

Someone in a completely unrelated discipline may have just what you need

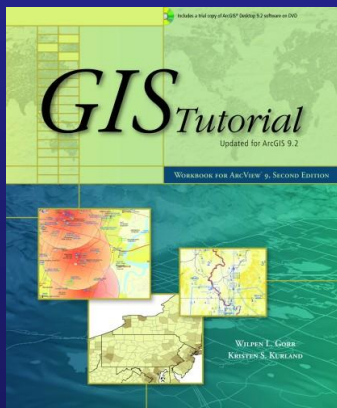
Needs

- Interaction with others in same situation (something in common)
- I need something from here, something from there - how do I put it all together?
- Just help me get started...
- Shared experience

I'm not alone

What Do We Have Now?

- GIS forums
- Online help
- General web search
- Conferences
- Books
- Blogs
- Colleagues



- How useful are they?
- How are they useful?
- What experience do you have with these or other resources?

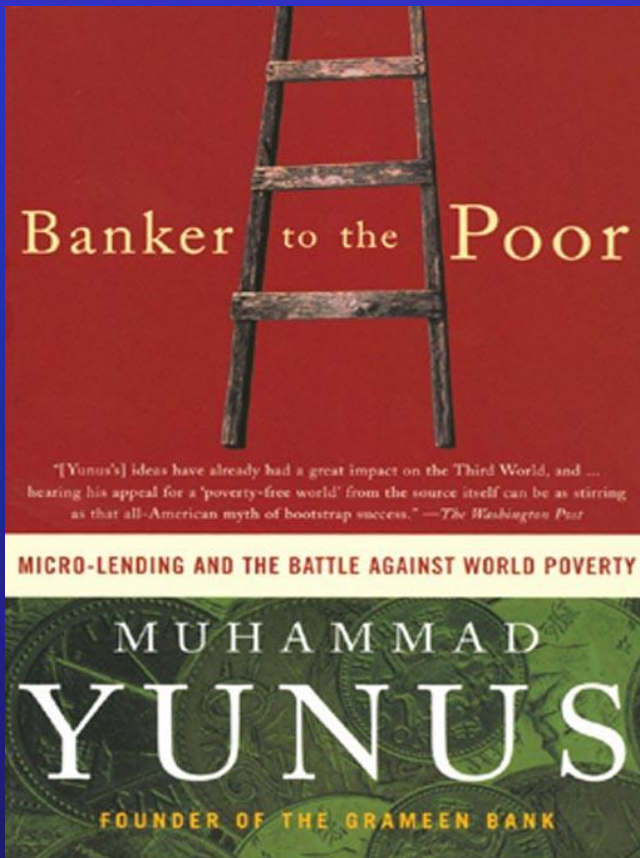
What Can We Do?

- Gather feedback
- Establish network - critical mass of people with relevant knowledge and common situation
- Provide a neighborhood
- Develop web resources
- Produce publications

Tom Nolan's Recommendations

- Experience
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Patience
- Persistence

Muhammad Yunus



- Creator of micro-credit
- Borrowers must organize themselves into groups of five like-minded people
- Trust is critical

“Beg, borrow, steal”

and

Contribute