URBA N AND REGIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

Certification Committee Meeting Outcome

On Monday, July 20, 1998, the URISA Certification Committee held its first meeting. A total of 19 members attended the one-hour session in the morning and the reconvened session later that evening. Between the two sessions, the members participated in two URISA ’98 Conference panel sessions discussing, first, the skills needed in professionals developing and using GIS technology and then second, how to evaluate competency in those skills. About 90 conference attendees attended the first panel session and about 60 attended the second. Each session evoked active discussion that often included the topic of GIS certification. The Committee took this interest as an indicator the GIS Certification is an important topic among the URISA membership as a whole.

By the end of the day (after two Committee meetings and two panel sessions – 8 hours in all), the consensus of the Committee was the following:

1. GIS Certification is going to happen whether or not URISA is involved (already, two other discipline-specific organizations have taken steps toward GIS Certification within the Surveying discipline and the Remote Sensing discipline);

2. The multidisciplinary background of URISA’s members, together with their GIS expertise, puts URISA in an excellent position to assist other discipline-specific organizations in assuring a high level of GIS competency among professionals in application area disciplines;

3. It is difficult to evaluate the competency of all professionals using or developing GIS technology because they have different levels of responsibilities (technical, analytical, managerial, etc.) AND because they are in many diverse disciplines, thereby using GIS technology differently;

4. There are, however, “core” skills which all professionals specializing in GIS technology within their profession must possess. Furthermore, there are “add on” skills required in addition which may be different for each discipline using GIS technology;

5. Since URISA primarily consists of professionals using and developing GIS technology and data within their own disciplines, they should be surveyed to gain a consensus on what the “core” skills are and what the “add on” skills are for each discipline. URISA members who are practitioners using or developing GIS technology and data should be asked to respond to a survey for their discipline, listing the core and add on skills required for that discipline. The URISA Certification Committee should combine the results and publish them for presentation to the URISA Board of Directors. (It is likely that a Delphi approach will be needed to gain consensus among members.);

6. A thorough review and comment on the results should be obtained from the University Consortium on Geographic Information Science (UCGIS);
7. Other organizations with potential interest should be contacted to invite their responses to the “URISA/UCGIS” GIS skills list;

8. A “White Paper” and a “GIS Certification Status Report” should be published on the URISA web site. The GIS Certification Status Report will be written immediately to give the Committee, the URISA Board, and the URISA membership at large some background information on the topic. The White Paper will contain the results of the URISA/UCGIS GIS Skills Survey and a formal recommendation to the Board on what URISA’s role should be.

The Committee anticipates that the recommendation it will send to the URISA Board of Directors will be that URISA evaluate the skills of professionals specializing in GIS within their profession (including the Information Technology profession). Upon satisfactory evaluation, URISA should confer the “GIS Specialization Certificate”.

Respectfully submitted,
William E. Huxhold, Chair

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**URISA MEMBERSHIP: 2,769**

**Type of Employer:**

- Local Government 59%
- Consulting Firm 13%
- Local or Regional Consortium 7%
- State or Provincial Agency 7%
- Utility or Authority 4%
- Federal Agency 3%
- Other 7%

**Job Title/Position Held:**

- GIS Management 34%
- GIS Analysis 21%
- Planner 10%
- IS/IT Management 7%
- GIS Technician 7%
- Other 21%