ILLINOIS GIS NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ILLINOIS GIS ASSOCIATION

UW - Milwaukee's Hidden Gems: American Geographical Society Library and Digital Spatial Data Clearinghouse

ByTom Brittnacher

Where does one go for digital spatial data, aerial photographs and digital maps of Wisconsin? An invaluable source can be found on the campus of the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Located in the university's Golda Meir Library, the American Geographical Society Library has a large collection of paper maps, atlases, globes and books. The library also houses the university's Digital Spatial Data Clearinghouse, a one-stop shop for digital geospatial materials.

The American Geographical Society (AGS) was founded in the 1850s, and over the following century it amassed an impressive collection of rare maps and atlases. Originally housed in the upper-Manhattan headquarters building of the AGS, the library was transferred to the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) from New York in 1978. It has since absorbed the Geography Department's map library as well.

With more than a million items, the AGS Library ranks among the largest map collections in the country. Library holdings include more than 500,000 paper maps; thousands of 20th- and 21st-century atlases and books; more than 100 globes; and several photograph collections containing nearly 500,000 images. The oldest map in the collection is Giovanni Leardo's *Mappamundi* of 1452, recently on display at the Field Museum as part of Chicago's "Festival of Maps." Also in the rare collection are atlases from the 16th - 19th centuries; Mercator's world map of 1538; coastal survey charts of Australia by Captain James Cook; the charts of Charles Lindbergh's historic trans-Atlantic flight (Figure 1); and maps used at the Paris Peace Accords following the Treaty of Versailles to determine Europe's post-World War I national boundaries.

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Northeastern Illinois County GIS Cooperative Program Update

By Richard Hilton, in cooperation with Alan Hobscheid, Bill Faedtke, Tom Nicoski, Keith Caldwell, Nicole Gattuso and Tong Zhoue

This article will provide an update on the status of cooperative work in GIS by the six counties of northeastern Illinois (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will) and other partnering counties. We've selected ILGISA as the most appropriate vehicle for sharing information about our work with other public sector and non-profit organizations. In additon to our last status report in the Summer 2006 *Illinois GIS Notes* and presentations by participating counties at the last three ILGISA conferences, updates are provided via the ILGISA website at **www.ilgisa.org**.

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Ruminations from the Desk of a Man with Three Hats

By Keith Caldwell

Here's an interesting note, Kerry St.Pé is the only keynote speaker who has been invited back for a second address. When Mr. St.Pé first spoke to our organization in the spring of 2004, we heard about the importance of the coastal wetlands in the Barataria–Terrebonne National Estuary (BTNE). The information he imparted was educational and insightful as to the plight of the loss of the wetlands.

Little did anyone know just how important these resources are. For later that year hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Cost, causing unheard of loss of life and property—and a loss of a way of life.

Mr. St.Pé's keynote address at last fall's conference provided us with an update on the region. It was with renewed interest that we learned of the challenges the BTNE Program faces in its restoration work, while at the same time learning of the struggles that the people who live there face to hold onto their way of life and culture. We also learned of the competing draws for government funds common to any undertaking of this magnitude.

As before, Mr. St.Pé address was filled with charm and warm humor. In this issue of *Illinois GIS Notes* you can read an interview with him and learn more about the challenges facing his important work.

Also in this issue you can learn from our Executive Secretary, Tracy Rogers, what it takes to put together our conferences. She shares with us some of the myriad considerations she has to take into account—from choosing a facility that can accommodate our size to estimating meal and banquet needs to assessing A/V requirements—all the while keeping a close eye on costs. Tracy, working with ILGISA's Board of Directors, does a terrific job with this challenging task. I'm sure you'll find this "behind the scenes" article informative.

Enjoy this edition of *GIS Notes*!

Keith Caldwell is the Editor of "Illinois GIS Notes," Past President of ILGISA and Interim GIS Manager of the Lake County GIS/Mapping Division .

Dick Vraga Recognized with 2007 ILGISA Service Award

Dick Vraga, of the U.S. Geological Survey received the ILGISA Service Award at the fall conference for outstanding and exemplary work within the GIS user community in Illinois and for his efforts to support ILGISA. Dick began his career in 1979 following his graduation from the University of Wisconsin with a B.S. in Cartography. He began working for the Federal Government as a Technical Assistant in the Water Resources Division of USGS and was later hired by the Defense Mapping Agency. He soon moved to a position with the USGS, where he has remained for the last 27 years.

