

"A map is the greatest of all epic poems. Its lines and colours show the realisation of great dreams." -- Gilbert Grosvenor, Editor, National Geographic, 1903-1954

Far North Queensland GIS User Group Inc

FUNGIS NEWSLETTER

4th Quarter 1999



Chairperson's Report
Terry Webb

Why take on the role of president of FUNGIS?

Why should I commit more time than the 28 hours a day already signed away?

For me there have to be two reasons :-

1. I believe in the cause; and
2. There's something in it for me.

I believe GIS is one of very few industries where competing interests work together. FUNGIS is a group that exemplifies this approach. Through projects such as helping establish the Data Sharing Co-operative FUNGIS is making a tangible difference to the region.

From its beginning dealing with technical issues, and sharing data locally, FUNGIS has developed to be recognised state wide as a reference and lobby group.

GIS (or whatever you want to call it now) is an industry undergoing rapid change. I want to see FUNGIS helping its members during this change. With the large number of members, I believe we should be able to arrange cheap training in fields that are not normally available locally (eg Placing maps in HTML pages, Database normalising).

Information is becoming more and more of a crux to modern society. While I do not believe GIS will be recognisable as a separate discipline in years to come, FUNGIS and its members will have expertise in information handling (especially spatially) that will benefit the community, and provide us with personally satisfying careers.

Data Sharing in the Far North

GIS is truly coming of age. We have evolved through the stages of opening huge boxes of high tech computer equipment and installing unknown software to the current situation where sophisticated, powerful, yet easy to use GIS software is available on common desktop computers. GIS professionals and technicians have also developed a wide range of expert skills and knowledge to the point where GIS understanding and terminology easily rolls off the tongue and is readily understood. The education system has embraced GIS and the older generations of tomorrow eagerly absorb today's ever-increasing technologies.

Gone also are the endless days of primary data capture, of weeks hunched over monstrous digitising tables and pawing over draft plots to check line-work and attributes. Data today is captured more readily by scanners and GPS and even more importantly by someone else. Other peoples GIS's are the single most valuable source of data for our own data hungry systems. Sure we all have our "own" (custodial) data sets which we must capture and maintain but invariably and increasingly the worth of these data are greatly increased through integration with other data sets.

Why then does GIS fail to flourish and proliferate across the desktop's of our organisations?

DATA, DATA, DATA – like the Position, Position, Position of the real estate industry, if you don't got it, you ain't got nothing. It is becoming increasingly easy to sell the concepts of GIS and integrated information tools to our colleagues and managers. Pilot studies and GIS applications abound yet few get into serious production and wide spread operation. Gaps in data, formats of data, cost of data, custodial legalities, data access hoops and just knowing that data exists are a few of the impediments we face in trying to get GIS out of the technology elite backrooms of organisations.

Light at the end of the tunnel?? In early 1998 the FUNGIS Executive began discussing the need for more open data sharing and improved data accessibility in the region. A couple of discussion papers were presented to the Executive and an open forum at the 1998 FUNGIS AGM focussed on the issue of improving data accessibility. A further "Data Access Structure Forum" was held in June 1999 to promote the first concept model of a Data Sharing "Co-operative" for the Far North area and to gauge local GIS community interest in such a project. Local support and enthusiasm for the concept was received from private, industry and government GIS users. The initial model was then presented, discussed and further refined at the 1999 FUNGIS AGM and a challenge issued to the GIS community to develop a business case and implementation plan.

The challenge was boldly accepted and the FUNGIS Executive facilitated the formation of a Data Sharing Co-op Steering Group, which has further formed a number of sub-groups to deliberate on issues of legalities, membership, data, technical operations and strategic directions. The steering group has met three times to date and made significant progress on the above issues. Members of this group are Mike Stott, Les Searle, Peter Swain, Dave Gillieson, Peter Wilson, Rob Crossley, Mark Hopp, David Kirchner, Rino Grimaldi, Bob Peever and Terry Webb. FUNGIS members are encouraged to talk with the Steering Group members to raise issues, concerns or ideas or to assist the steering group if you wish to be more directly involved.

Progress made by the Steering Group towards more available, accessible GIS data and the operation of a body to facilitate and manage this will be regularly reported through FUNGIS Executive meeting minutes, the FUNGIS newsletter and the FUNGIS web page www.trinitysoftware.com.au/fungis. So, keep your ear to the ground, your mind on the road ahead and your hands on your GIS.

by Peter Wilson
Natural Resource Information Management Officer
Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 1785 MAREEBA Qld 4880
E-mail wilsonp1@dnr.qld.gov.au

FUTURE OF GIS

Those of you who attended the FUNGIS Seminar this year will remember Robert's captivating talk on his thoughts about the future of GIS. Echoes of that presentation reverberated all the way to the USA, prompting online newsletter "Spatial News" to ask permission to publish his notes on their site. I have included below a couple of extracts of that presentation for your interest. The entire article can be read at <http://www.spatialnews.com/features>

(First Extract...)

