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Note from the President

Steve Scheepmaker
URISA BC President 2010

The BC Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA BC) is very excited to bring you our 2010 spring newsletter.

In October of 2009, URISA BC hosted an event titled 'The Changing Face of GIS'. With a great line-up of speakers there was plenty of thought-provoking content. What I really took away from that event was that the expectations of the user have changed around both the content of their maps and the functionality of the tools used to access them. While there is still a place for that coveted web-based version of the desktop GIS application, use-centric maps coupled with easy to use tools are what many users are now expecting. If you are interested in the presentation materials from any of our past events, you can find them on the URISA BC website (www.urisabc.org).

The first URISA BC event of the year will be held on May 20th and is titled "The Implications of Open Data for GIS and more". With many Open Data initiatives being launched by various levels of government, this is not only a new and exciting advancement for GIS, but potentially the beginning of a

much larger transformation – the larger "Open" movement could very well lead to changes in the way governments provide services and ultimately engage citizens in the future. With the incredible advances in technology, coupled with the wide availability of data, the stage is set for some truly amazing innovation!

If you have any ideas for seminar topics, or a presentation that you would like to share at a future URISA BC event, the URISA BC Executive would love to hear from you! Please contact a member of the URISA BC Executive committee directly or email us at info@urisabc.org.

OPEN DATA IN ACTION

Interested in seeing an Open Data initiative in action? Here is a quick list (not exhaustive) of just a few of the many Open Data initiatives across North America:

CANADA

- District of North Vancouver (geoweb.dnv.org/data)
- Edmonton (data.edmonton.ca)
- Kamloops (webserver.kamloops.ca/imf/sites/DataDownload/disclaimer.html)
- Nanaimo (nanaimo.ca/datafeeds)
- Province of British Columbia (geobc.gov.bc.ca)
- Surrey (cosmos.surrey.ca)
- Toronto (toronto.ca/open)

- Vancouver (data.vancouver.ca)

UNITED STATES

- New York (www.nyc.gov/html/datamine)

Seminar Sponsors



BCIT Scholarship

URISA BC was pleased to present the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, BC Chapter, Pacific Institute of Cartographers Award to Paul Couch at the March 18, 2010 BCIT Graduating Awards Ceremony. Paul completed the Geographic Information Systems program at BCIT in the spring of 2009 and has gone on to a challenging career automating GIS processes through Open Source technologies.



Surrey's Road to Open Data

When the City of Surrey first started providing digital data to the public over ten years ago our goals and challenges were quite different than they are today. We were working through questions such as 'Should we charge for our data by file size, number of features, fixed rate for entire layer, or something else?' We also asked ourselves if we should be charging at all. At that time in the 1990's, it was determined that staff needed to recuperate time

spent providing this service. As the requests for data increased, we looked for efficiencies and decided to make the data available online through our web mapping application COSMOS, leveraging technology to offset increased demand was the idea at that time. We invested in a sophisticated system having many integration points including a payment system, secure file download system, data extract software, and of course COSMOS. Self service yes, but when there was a glitch, it was a headache. Last fall we removed the cost portion of downloading data from COSMOS which simplified the process, however, you still have to know how to use a web mapping application in order to gain access to downloadable data. This coming June 7th, the City will be launching a new version of COSMOS that will no longer include a data export feature. Instead we are providing spatial data through a simple web page where users can download a range of datasets (e.g. Water/San/Drainage Infrastructure, property data, etc.) covering the entire extent of the City in one zip file. Several data formats will be available with no restrictions on the use of the data. The City of Surrey is committed to providing Open Data and over time we will strive to provide additional datasets and formats (e.g. KML, streaming services, etc.) We may not be the first municipality to go down this

road (e.g. Vancouver, Nanaimo, North Vancouver), but we're certainly not the last!

2010 Executive

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Any suggestions or comments on the newsletter please e-mail me at news@urisabc.org

Happy GISing!