In 2003, Dick became the USGS Geospatial Liaison for Illinois and Wisconsin as part of the USGS Eastern Region Mapping Operations Team. Since that time he has been actively involved in expanding the National Spatial Data Infrastructure by working closely with partners within Illinois and Wisconsin. As the official ISGS Mapping Liaison for Illinois and Wisconsin from 2003 to 2006, Dick solidified a strong relationship between the many state and local governmental agencies within the State of Illinois and the USGS. This led to the development of a full-time Illinois Liaison, appointed in 2006. This individual continues to work closely with Dick on the issues impacting GIS communities in the Midwest. In 2005 Dick was instrumental in securing 2005 orthoimagery for the entire State of Illinois, and has worked tirelessly in finding potential funding partners. In his continuing efforts on behalf of GIS in Illinois, he has worked to secure additional grant funding for the Illinois Clearinghouse activities, and for the geospatial program activities in Illinois.

Notes from the Desk of Chris McGarry

ILGISA President 2007-2008

It really is amazing how little time has passed since I was fumbling for words in an awkward attempt to explain what GIS is to friends and family. Today, GIS is all around us. From web-based mapping, to in-car navigation systems, to sophisticated scientific and business analysis, GIS is everywhere.

Many of you, like me, came to GIS through non-IT related fields. We are a fascinating hodgepodge of professionals including civil engineers, wildlife ecologists, city planners, geologists, and classically trained geographers. Each of us brings a unique perspective to this discipline, and each has something to contribute to our community of professionals.

As a community, we rarely need to justify that organizations should be using geospatial technologies anymore; now the task is how to leverage those data and technologies—a task that seems to be more complex on a daily basis.

The role of GIS as mapping and geospatial data creation software is as important as ever. Part of the challenge of today's GIS is the high expectation of data quality and availability. The demand for newer, more accurate data is palpable when users complain of stale imagery in Internet mapping services from providers such as Google or Microsoft. Developing or modifying business practices to ensure timely update of dynamic data can be a difficult task, both technically and politically.

As GIS data have become more prevalent, the types of analytical questions being asked have grown proportionally. Merely having a map depicting the location of a specific type of crime is a great tool. How about showing how the weighted center of mass for these crimes has changed location during the last year?

With additional information, come additional questions. And we need to be sure to have the technical understanding and analytical methods to be able to answer them.

GIS has evolved from "specialized mapping software" and joined the ranks of the mission-critical business infrastructure. GIS is uniquely positioned within this infrastructure to act as far more than mapping software, but rather an integration platform—tying together all the other spatially-related data within the enterprise.

The IS portion of GIS can be exciting—and intimidating. Adding the general information technology lingo to the alphabet soup of TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms) in the GIS world can make one's head spin. How prepared is any one of us to tackle the challenges put before us when bringing GIS into the dynamic world of the IT enterprise?

The task of remaining current with data compilation and mapping techniques, analytical methods, and enterprise IT infrastructure is daunting, if not impossible. This is how the role of ILGISA in the development of our collective skills is so very important, both as a student and a teacher. Within this diverse community, we are able to explore how others have struggled, both with and without success, to achieve their goals. And we are able to elaborate on our own stories of progress. The wisdom gained from our collective experiences prepares us to accomplish our objectives.

ILGISA can only function as designed if we truly behave as a community, and that means participation. I would like to challenge you to get involved. Ask that nagging question after the presentation. Moderate a session. Share your story of how you solved a problem. Participate in a conference planning committee. In short, become a participating community member. Please contact the ILGISA Executive Secretary, Tracy Rogers, at **tlrogers@niu.edu** for more information.

This is an exciting time to be a GIS professional and I believe there is a bright future for GIS in the state of Illinois.

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The Digital Spatial Data Clearinghouse Collection

The AGS Library houses more than just 'hard-copy' materials, however. The library's collection of maps and data in digital format can be found in the Digital Spatial Data Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse contains roughly 15,200 datasets on computer hard drives, with a total memory of about 156 gigabytes. There are also thousands of TIFF images of scanned maps, totaling about 670 gigabytes, and approximately 54 cubic feet of CDs and DVDs. Typical file formats include ESRI's shapefiles; computer-aided design files; and raster images, including remote sensing imagery and digital elevation models.

The collection has worldwide coverage, with a major focus on the Milwaukee metropolitan area and Wisconsin. The majority of data requests are for information pertaining to Milwaukee and southeastern Wisconsin. However, it is not unusual to receive requests for data covering Chicago, St. Louis or other large American cities. Most non-Wisconsin-area datasets are state- or nation-wide in scope. Popular dataset requests include base map information such as roads, rivers, lakes, parks and city boundaries; the Milwaukee property database (MPROP); property boundaries (parcels); U.S. Census data; land use and zoning; land cover and vegetation; flood plains; and environmental corridors.

