

EDUCATION-COMMUNICATIONS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Event Name:

2005 Nebraska GIS/LIS Conference

Attendee's Name:

Joseph J. Kerski, Geographer:
Education/GIS, Denver

Other USGS Attendees: Ray Fox (USGS NSDI Liaison to Nebraska), Jeff Simley and Keven Roth (National Hydrography Dataset program), Karen Zanter (USGS AmericaView Project Chief), Sonja Sebree Nebraska GIS scientist).

Location: Lincoln, Nebraska

Event Dates: 23-26 May 2005

Summary

I joined over 250 colleagues at the 2005 Nebraska GIS/LIS Conference, an event held every 2 years for the regional geospatial user community. In attendance were GIS professionals from tribal, federal, state, county, and municipal governments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions (professors, teachers, and graduate and undergraduate students), and private industry. We conducted keynote addresses, conducted workshops, operated an information exhibit, and learned from each other.

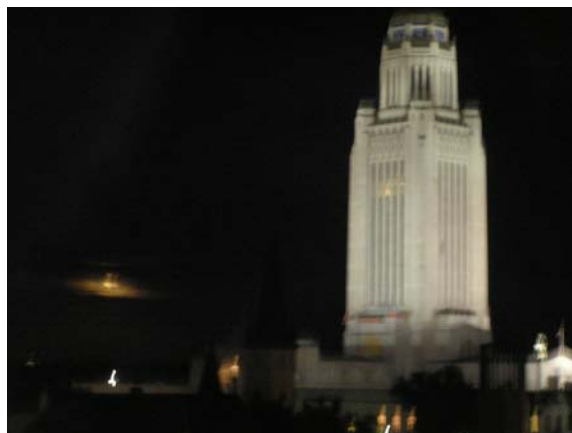
The conference was hosted by the Nebraska GIS/LIS Association, and it alternates with the Mid-America GIS

Symposium in Kansas City. One has to only look at the dozens of sessions at the Nebraska GIS conference to understand the diversity of GIS applications in the region, and to grasp the high degree of collaboration among the organizations represented by the Nebraska geospatial community.

Description



Conference setting: Standing at 97 west longitude at the edge of the Great Plains, looking east toward the very first rolling hills, 30 miles west of Lincoln. Photo by Joseph Kerski, 24 May 2005.



Moonrise to the left of the Nebraska

State Capitol on 23 May 2005. Jim Langtry told me that Lancaster County's growth (where Lincoln is located) exceeds 10% per year.



Above, Jim Langtry, Lancaster County Engineers GIS Manager, and Bonnie Schulz, Chair of the Symposium Planning Committee, Board Member of the Nebraska GIS/LIS Association, and instructor at Northeast Community College in Norfolk, Nebraska. I commend them for their efforts that resulted in a very successful conference.



Cornhusker Marriott, above, site of the 2005 Nebraska GIS/LIS Conference.



I would like to thank Jim Langtry, Steve Cacioppo (Douglas County GIS), and Karisa Vasek (University of Nebraska Geospatial Extension) for inviting me and the Nebraska GIS/LIS board for sponsoring my trip there. Jim even picked me up from the airport! Those kinds of thoughtful acts are not forgotten.

The conference featured concurrent sessions running for two days, a preconference set of workshops, exhibits, and a poster session. The Nebraska GIS/LIS conference is a good example of how a GIS conference **should** be run—providing many opportunities for networking, and conducting and attending papers and workshops. Attendees came largely from tribal, local, state, and federal government organizations in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri, but with additional attendees from nonprofit organizations, universities, schools, and private industry in those and other states.

USGS Activities at the Conference

- 1) Keven Roth presented a keynote on the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD).
- 2) Ray Fox and Sonja Sebree conducted a workshop and a presentation on how to access and use USGS and other spatial information portals.
- 3) Jeff Simley conducted a presentation on how to access and use NHD data.
- 4) Joseph Kerski presented a keynote address on GIS in education.
- 5) Karen Zanter and Jim Merchant conducted a NebraskaView workshop.
- 6) USGS staff hosted a USGS information exhibit.

Plenary Sessions



Jim Williams (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), Joseph Kerski, and Jim Langtry before the keynote presentation.



I was pleased to see so many people on hand for the education presentation. I chose not to rehash what they already knew, such as how to further their own GIS education. Instead, I focused on how GIS fits into critical needs for 21st Century problem solving, new Department of Labor initiatives, developments GIS in education at all levels, and how GIS professionals could get involved in the educational community.



Keven Roth conducts a plenary session on Building the NHD. She was followed by Todd Peterson of Pioneer Hi-Bred, who discussed technology convergence and agricultural processes. Tom

Casady of the Lincoln Chief of Police provided a spirited discussion on GIS in law enforcement and in society in general.



Lincoln Mayor Coleen Seng began the first day of the conference.

Poster Session



The poster session well illustrated the diversity of GIS-GPS-RS application to education, business, science, transportation, planning, and much more.

Exhibition



The exhibit hall featured a wealth of geospatial information, data, and applications from government, nonprofit organizations, and private industry.



Above, the required nerdy USGS exhibit photograph, here of Joseph Kerski and Ray Fox. Our exhibit featured free maps, guidelines to geospatial data, information about The National Map, brochures on maps, aerial photographs, satellite imagery, water quality, biodiversity, urban growth, Nebraska geospatial activities, and more.

Workshops and Papers



Above, one of the leaders in geospatial technologies for many years, Dr Jim Merchant, conducts a session on the AmericaView program.



Dr Cary Chevalier, above, presenting the innovative ways that he incorporates geospatial technologies into his biology courses at Western Missouri University.

Work with High School Students



Ray Fox, above, giving one of his very useful presentations on how to use USGS and other geospatial data portals, together with Steve Rathje and Kim Menke of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, and Sonja Sebree of the USGS.



I contacted one of my favorite geography teachers, above, with whom I met at the 2003 NCGE conference. He is knowledgeable about GIS and plans to use it next year. He graciously allowed me to teach one of his classes. The sign of a good geography teacher might be an eclectic and full desk, bulletin board, and walls covered with maps and imagery!



During my workshop, first, the students examined USGS topographic maps and aerial photographs from two different time periods of the neighborhood surrounding their school.



All of the students were enthusiastic, quite bright, and they gave me great hope for the future.

USGS Nebraska Science Center Visit



Second, we went outside and worked with GPS, discussing how GPS works, accuracy, datums, and different coordinate systems.



I visited the impressive new USGS Nebraska Science Center and met Robert Swanson, the director of the Center. He and his staff were very kind to me, providing me a workspace before I left for the airport.



USGS Nebraska Science Center, my suitcase, and my lunch that has fallen over in the wind.

Recommendations

The Nebraska GIS community is one of the closest-knit I have ever seen, with a high degree of cooperation and collaboration. It was a pleasure to work with them and I recommend that we continue to do so in the future. This includes conducting workshops, papers, and an exhibit at every one of their conferences, and even more importantly, working with them throughout the year.

I recommend that they consider inviting secondary school students and teachers during a “public night” at their 2007 conference, providing opportunities for students to showcase their work, and to increase efforts in attracting local and regional university students and faculty to the conference.



I took a walk around Memorial Stadium on the University of Nebraska campus (during which I saw the largest raccoon I have ever seen, happily eating in a dumpster).

The next conference for the Nebraska geospatial community will be the 10th biennial MidAmerica GIS Symposium, 23-27 April 2006 in Kansas City:
magicweb.kgs.ku.edu.

*** End of 2005 Nebraska GIS/LIS Conference Report***