Introduction

For a start, let's stop talking about GIS. I believe that what we perceive to be GIS now will only be a small part of the technology we use. The software we will be using will have a much broader application base than the systems we sit in front of each day. A better term would be spatially enabled software, or spatial software for short.

So, how does one predict the future? If I really knew I wouldn't be here, I'd be betting on horses. I was once exposed to methods that were supposed to enhance your capabilities. About 5 years ago in another life, I worked for a multinational consultancy. We spent one day of our own time doing a visioning exercise to see where the company was going. In one exercise we drew pictures of where we thought we would be in 10 years time. Quite a few of us drew barely recognisable pictures of us working away on laptops under palm trees, connected to the office by mobile communications. About a year ago, I tried it, and frankly it's quite uncomfortable. Sand in the keyboard and being surrounded by semi-naked backpackers were quite distracting.

I wrote the first draft of these notes sitting on a rock ledge meters from a coral reef. I used a notepad (the old fashioned type) and a pen. I then typed it into my computer when I got back to the office. Why? During the previous weekend my mobile phone got wet when out fishing and it no longer works. I wasn't going to risk my laptop in a sea kayak.

At this point you may well ask what has this got to do with GIS products, but I just wanted to point out that having the technology will not automatically change the way that people do things. Visions of the brave new electronic world sometimes forget this, and whatever the technologists envisage may not happen because of people factors.

(...Second Extract)

Attitudes

Another big impact on the products we see now been caused by the change in attitudes of software developers. Software developers and GIS professionals ignore users at their own peril. Users will not tolerate being treated like fools for so long.

Hands up how many people remember having a word processing group that you had to hand your typing into, have it filed into a jobs list and then wait for it to be done? Now hands up who do have a word processing group in their organisation, and do their own typing - or don't even have a word processing group in their organisation? Perhaps you have a good word processing operator who checks the integrity of the document, tidies it up a bit etc. Anyone who cannot see the parallels with the GIS groups should give up their medication before it does any permanent damage.

In the GIS industry, MapInfo was a product that recognised this a long time ago. When I started in GIS, I deliberately chose a product that worked on affordable platforms (actually I had little choice), and even the DOS version was simpler to use than its competitors. At the time, it was scoffed at by "serious" GIS users, who said it couldn't do everything that their system could. The difference was that I could do what I wanted to do at an affordable price and I did not have to ask the GIS section to do it for me. Now everyone talks of empowering the users as though it was always the case, but it is a relatively recent phenomenon.

"I can imagine a small credit card that has a GPS, spatial software and the street network in its 2 terabytes of flash RAM..."

The people factor is an important factor in the adoption of new technology and thus what products become mainstream. No matter how great a gadget is, it won't become mainstream unless it fills a specific requirement or wish. Being innovative is not always profitable, as the great new gadget may be released before the people know they want it. The first company goes bust trying to market it, and then the unimaginative masses following along behind are the ones that make a success of it. Look at what has happened with satellite phones.

Conclusions

There will be a place for the traditional GIS and GIS professionals. They will be needed to bring the spatial data together, produce maps (yes there will still be a need for printed material

FUNGIS HAS STRONGLY PROMOTED THE USE (OR IS IT ABUSE?) OF GIS IN SCHOOLS DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS. THIS YEAR SCHOOLS HAVE ASKED FOR REAL LIFE PROJECTS TO WORK ON. APPROXIMATELY A DOZEN PROJECTS WERE IDENTIFIED BY LOCAL ORGANISATIONS INCLUDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT, STATE GOVERNMENT, AND COMMUNITY GROUPS. LOCAL SCHOOLS PARTICULARLY TRINITY BAY SHS AND TRINITY ANGLICAN SCHOOL TACKLED THESE PROJECTS WITH GREAT ZEST. IN THE END PROJECTS WERE COMPLETED WITH BENEFITS TO THE STUDENTS, THE ORGANISATIONS THEY WERE SUPPORTING, AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. JUDGING BY THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECTS THIS YEAR, WE SHOULD EXPECT MORE PRODUCTIVE LINKS WITH SCHOOLS IN FUTURE. THANKS GO ESPECIALLY TO JAN CARR AND TONY DAWSON FOR "EFFORTS AND VALOUR BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY"



GIS DAY WILL BE HELD NOVEMBER 19, THE LAST DAY OF GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK (NOVEMBER 15-19), AND IS SPONSORED BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF GEOGRAPHERS AND ESRI.