The AGS Library collection also includes a wide range of aerial photographs, including historical photos of the Milwaukee area. Non-rectified aerial photos of Milwaukee County taken between 1936 and 1985 have been scanned and geo-referenced for use in GIS software. Orthophotos produced by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission are available for 1995, 2000 and 2005, but can only be redistributed to UWM students, faculty and staff for educational purposes.

The collection continues to grow as staff members collect and archive digital data files from federal, state and local government agencies and private vendors. The Digital Spatial Data Librarian can also acquire data on request, (within reason). University students and professors often donate personal research files as well as files collected as part of their work. In these cases, permission must be granted by the data originator for redistribution by the AGS Library. Often permission is granted on the condition that the datasets be distributed to UWM affiliates only.

Digital Data Distribution

The digital data clearinghouse serves the students, faculty and staff of UWM by providing data for class projects, thesis work and research. Digital data files are also available to the general public for non-educational purposes, except where restricted by license agreements.

More than 6,400 datasets were distributed last year, many to UWM students and faculty from the Geography, Urban Planning, Architecture, Conservation and Environmental Science, and Civil Engineering departments. Other departments such as Anthropology and Health Sciences are beginning to use GIS as a tool to map everything from archeological

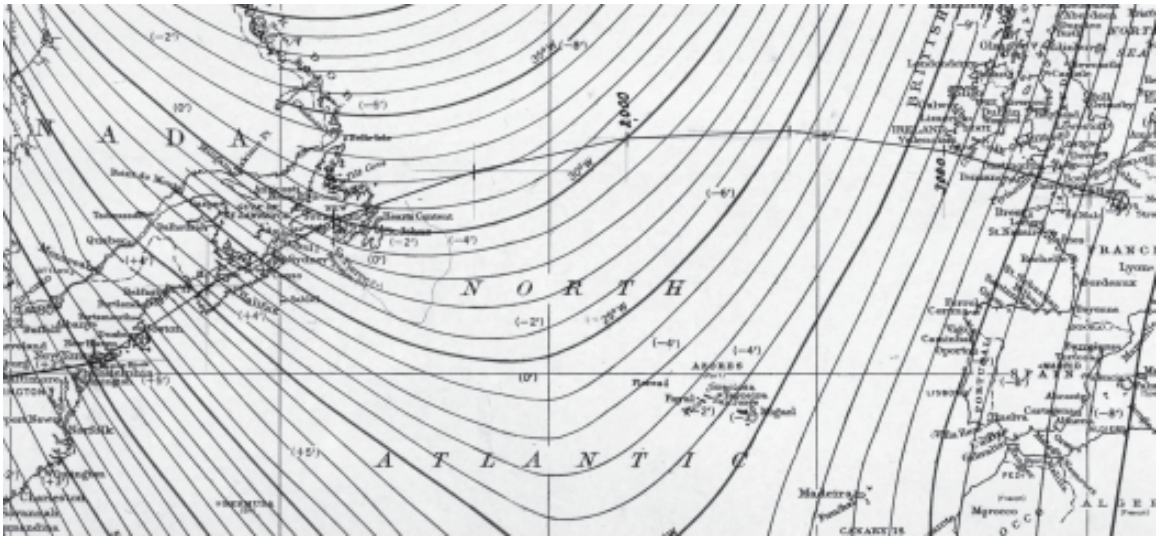

Figure 1. "Variation of the Compass" map on which Charles Lindbergh plotted his course.

digs to primate diseases. Engineers and urban planners from across the country have also contacted the library seeking Milwaukee area datasets.
In most cases the data files are distributed on CD or DVD ($3.00 for UWM affiliates; $6.00 for the general public). However, PantherFile, UWM's file transfer protocol (FTP) site, has become a great tool to transfer non-licensed and non-copyright-protected data to patrons free of charge on a request-by-request basis.

Additional Services Provided by the Clearinghouse

Currently five students in addition to the Digital Spatial Data Librarian work in the AGS Library as part of the clearinghouse. Their primary task is to process patron requests, but their work also includes acquiring, organizing and processing data. Typical projects include scanning and geo-referencing aerial photos, re-projecting databases and inventorying large datasets. They also gather metadata, or data about data, which provides crucial information about the dataset's creator, creation method, uses/limitations, distribution restrictions and field descriptions, as well as technical information, such as projection, datum, situational date and bounding coordinates.

