

Note from the President

Sean Simpson
URISA BC President 2008-2009

The BC Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, URISA BC, is pleased to bring you our second newsletter of the year. The URISA executive is comprised of GIS professionals from different sectors of the industry including municipal, private, provincial, RCMP and education who volunteer their time to coordinate seminars and promote information sharing.

In just over a week we are hosting a seminar on October 29th called "The Changing Face of GIS". We are very pleased to be bringing you a tremendous list of speakers who will explore this timely topic. Our URISA BC executive chose this theme because we felt that it reflected what many of us are experiencing within our own organizations, as well as what we are seeing elsewhere. Change can come in many forms; however, in GIS it appears to be towards simplification. Some of our presentations capture this sentiment while others focus more on what's happening right now. Several speakers will provide insight into the shift within our industry brought on by consumer mapping tools and how the

non-GIS savvy can use them, while others discuss bringing together disparate information into one system. We believe this seminar will be thought provoking and informative for all! To view the seminar program and to register for the event, please visit our website www.urisabc.org.

Last January URISA BC hosted a successful seminar on 'The New Dimension in GIS'. This well received event focused on how 3D GIS is transforming our landscape and decision making process. To view full presentation slides visit our URISA BC website.

Just as GIS has changed over the last year, so too has URISA BC. We rolled out a new web system for seminar registration, changed our president's term to coincide with calendar year permitting us to be more active year round, and introduced lightning talks at our seminars. We also saw some of our executive change and move on to new challenges, so I would like to thank Greg Allen, Carla Dresser, David Newman, and Steve Dean for all their hard work on the URISA BC executive. We would like to formally welcome a few new members, including Ken Johansson, Roy Cordoni, and Robert Schultz to our team.

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City of Vancouver Launches OpenData Web Site

In May 2009, Vancouver City Council passed a motion that embraces the principals of open data, open standards, and open source. As a result of the Open3 motion (so called because it covers open data, open standards, and open source), City staff began to put together a site to accommodate the free downloading of data.

While not a long document, it represents a significant policy direction for the City, and its core directive is seen in this excerpt:

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Vancouver endorses the principles of:

- Open and Accessible Data – the City of Vancouver will freely share with citizens, businesses and other jurisdictions the greatest amount of data possible while respecting privacy and security concerns;
- Open Standards - the City of Vancouver will move as quickly as possible to adopt prevailing open standards for data, documents, maps, and other formats of media;
- Open Source Software – the City of Vancouver, when replacing existing software or

considering new applications, will place open source software on an equal footing with commercial systems during procurement cycles.” The entire motion can be seen [here](#).

The City of Vancouver is not the first government to make data freely available (see for example www.data.gov, San Francisco, Nanaimo BC, and Washington DC with Toronto and New York coming soon). The City of Kamloops has made GIS data [available for free](#) for some time. However the City is one of the first, if not the first, to pass a formal motion to promote the principals of open data, open standards, and open source. The City is looking to be at the forefront of this new movement to make governments more transparent and to empower citizens to be more informed and to join in the process of providing services.

While the primary focus of this article is to focus on open data, it is worth mentioning that going forward, the City will look to do more with open standards (while not completely forsaking many of the “de facto” standards already in use) and will consider open source software where appropriate. It is unlikely that there will be any wholesale change to open source software as the business case for doing so may not be there and because in many cases, there are no relevant open source applications. That said, the

City is certainly looking at various open source components to work with our MapGuide web GIS environment.

GIS Data Catalog

On the data front, the City has licensed its GIS data for years with formal licensing agreements and fee structures as well as provisions for making it available for free to certain clients. In recent years, the proportion of clients receiving data for free has increased along with proposals being made to move to a free dissemination model.

City staff began to put together a site to accommodate the free downloading of data. Initially the focus was almost entirely on data already available for viewing in [VanMap](#) because of our longstanding interest in moving in this direction. Also important is the fact that some of the hurdles to making data available had already been passed because this data is publicly available in VanMap.

To bring the web site to fruition, several issues had to be addressed including:

- Decisions were required regarding what data should be made available in what formats given limited time and resources

include a mapped spatial point location.

Addresses are primarily created and maintained by local governments and First Nations who are the addressing authorities in BC. Under the AddressBC project these addressing authorities will be able to choose the most effective method to manage their addressing information by either using batch submissions of address points or using a secure web-based mapping system.

One of the main benefits to local governments and First Nations participating in AddressBC is the opportunity to streamline addressing notification, saving duplication of effort and staff time. For those that choose to use the secure web-based application a major benefit will be a fast and efficient method of managing addressing information for their area.

Throughout 2009 ESRI Canada will be working on developing the supporting database and system for AddressBC. This phase of the project will see the completion of an application that will support submission, storage and management of point address information by spring/summer 2010.

To date the [data model](#), requirements and system design have all now been finalized and development has included various applications that will form the core of AddressBC. Main

features of the system include verification of addresses against the Digital Road Atlas, as provided by GeoBC, an automated submission process, online editing capabilities and error reporting sent to the originating address authority.

It is important to note that AddressBC maintains the integrity of all data received, as authority for correcting errors or omissions remains with the source addressing authority.

AddressBC development funding is provided by the Province of BC, TELUS and Shaw Cablesystems. A Steering Committee that includes the Province of BC, TELUS and Shaw Cablesystems with advisory input from the RCMP, ECOMM and BC local government oversees the project under the direction of the ICIS Board of Directors.

More information on AddressBC can be found on the ICIS website at www.addressbc.ca. For updates and commentary on AddressBC progress, please visit the blog at www.addressbc.ca/blog and add your input.

2009 Executive

Our current executive committee consists of:

President – Sean Simpson, stsimpson@surrey.ca

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Member – Phil Bates, pbates@westvancouver.ca

Member – Jim Kennedy, yoitsjim@msn.com

Member – Ken Johansson, kjohansson@crd.bc.ca

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

Happy GISing!