

Podcast Review #4

(Interview with Clint Brown, Director of Software Products at ESRI)

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This podcast was recorded at the first ESRI developer summit as well. The summit is a 2 day event. Summit turnout was a great surprise. Clint feels that it shows the demand for taking GIS to next level as well as getting it out to more users is high. He also talked about how GIS has always had worldwide appeal and this is shown in the diversity of the participants. The success comes from the model of enabling others to become practitioners of GIS. This shows the universal nature of GIS. While there is change from cultural setting to another a set of best practice and methods seems to cut across barriers.

GIS started out as scientific computing by professionals, analysts, and ecologists doing their own work. It is important to remember that there is still a certain segment of industry still interested in the IT and development side of GIS. While the development side will continue to grow, the capability for GIS deployment for broader use is huge. So, last decade the mainstream use was in the IT framework. But, there is still a large area of growth in geographic awareness that is and needs to continue to happen.

He is not surprised that the evolution of GIS has gone so well. A lot of people have worked hard and long throughout the years to reach today. The challenge today is to define what a developer is in today's GIS world. And best practices need to be well defined for all to understand. This is why the Summit is critical to have at this juncture so as to exploit the full potential of GIS. He was excited to see new techniques being shared and developed through this sharing.

Other important current happenings are the open source movements – common shared infrastructure and the Managed/Enterprise frameworks – such as MS or .net worlds. They have shared components and objects and are easy to access and maintain. Clint sees things becoming not so much 'open source' as shared source (samples, algorithms, etc.). ArcWeb services among others will ESRI move towards system of hosting more data, but they will still be producing core program. 400,000 orgs are currently using GIS so the demand for the program platform is still high.

Also, integration across boundaries is a new and exciting action in the GIS field. There will definitely be more data hosting, but much more than just data will be offered soon. CUAHSI is a good example of multi-organization collaboration. Clint was excited to see this happening.

He also addressed the complexity of new software development and rollout. He was humble in his admission of mistakes and errors, but identified the fact that this is just part of a development process.