In addition to distributing datasets in native formats, clearinghouse staff members process data to meet patrons' needs. Spatial data files can be re-projected, clipped or converted to other formats; aerial photographs can be cropped to a study area; or feature classes can be extracted from geodatabases. For more complex requests, patrons consult with the Digital Spatial Data Librarian.

Clearinghouse staff members also scan and plot paper maps in the AGS Library collection. The library's paper maps do not circulate, but instead are scanned and delivered in either electronic or paper format. The library has a 42-inch-wide Colortrac 4280e manual feed scanner and a large format (60 inch) Hewlett Packard HP DesignJet 5500ps plotter. Most maps are scanned at 300dpi, and TIFF file sizes range from about 60 to 400 megabytes on average. TIFF is used as the archival format due to its "lossless" compression and general compatibility. Although JPEGs have smaller file sizes, their compression is "lossy," thus reducing functionality and clarity.

Copyright-protected maps are scanned at the full 300dpi resolution for archival purposes, but are delivered to the patron at a usable 100dpi, which restricts patrons from plotting out high-resolution copies on their own. Another option is for the patron to receive only a portion of the map, but at full resolution. Similarly, copyright-protected maps are plotted at a smaller size than the original, usually less than half the size, or a portion of the map can be plotted at full size and resolution.

The current fee for map scanning is $7.50 per half hour for UWM affiliates; $15.00 per half hour for the general public. Images of previously scanned maps are $5.00 (UWM affiliates) or $10.00 (general public). Plotting is $1.35 per square foot for everyone.

Online Digital Library

Most map scans are archived for future use. Each map image is stored, entered into a Microsoft Access database and added to the UWM library's online catalog, PantherCat. In addition to scanning for patron requests, AGS Library staff scans and plots damaged or brittle maps so that plotted copies can be placed in the general collection for handling, and the originals can be encapsulated and/or stored in the rare materials room.

Map images continue to be added to an Online Digital Map Collection. Recently implemented, this web-based tool for searching and viewing maps allows library users to see maps in the collection after hours. The web interface, which uses ContentDM software, allows for keyword searching and high-resolution viewing with zoom and pan functions. The collection contains JPEG2000 format versions of the original TIFF images. The images cannot be directly downloaded at this time; however, they can be purchased online for $5.00 (UWM affiliates) or $10.00 (general public). The first iteration of this digital library includes copyright-free maps only, primarily of Milwaukee and Wisconsin.

The collection will be expanded over time as more maps are scanned. The Digital Map Collection is part of a larger website containing items in the AGS Library photography collection and other scanned materials in the UWM libraries. These items can be viewed at **http://www.uwm.edu /libraries/digilib/agsl/index.html**.

The AGS Library is located at 2311 E. Hartford Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The library is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, year-round except holidays. For more information, call (414) 229-6282, or visit the website at http://www.uwm.edu/libraries/agsl/.

Tom Brittnacher is the Digital Spatial Data Librarian for the AGS Library atUniversity of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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The six northeastern Illinois county GIS Managers, meeting in late 2005, developed a set of goals we wanted to achieve together. These goals are explained in more detail on the ILGISA website referenced above. Briefly, the major goals include the following:

- Standardize data that we provide to public safety and other agencies so that GIS data from neighboring counties are consistent in structure and attribution and can be used together immediately and seamlessly.
- Involve other county GIS Managers in Illinois and neighboring states wishing to participate in our cooperative work.
- Collaborate in supporting regional public safety applications and provide mutual GIS assistance to each other if needed in an emergency.
- Explore the possibility of cooperative data development projects that would result in cost savings for participants and support consistent core data creation for the region.
- Continue ongoing sharing of experiences for mutual benefit.

The counties published a beta release of the data sharing standards they will implement for GIS data for parcels, government jurisdictional and elective boundaries, addresses, road centerlines and railroad centerlines. These standards were developed by workgroups that included GIS Managers and GIS Analysts from all six counties.

Earlier versions were submitted to partnering counties for their review and comment before the beta version was finalized. The beta standards document can be viewed and downloaded from the county GIS section of the ILGISA website, and is distributed as an Adobe Acrobat .PDF file. Contact information is provided there for interested parties to forward their questions or suggestions related to the beta standards document to the counties.

Find Northeastern Illinois County GIS Cooperative Program updates at www.ilgisa.org (County GIS link)

The 69-page standards document contains chapters that provide background on the effort, explain why the counties felt it was important to develop the standards and discuss the process used in more detail. The standards deal with both spatial and attribute matters.

