ESRI’S GIS Education Priorities
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GENERAL PUBLIC

Increase basic spatial literacy of society. The overall goal of encouraging the use of Geographic Information Systems is to change the way problems are solved in society, that is to add a spatial or geographic component to the problem solving process. Ultimately, this depends on increasing the basic spatial literacy of the general public.

K12 – the main path to widespread spatial literacy is to work with the children in the primary and secondary schools. This is central to ESRI’s educational program. The purpose here is not to teach GIS to children, but to use GIS to engage them in exploring spatial information and to facilitate their ability to conceptualize problems within a spatial context.

Universities - we must also work to spread the understanding of geographic concepts to whole of the university campus and involve all the problem solving disciplines. Since GIS is being widely implemented across a wide range of industries and professions in the workplace today, we need to have students training in the GIS applications in almost every academic discipline. This requires that the traditional spatial disciplines work with the other departments on their campuses to provide wide access to GI Science courses. ESRI’s educational policies and prices are designed to encourage widespread usage across the campus.

General public - we must also work to bring an awareness of the spatial dimension to the general public through awareness programs, community service projects and educational outreach. We are trying to encourage universities to engage in community service projects that use GIS to meet community needs and bring community awareness of the GIS technology. The internet map server technology will help facilitate this.

USER COMMUNITY

Improve the quality of science in the professional community GIS. To do this we need to increase opportunities for professionals in the field of GIS to continue their education. Professional education is an important part of a knowledge-based economy. We are all faced with the need for lifelong learning. We need to dramatically increase the number, variety and accessibility of programs geared to the needs of the GIS professional.

Degrees are important for advancing ones career. We need more advanced degrees that are designed to meet the needs of working professionals in GIS.

Certificate programs are an important component in the delivering of GIS education to professionals. Professional societies should make it clear what they think should be in a
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certificate program. They can do this by placing a stamp of approval on certificate programs that they feel meet the needs of their profession.

Additional short courses. We can do this through seminars at conferences, online courses, and short programs at local schools. Opportunities for increasing ones knowledge of GIS should be readily available to all GIS professionals, that are low cost, local and available on demand.

GIS SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS

Increase the availability of GIS software developers. The GIS software industry has a special set of needs that are somewhat different from the user community. We need people who are not only good programmers but who can think spatially and understand the special needs of software designed to do spatial analysis. To meet these needs, we need to help both students and faculty realize the importance of hard core computer science skills in addition to an understanding of spatial analysis. Industry needs to work with the academic community to ensure that our needs are recognized.