

Podcast Review #6

(Main Topic: A Brief Overview of the History of GIS (A Very Spatial Podcast - Episode 3))

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Jesse joined the emcees to talk about the news. A new hot topic was the availability of public information over the internet, and how this information is being used geographically and through geospatial applications. They asked if there is a limit to the amount of information that should be available to the public. Also, there is a new extension for Mozilla Firefox to be converted to a semantic web browser. So that any blog can be flagged with keywords or locations while using Firefox as a browser.

Today's topic will focus on the history of the development of the mobile computing and mapping, and the GIS systems. In the beginning of geospatial analyses, around 1967, Roger Tomlinson created a catalog/inventory of natural resources in Canada. This was the first case where there were attributing pixels used in digital mapping. It allowed persons to look at two different layers at the same time. It also allowed the abilities to do some operations/calculations (plus, minus, and less/more).

Others were using the same technologies at the time (even though hardware was a big limitation). For example, Harvard mapping lab was also working on a project in 1968. In 1969 a company was started and was really focused on the building of the technology. Its applications were very specific and had a linear market. At the time, only geographers and landscape architects, or anyone dealing with maps, were the users of their products. Also, the cost of computers and programs were high, so only big agencies/companies were buying the software at the time. One big use was for oil exploration.

As mentioned many times before in other podcasts, the development of the desktop PC led to a more widespread proliferation of the technology. While, attributed data was the first major available data, there are also now aerial and satellite images to use for mapping or analyses.

ESRI began producing its products for geography departments at the university level. There were wise in planning and created products for grades K-12. Eventually, all levels of government began to adopt the use of GIS in their everyday operations. If a company/agency does not have GIS nowadays they are considered behind the times.

Analysis allows people to make the maps that they are desiring for their specific purposes. Even though the technologies have actually been around for quite a while, it has only been recently that it is widespread in the awareness of the mainstream of society (e.g. Google Earth). Now the data is available to many users these days for them to make their own maps and do their own analyses.

A good question that was posed was 'How will this change the concept of geography?' Obviously, the answer is still unfolding. But the digital mapping of Earth is driving the fields of geography and geospatial analysis into new frontiers. Understanding the new data types and applications will be important for many persons in many different workplaces.

They wrapped up by talking about the ESRI conference that just occurred and the success that it was for all. They identified other conferences around the world like the conference in Jakarta, Indonesia.