There is no official boundary dataset for the State of Illinois or the counties of Illinois. Although these boundaries exist in some U.S. Geological Survey products and other generally available sources, none of them are sufficiently accurate for local government applications. As an example, urbanized counties typically map parcels at an intended usage scale ratio of 1:1200, whereas the U.S. Geological Survey county and state boundary data is compiled for intended usage scales ratios of 1:24,000 or 1:100,000.

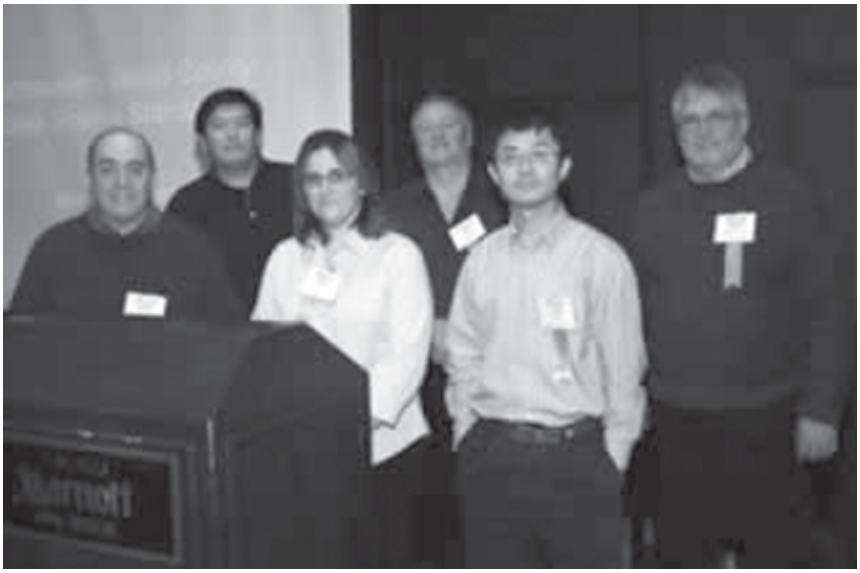
Research for the development of these standards led us to the Acts of Congress that established and finalized the State of Illinois boundary and to the acts of the Illinois State Legislature that defined the current county boundaries. These are based on a combination of Public Land Survey System (PLSS) legal description references but also on a metes and bounds approach when water bodies make up a portion of a boundary.

The counties have committed to resolving their contiguous boundaries using a field survey approach by professional surveyors. The methodology is described in the beta standards document. While this will take several years to complete, including realigning hundreds of layers to the corrected county boundaries, the result will be that spatial data from the participating counties will precisely fit and integrate seamlessly.

One of the consequences of mapping with regional consciousness is that each county's GIS Analysts and mapping technicians will adopt a standard process for consultation with neighboring counties when editing spatial data that meets a common boundary. This is a significant change from the past when each county performed all of its mapping work internally.

Feature attributes for shared data are also included in the standards. After analyzing and comparing the attribute data each county provides when sharing data, it was determined that all counties could commit to including what we called core attributes.

Beyond the core attributes, we were able to agree on standards



Fall 2007 ILGISA Conference—Northeastern Illinois County Presentation, County GIS managers, left to right: Richard Hilton (Lake County); Alan Hobscheid (Cook County); Nicole Gattuso (McHenry County);Bill Faedtke (DuPage County; Tong Zhou (Will County); Tom Nicoski (Kane County).

for additional optional attributes that may or may not be included by a particular county for a particular spatial feature. Individual counties were left free, under these standards, to also provide a third category of attributes that are unique to that county and not part of these standards.

Any existing standards or guidelines in wide use or with clear relevance were reviewed by the standards workgroups. As an example, U.S. Postal Service standards were extensively consulted when developing the address standards included in the county beta standards document. As a result, when implemented, the spatial data from participating counties will fit together precisely and will carry core attributes that follow a common standard. While this may sound simple, it was in fact a complex process to understand both what exactly needed to be done and how to go about doing it regionally.

The county GIS Managers met in December to discuss our mutual work plan for 2008. Some of the activities to be undertaken include:

- Testing the beta standards using live data.
- Making any fine adjustment needed to the beta standards based on our testing and comments received from others after reviewing the standards document on the ILGISA website.
- Continuing to provide updates on our work through ILGISA. The counties will offer a presentation at the spring conference in Springfield and will update the county information on the ILGISA website throughout the year.
- Agreeing upon a common release date for standards-compliant shared data to our existing data recipients.
- Beginning work on further standards. While the beta standards cover some important datasets, there are numerous additional topics that require standardization.
- Continuing to network with each other and increase active partnership with other interested counties.

