Note from the President

Dan Tancon
URISA BC President 2012

URISA BC is thrilled to bring you our first newsletter of 2012. The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association - British Columbia Chapter, URISA BC, is run by a group of executive members from both the public and private sectors. One of our primary objectives is to hold thought provoking seminars once or twice a year to engage industry professionals in dialogue on topics of interest with an opportunity for attendees to network and share ideas.

In January of 2011 we held a seminar on GIS technology inviting industry experts to showcase their experiences and ideas on the use or potential use of some leading edge technologies. In our call for papers, we received many responses related to social media, mobile, data collection methodologies and virtual reality. It was a well-attended event and received some very positive feedback.

A number of open data initiatives have been implemented within BC since 2009 and URISA BC held a seminar on the subject in 2010. Our next seminar, on February 16th, entitled "Open Data – So What!" will focus on positive impacts, issues uncovered and what we can expect in the coming years. We have assembled an excellent line up of speakers who will share their experiences on the subject and we will finish off the day with a panel discussion providing an excellent opportunity for the audience to participate in the dialogue. For more details on this and past seminars, please visit the URISA BC website at http://www.urisabc.org/events.htm

Another responsibility of URISA BC is to give back to the community by supporting our educational institutions through bursary and scholarship endowments. An award will be presented on behalf of URISA BC later this month at the BCIT Winter Convocation to some lucky recipient who shall remain anonymous until the awards ceremony.

As for ongoing changes within URISA BC, we have added some new faces to the executive team over the past year. Welcome to Steve Mark of ICIS, Tony Chow of IMAGINiT Technologies and Rachel Browne from the City of North Vancouver. We will also be modifying the look and feel of our website in the coming months. Designed and developed by our own URISA executive, the new site will be launched by early spring 2012. Having recently enabled TWITTER on our existing site we will be looking to integrate other social media tools with the new site. We encourage your feedback on social media preferences and feel free to provide your thoughts on topics for future events at http://www.urisabc.org/contact.htm

In closing I would like to note that without the support and dedication of a very skilled group of URISA executives the seminars, newsletters, registration and website administration would not exist. Thanks to all those who support URISA BC and what this organization represents.

Seminar Sponsors

Vancouver continues to grow its Open Data site

Vancouver first launched its Open Data site (http://data.vancouver.ca) in September 2009, about three months after City Council passed a motion encouraging staff to do so. The number of datasets originally released was very small, formats were limited, and updating was not as good as it needed to be. In January 2010, the City launched the second version of the site with many more datasets, more formats, weekly updating, improved ease of use, and one click Google Map and Bing Map mapping.

Initially the data available through the site was almost exclusively geospatial in nature reflecting the data already displayed to the public in VanMap. However over time, both the nature of the data and the formats have broadened. Below are some of the changes that have occurred since the second launch.

New formats:
The initial formats focused on XLS, DWG and SHP. Since then, we have branched out. Most of the geospatial datasets are now available in DWG, SHP, and KML. Other formats now available for one or more but not all datasets include CSV, ECW, XML, JSON, Mr. SID, and JPG. GeoJSON is coming soon. The decision about what formats to support is dependent in part on the feedback we get from those who access the site. For the non-raster sites, we use FME products extensively to create the formats that we do not normally use in-house.

New data:
Since the May 2010 URISA BC session on Open Data, a number of datasets have been added to the Open Data site. These include

- 2009 and 2006 orthophotos (Vancouver is one of the few Open Data sites that releases its orthophotos)
- Elevation points
- Web cams
- Food vendor locations
- Drinking fountain data improvements
- Business licenses issued by the City including geocoding
- Bike lane usage
- Council expenses
- Parks listing
- 3-1-1 Call Centre data
- Election 2011 voting divisions, voting locations, and results
- Animal control inventory data (multiple datasets)
- Vancouver street trees

Clearly the Council expense data and the bike lane usage data support the broader open government direction as well as simply open data. Forthcoming are about 20 more datasets from VanMap and other data. Follow this link for the complete article in GeoPlace.

2012 Executive

Our current executive committee consists of:

President – Dan Tancon, Dan.Tancon@gvrd.bc.ca
Vice-President – TBA, .
Treasurer – Kathleen Kewley, Kathleen.Kewley@autodesk.com
Secretary – Ken Johansson kjohansson@crd.bc.ca
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Member - James Andrusiw, jandrusiw@coquitlam.ca
Member – Jonathan Mark, jonathan.mark@vancouver.ca
Member – Steve Scheepmaker, sscheepmaker@tol.bc.ca
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Member – Ray Cordoni, rcordoni@richmond.ca
Member – Rachel Browne rbrowne@cnv.org
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Member – Tony Chow, achow@rand.com

Happy GISing!