

Podcast Review #2

(Interview with Scott Morehouse, Director of Research and Development at ESRI)

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This podcast was recorded at the first ESRI developer summit. The summit was started to reach out to persons who are using the tools ESRI is developing. It seemed important for ESRI developers to understand things from the user's perspective. It was also create to try and improve communication between private party developers and ESRI. In essence to better build the community of developers.

Scott Morehouse has been at ESRI for about 25 years when things were just getting started in the realm of customized developing. He has seen many generations of developing cycle through by today. For example, at first work was done off of a mainframe wired to 'satellite' screen interfaces where ArcInfo was first built for UNIX networking. Then it moved to a more individual interaction, when PCs for Windows when Windows became popular. This change led to ArcView being created and used widely. And currently both user interface types have led to the present day ArcGIS. It is a combination of a visual interface and full-feature GIS together.

Even today things are moving forward, and in a way cycling back to how it started in the UNIX networking environment. Now people are accessing GIS applications and data via the internet. However, as mentioned in Scott's keynote address ArcGIS was created as a development tool. And so while it is good for the building of web-based systems and employing geographic information through a different 'device' ArcGIS is still used by professionals to perform more advanced processing in addition to the content development for web-based

So, there is still a need for the desktop program, and the control needed at that level. His opinion is that the rise of web-based GIS is not going to replace desktop. In actuality, they complement each other and both will be needed well into the future. That being said, web-based will expand its offerings of advanced tools.

Scott was originally interested in GIS for developing tools to analyze agricultural and historical geographical problems. While he does not do too much actual GIS anymore, he is excited about how ArcGIS interfaces are exposing more and more people to geography and geographical concepts. And these interfaces are becoming an exciting set of tools for many people. So it is attracting more and more creative people into the fold of the geo-spatial world and being used in exciting research topics. A lot of geography work is now being done by many other persons in other disciplines. He feels it is exciting to see these opportunities to improve modern geography.