A conference call with expanded participation that involved nine counties was held in January, 2008 and was considered useful and successful by all of the participants. This is one of several ways in which networking among county GIS Managers and staff will expand this year.

The county GIS Managers of Northeastern Illinois highly encourage all counties in Illinois as well as adjacent counties in neighboring states to join in this effort to develop standards so that data can be easily shared between agencies. Contact information can be found in the County GIS section of the ILGISA website mentioned above.

As this article is being written, the counties are in the final stages of approving a major joint data development project that will be the subject for future articles in *Illinois GIS Notes* and on the ILGISA website.

About the authors:

Richard Hilton retired in January, 2008 as the GIS Manager for Lake County after thirty three years of service. He continues to be involved in some aspects of the county cooperative program as a volunteer. Keith Caldwell has been named Interim GIS Manager of Lake County. The other county GIS Managers remain unchanged.

Wetlands, Hurricanes and Restoration in the Deep Delta

Kerry St. Pé is the Director of the Barataria–Terrebonne National Estuary Program in Louisiana and was the keynote speaker at the fall GIS in Illinois conference. This was Mr. St. Pé's second appearance before our association; the first time was prior to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. He provided an update on the critical restoration work the estuary program has been doing.

The Barataria – Terrebonne National Estuary (BTNE) covers a 4.2 million acre region and was established by congressional action in 1990. What makes this area so unique?

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary is positioned at the end of one of world's greatest rivers—the Mississippi, a river that drains two-thirds of the United States and two Canadian provinces. Aside from the incredible biological productivity of the region, it is the people that make the area so unique. The rich, cultural diversity is made up of people that can trace their lineage here for generations. The same biologic productivity has kept people here, harvesting the riches of the land. My own ancestors arrived here in 1760.

For those readers who missed your Keynote Presentation at the Fall 2007 ILGISA conference, can you give a very high level description of the problems facing the BTNE?

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary is the fastest disappearing landmass on earth. Currently, we are losing wetlands at the rate of 16 square miles per year. This has affected…everything! Drinking water supplies, storm surge protection for our communities, and our way of life are all affected negatively.

A restoration master plan for the BTNE was in place before hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Another plan was developed after that in reaction to the hurricanes. Why?

I believe that the human species is infected with an overwhelming desire to plan. Somewhere along the line we lost the implementation gene. The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program was created to develop a comprehensive restoration plan to address seven priority issues affecting the 4.2 million acres between the Atchafalaya and Mississippi rivers, a region granted national significance by the U.S. government. About 250 scientists, farmers, businesses, fishermen, environmental groups, and educators spent five years on this planning effort, successfully creating the plan through consensus in 1996.

When you create a plan, the folks participating in its development who were in favor of an idea that was not in line with the consensus opinion don't go away. They continue promoting their ideas. A particularly aggressive person might get their idea heard over that of the consensus opinion in subsequent, but closed discussions. Yet this opinion may be so far beyond what the consensus opinion is that it can not be implemented.

It takes leadership to agree to a consensus opinion. There will always be those that didn't get what they want. But do you go with the majority or do you go with the opinion of those advocating something that will change the system so drastically that it will change it into something that is unacceptable. Which has the best chance of being implemented? The answer is obvious.

I think that we have the right governor in place. I believe Governor Jindal will implement a restoration plan that is reasonably acceptable to all of our people.

What type of work is actively being done based on the approved master plan?

Most of the work of restoring our coast is being financed by a program called the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act or CWPPRA. About $70 million is available to finance coastal restoration projects on an annual basis. The need far outweighs the funds available considering the cost of restoring one barrier island was $24 million and there are myriads of needs in the internal marshes.

Additional funds, about $520 million, are available over a four-year period under programs funded through the Energy Bill. Our state has gone through a well-run project selection process to choose restoration projects for this program. The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program received $700,000 for the vegetative component of a ridge restoration project we have been working on along the coast.

The state's Master Plan sets the parameters under which all of these programs are run. Future projects must be consistent with the state's master plan.

Can you describe why indiscriminate channel digging was allowed? What impact have these channels had on the problems facing the BTNE? As I understand it, this was done primarily by oil and gas companies many years ago. What has changed since that time?

The indiscriminate channel digging was at first done at a time when we didn't value wetlands—the late 1950s. No one, or relatively few, knew of the impacts to the hydrology of our wetlands and relatively few cared. But then by the mid- to late-'60s when ecologists were sounding the alarm, the political strength of the petroleum industry was too strong to change the status quo. When the Clean Water Act of 1972 was enacted and 404 regulations were in place requiring permits for activity in the wetlands, still the political strength of oil industry was too strong to counter. Permits were given freely. It wasn't until the mid '80s to the early '90s that canals were slowed.