SINCE 198, THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY HAS SPONSORED GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK TO PROMOTE GEOGRAPHIC LITERACY IN SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES, AND ORGANISATIONS, WITH A FOCUS ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

THE GIS DAY CELEBRATION IS A GRASS-ROOTS EVENT THAT FORMALISES THE PRACTICE OF GIS USERS AND VENDORS OPENING THEIR DOORS TO SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO SHOWCASE REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY ABOUT HALF A MILLION GIS USERS IN THE WORLD, BUT MOST OF THE PUBLIC IS UNAWARE OF THIS GROWING TECHNOLOGY.

USED TO SOLVE PROBLEMS IN SUCH AREAS AS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, POLLUTION, HEALTH CARE, LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCES, CONSERVATION, BUSINESS EFFICIENCY, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL INEQUITIES, GIS PROVIDES A UNIFYING FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING AND UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD AROUND US. COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, K-12 SCHOOLS, CITIES, AND PRIVATE INDUSTRIES ARE PARTICIPATING IN GIS DAY, GIVING THE GENERAL PUBLIC AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HOW GIS TECHNOLOGY IS APPLIED IN MANY INTERESTING AND EXCITING WAYS.

CADASTRAL DATA PRICE REDUCTION

The new pricing and distribution policy for Digital Cadastral data from the Department of Natural Resources commenced on 1 July 1999. For the period to the end of October these changes have generated great interest in Queensland and interstate. More than 420 information kits have been supplied and more requests are being received each week as more people find out about the change.

By the end of October there are 2 whole of State distributors with three other distributors for large areas of rural Queensland. Negotiations are continuing with other parties interested in whole of State Distributor /value adder licenses.

More than 80 licenses have been issued. Most have been issued to Local Government. A number of new licenses have been issued to private companies who have never had a supply of DCDB data before.

There are a number of different license categories with separate prices. A Distributor / Value Adder license is available as a once off, quarterly reissue or monthly update and for whole of State ranges in cost from \$105,000 to \$125,000 with a minimum fee of \$200. This is proving to be the most popular type of license by a big margin. Licensees are able to do what they like with the data subject to licensing conditions and do not have to pay royalties on distribution of the data or any products containing the data.

Internal purpose licenses are available and cost between \$70,000 to \$105,000 for whole of State data. Under these licenses the data or products derived from the data, cannot be sold although hard-copy maps can be given away for free. A few Local Governments have adopted this arrangement.

At this point in time, the new policy on pricing and distribution has to be judged as a success.

The Department has achieved a significant decrease in price from \$1.6 million for whole of State data to \$105,000 while maintaining income flows with greater use of this infrastructure data.



**FUNGIS XMAS
BREAKUP
Friday 19th Nov.**

Party at Webby's place

A chance for new and old faces to mix and relax. Afternoon nibbles / drinks. A pool for the kids. All members and family welcome.

Location Terry and Davida Webbs home

3 Kurrajong Street, Earlville

Time 4:30

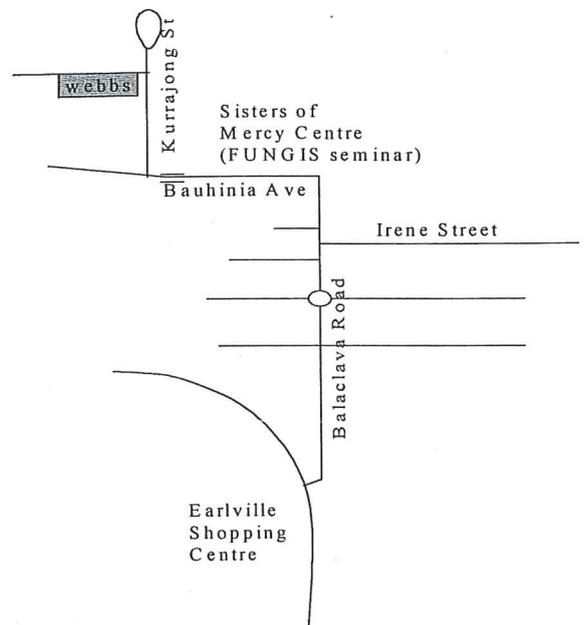
Afternoon nibbles / drinks / swim

FUNGIS providing nibbles

BYO drinks

7:30 Shared pizza for those that want to stay on later

RSVP terryp.webb@env.qld.gov.au or Phone 4052 0570



If you'd like further information regarding any of these articles or you would like to make a contribution to the newsletter you can contact Mark Hopp on 4032 3377. e-mail - cairms@braziermotti.com.au
 For membership enquiries contact Lesley Davis on 4054 7176. e-mail - ljmdavis@bigpond.com
 FUNGIS makes no guarantee as to the accuracy or completeness of information contained within this publication. The spelling mistakes are left in for people who need to correct others to make their life fulfilled.