I fault the state and federal agencies for allowing this to happen to us. We elected the governor and the president that appointed these folks to protect our resources and they failed us. For this we are to blame. We are the government. We elect the people who make these decisions. We have no one else to blame.

The impact of these canals is to the hydrology of the wetlands. The spoil banks, mounds of earth stacked adjacent to the canals when the canal is dug, impound wetlands causing detrimental chemical changes in the soil. The marsh begins to die from the inside, opening ponds in the midst of once continuous expanses of wetlands. These ponds turn into lakes then merge into broad expanses of open water.

These canals also can create conduits for salt water pushed high up into fresh marshes by hurricanes. This can kill the freshwater marsh and cypress swamps, resulting in wetland loss.

How is it working with biologists, scientists and engineers, all of whom bring a unique perspective to problem solving, to come up with a consensus on how to best restore the BTNE?

It is easier that what you might think. The hard work was in developing to plan. Once the plan was developed, it was relatively easy—relatively.

You had mentioned that a strategy for restoring some of the 217 square miles of lost land due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita was to dredge sediment from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers. This slurry could then be delivered economically to where it is needed. Has there been broad acceptance toward this approach? If not, why?

The pipeline sediment slurry strategy is gaining momentum. There are several pipeline sediment projects scheduled for our system now and several planned. We still have a ways to go. We want to see this embraced as a full strategy for restoring our wetlands. We don't want to see to a strategy that will merely keep the marshes we have intact. We want to build them back. This will require new sediments, much more than is in river diversions. Then after we rebuild the wetlands that we once had, we can maintain them with water diversions.

*More information about the BTNE can be found at **http://www.btnep.org**. What can people do to help support the restoration work being done?*

We need national support for our restoration effort. This means that we need your senator's and congressmen's vote. Write to your elected officials.

Interview conducted by Keith Caldwell.

What Does ILGISA's Executive Director Do?

By Tracy Rogers

For many years the Illinois GIS Associations has employed an individual to run the "behind the scenes" aspects of running and managing your association. While we are only "seen" by the membership at the annual spring and fall conferences, we are always busy, working in the background to ensure that you get the most value out of your membership.

One of the primary responsibilities that I have is the coordination and management of the ILGISA conferences. This is no easy task, as it literally takes a year to plan in advance. Our needs from ten years ago have changed dramatically as our membership has grown over that time.

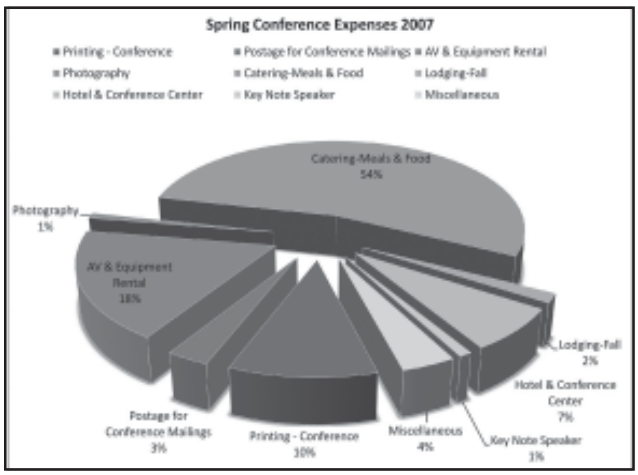
Securing the site is a major endeavor because of the amount of space that we utilize during the conference. Not many facilities have the type of space that we require—an exhibition hall, dining/banquet facilities to seat up to 500 for a sit-down luncheon, as well as four to eight sizeable break-out meeting rooms for the various workshops and sessions offered at each conference.

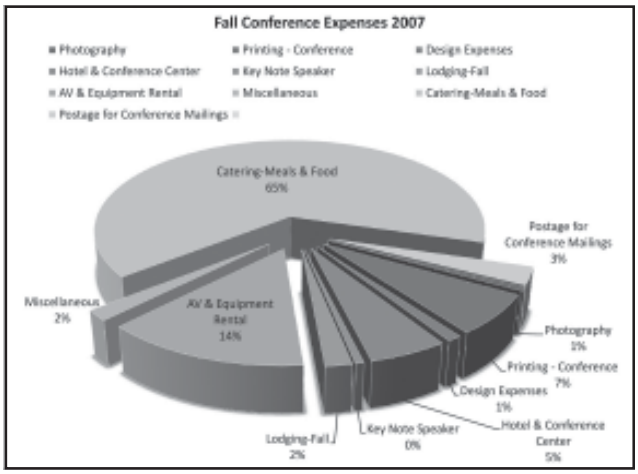
Space at the facility is not the only concern addressed when choosing a site. Meal/banquet service is also a key factor in site selection. ILGISA has been known to provide top-notch meal selections to its members, along with a tasty variety of snack breaks throughout the conference. Surprisingly, the food and beverage portion of conference expenses is the largest piece of the expense pie—and it is a piece of the pie that keeps on growing! It is 54% to 65% of your conference registration fees!

The next largest piece of the pie (14%-18%) is the costs associated with audio-visual equipment: internet connections, electricity to each and every room, projectors, screens, podiums and microphones. Believe it or not, we are charged approximately $10 - $25 per extension cord used, as well as more than $600 per LCD projector. That is per day of the conference! It all adds up. Now you understand why when we ask if you can bring your own computer and/or projector to the conference—to help cut costs!

In today's world, conference planning takes sharp negotiation skills, as well as the ability to think out of the box. As the competition for sites amongst the various organizations and trade shows needing space increases, the need to plan even further ahead becomes more important. While one can reserve space up to several years in advance, it is impossible to predict the incidental costs that go along with conference planning.

ILGISA has always prided itself on giving attendees the best value for their conference dollar—unfortunately that gets tougher with each conference that we host. Inflation does take its





eventual toll and as we grow, we do require larger space, which eventually comes with a cost that the ILGISA board must concern itself with.

Do we cut the quality of facility, space, and food for the conferences or do we increase registration fees without affecting quality? It's a hard balancing act to predict each year's needs, and my job entails finding answers to all those questions so that the ILGISA board can make the best, practical solution to serve the members well.

So next time you are at one of our conferences, look around and see how your registration fees are being spent. Are you getting value for your dollar? I hope so, as I have worked hard to make sure that you receive the best return on your investment to attend—at least as far as the facility, food and technology are concerned.

Your conference committee team is responsible for the workshops and sessions, which do depend upon you and your involvement in making ILGISA the top-notch GIS organization that it is!

New Board Members Installed at the Fall 2007 Conference

Shelley Silch is the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Geospatial Liaison for Illinois. She has been with the USGS for 24 years. Before moving to Illinois in September 2007, she worked at the mapping center in Rolla, MO. During this time she worked as a typesetter, Cartographic Technician, GIS Specialist and Physical Scientist.

As a liaison she represents, coordinates and implements National Geospatial Program Office programs and initiatives in the context of state, local, other federal agency and regional needs and strategies. Her primary role is to engage partners by providing leadership and guidance to ensure the unified implementation of the entire portfolio of national geospatial programs and to implement key components of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure.

Shelley's experience with mapping dates back to compiling map manuscripts using B-8 and PG-2 vintage stereoscopic plotters. She went on to become a technical expert in the area of data integration requirements, procedures and processes. She has directed technical teams for a variety of GIS and remote sensing projects and provided briefings and presentations on a variety of USGS programs and projects. While Shelley's office is located in Urbana, she has been traveling across the state to meet as many people as she can in the great State of Illinois.

Mark Toalson earned a B.A. in Geography from Illinois State University in 1985 and studied Geography in pursuit of an M.A. at NIU. Mark worked in private mapping and GIS firms in Illinois prior to becoming GIS Manager for the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission and the Champaign County GIS Consortium in 2003. As GIS Manager he has overseen the startup and implementation of a countywide GIS. Mark's professional experience gives him a unique understanding of both the indispensable role of GIS vendors and challenges faced by local governments implementing GIS.

Mark was a GIS workshop instructor for UW-Milwaukee, has attended and presented at numerous GIS conferences, recently served on the ILGISA bylaws committee, co-founded AUGI (Arc Users of Greater Illinois), participated with the Illinois GIS Advisory Committee and is looking forward to serving on the Illinois GIS Strategic Planning Committee.

While Mark believes that ILGISA has and will continue to provide a critical service to our state as the primary platform for exchange of ideas and education amongst peers in our field, he also believes that it is time for ILGISA to explore a new role. Mark firmly supports the idea of statewide coordination, but also feels that centralized coordination should be accompanied by a check and balance, which he believes ILGISA could provide.

Interesting Aerial Photography

This farm-field proposal in Lee County, Illinois,was submitted by Matthew Jefferson, GIS Analyst with the Illinois State Water Survey in Champaign.

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