Find out more about GIS Day 1999 at <http://www.gisday.com>

(Continued from page 2)

for a long time yet), do enquiries that aren't quite standard, do quality assurance. Spatial software will be operated by fewer GIS specialists, and more by people who want to use the system for their work rather than the GIS being the focus of their work.

This isn't the future, this is a current trend. GIS specialists that have no other skills will need to evolve into either cartographers or IT specialists who have an understanding of how the spatial data fits into the overall information management. I have been saying for some years now that the very existence of an organisation of GIS users such as FUNGIS started out being will make as much sense as an organisation of word processor operators. Now I am hearing the same thing from other people as well. Fortunately FUNGIS has been evolving as well and its role as a lobby group on issues such as data availability and exchange will keep its relevance.

More commonplace than GIS will be spatially enabled products. These products will use spatial technology to interact with databases created and maintained by using the more traditional GIS. We already see spatial data in our phone books and car systems, but it will increasingly be incorporated into other products.

For example, I can imagine a small credit card that has a GPS, spatial software and the street network in its 2 terabytes of flash RAM, and its sole purpose in life is to give you a continuous readout of where the closest McDonalds is - Worldwide. And you get one free with every purchase of 2 McHappy meals.

Who am I to say which course our future will take? If you melded concepts from Frank Herbert's Chapterhouse Dune and Tolstoy's War and Peace - something I'm sure is not done everyday - you would end up with the following view. There is an infinite number of paths our future could take from this point in time, and certain powerful figures will be trying to direct the future along a path they see or desire. However, unless there is a large worm using some mind altering substance to manipulate the future along one of those paths, the future could be more influenced by small unpredictable events that we have no way of foreseeing. The future of spatial products may be largely determined by the large corporations that are currently involved and follow the path that they have mapped out. **Then again, maybe some 14 year old kid may connect his dad's GPS to some data he got at school** and the latest Doom or Tomb Raiders development kit and come up with something that redefines the whole spatial industry.

by Robert Crossley
Trinity Software
Phone: 61-7-40314877
Fax: 61-7-40314810
e-mail: Robert.Crossley@trinitysoftware.com.au

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Cairns office,
39 Pease St (PO Box 1185)
Cairns, Queensland 4870
Australia
Ph. 61 7 4032 3377
Fax. 61 7 4032 3399
E-mail. cairns@braziermotti.com.au
Web www.braziermotti.com.au

Executive Committee Structure

The Management Committee of the Far North Queensland G.I.S. User Group has not avoided the Restructure Revolutions. With the intention of changing the role of the committee, each member now has agreed to take on specific responsibilities that will enable the combination of professional resources to exert a wider influence on what is an ever changing process of Information Management.

Issues such as

(a) the Development of a Spatial Information Infrastructure for this Region

(b) the need to increase the Role of Private Industry

(c) more effective communication with common interest user groups

(d) Promotion and Profile of the user Group

(e) our involvement with QSIC have caused a change of focus for the Management Committee, and as it is always the intention to address what is hopefully the best interest of all members, the subsequent Restructure should accommodate what is required. All members should note their nominated Executive member and are encouraged to make contact. Please forward any issues through these members for consideration by the FNQ GIS executive.

Executive Members

Name	Role	Tasks
Terry Webb	Chairman	Chairman Committee restructure
Tony Dawson	Education	Tertiary secondary primary TAFE
Les Searle	FNQ GIS	Issues with external agencies
Robert Crossley Mark Hopp	Private industry	GIS consultants Sugar industry Survey industry CSIRO
Lisa Rutton	Communication/Promotion	Newsletter Web page
Peter Wilson	Communication/Promotion	Related groups eg. (MSIA, RAPI) GIS user groups
Terry Webb	Functions	Organise executive meetings half and 2 day seminars
Peter Swain	Government	Local State Commonwealth
Lesley Davis	Admin (paid position)	Secretarial Treasurer Membership enquiries etc.