

# Geospatial Forum 2016

May 5, White River Junction, VT

## General Session Discussion and Afternoon Unconference Summary

Notes by Leslie Pelch, VCGI

### 1. Summary of the 11:00 AM General Session Presentation and Discussion about Professional Development and Certifications:

Steve Sharp, VCGI provided an overview re: professional development and the GISP (GIS Professional) certification offered by the GIS Certification Institute. His presentation will be available at the VCGI website:

<http://vcgi.vermont.gov/events/archive#rt>

One key bit of news is that those applying for the GISP will now have to pass an **exam**. Those renewing their GISP will not have to take the exam **unless they let their GISP lapse and don't renew within the 1 year grace period** after their GISP lapses. Learn more here: <https://www.gisci.org/Recertification/Recertification.aspx>

Discussion following Steve's presentation included the following:

As a student, I found that having a 9-month GIS certificate (indicating completion of an academic program) made a huge difference as to whether I got an interview when applying for jobs.

A certificate can provide concrete evidence of what GIS topics the applicant has been exposed to.

Students and employees of the UVM Spatial Analysis Lab have a high rate of success finding jobs after SAL because they have an excellent combination of education and concrete skills.

GISP can help separate applicants into groups. An employer might be more likely to look favorably on the group who meet qualifications AND have GISP. For those who already have lots of experience the GISP shows a certain dedication to the profession and GIS community since it requires contributions to the profession.

Will there be a push to create GIS Licensure in VT to protect the public? Maybe, but we have not seen anything indicating such a push in recent years.

The State's Enterprise GIS Consortium (EGC) has been working on creating a GIS job ladder in state government (series of 5 GIS-related position descriptions that fit into a professional progression). Perhaps we (VCGI) should publish those once they are official, as they may serve as useful templates for other employers, and also to give job applicants guidance as to what might be expected at different levels. VCGI can do this.

Data analytics certifications are becoming popular; could these eclipse GISP certifications? GISCI has not been talking about this so far.

If you are looking for a GIS job in Alaska, you need a GISP!

There seems to be a disconnect between the education system and the workplace. Lower level certifications would be helpful. Perhaps to show that certain topics have been covered in an undergraduate setting.

More internships are needed to provide hands-on opportunities. (Internship and Mentor coordination – a potential role for VCGI? – leslie's comment)

We often see general certifications developed and then more specific certifications within that field evolve.

As geospatial technology is a many-faceted and rapidly evolving field, certifications can't really keep up.

Other certifications that are relevant to GIS practitioners:

- ASPRS: LiDAR, Remote Sensing, Photogrammetry
- AICP (planning) – includes GIS but it is a bit simple and not up to date

Should there be an effort to raise awareness of the importance of GIS use in other professions that would lead to including GIS in certification requirements?

- Surveyors
- Foresters

GISCI should do more outreach to educator employers about what GISP reflects and what the value is.

Should folks responsible for the E911 databases have licenses of some sort? They do create/manage data whose quality has the potential to harm the public.

2. **The morning discussion was continued during our afternoon Unconference, when we focused on the question: “what advice would you give students and young professionals embarking on their professional career?” We also learned more about Mapathons and Humanitarian Open Street Map.**

Your resume should reflect your ability to do “grunt” work as well as cool stuff. It shows employers that you won’t shy away from tedious tasks.

Show that you are able and willing to learn new skills by highlighting how you have done that in the past via your cover letter or resume.

Show enthusiasm in your cover letter, don’t let make it a brief/pro forma document.

Highlight non-GIS data management skills – and other non-GIS but applicable skills like working with databases

Provide examples of your resourcefulness and ability to figure out solutions

Quantify your experience where possible – number of hours spent doing something, number of lines of code written, etc.

Create a portfolio (online and hard copy) – we don’t see this much yet, but it shows a level of effort, organization, etc. that looks great and it gives an employer a true product of your labors by which to judge you.

Don’t be intimidated by job postings that seem to require everything, apply anyway if you think you can do the job. But be honest about your experience and abilities.

More than 1 page for a resume for someone just out of school? Differing opinions on that, but definitely don’t pad and don’t leave out relevant description.

Do research on potential employer, especially before an interview, and make it clear that you have done so.

Describe the content of the classes you highlight on resume, or expound a bit in an interview.

Should you describe projects on a resume? Might depend, but if that is the best way to get across some of your skills and how you have applied them, go for it. Or consider a portfolio.

Include links to other documents? Depends on method of transmittal, but don’t bury key information a link away. Rather, provide additional information via link.

### **Requests from young professionals:**

- Be explicit about grunt work that will be required element of position.
- It would be useful to post state positions that describe a career ladder for GIS.

Leslie at VCGI will plan to organize one or more webinars on GIS Employment (all or some of the following):

- The new State GIS Career Ladder
- Tips for Employers
- Tips for job applicants
- Certifications and their usefulness

### **3. Humanitarian OpenStreetMap and Mapathons – Noah Ahles, Senior GIS Technician, UVM Spatial Analysis Lab**

If you would like to be notified about Mapathons at UVM when they are planned, contact organizer Noah Ahles and ask to be added to his email list: [noah.ahles@gmail.com](mailto:noah.ahles@gmail.com)

Mapathons are events that coordinate the efforts of people all around the world to use Open Street Map to map road networks and building footprints in areas that have recently experienced a natural disaster. This can help those responding to the disaster as well as communities rebuilding after a disaster. Here is an article about the recent Mapathon at UVM to support recovery after the earthquake in Ecuador: <http://digital.vpr.net/post/mapping-ecuador-afar-burlington-volunteers-help-recovery-efforts#stream/0>

Anyone can participate in these events held at a computer lab in the Aiken building at UVM. Noah provides about 15 minutes of training if you haven't participated before and then you will be mapping away, helping communities in a far off land experiencing tragedy. It also possible to participate remotely, and the Mapathon notification emails provide instructions if you would like to do so.

Noah has also been working on a Middle School curriculum about Humanitarian OpenStreetMap to help teachers introduce the cross-curricular ideas of digital mapping and service learning.

The idea of having sponsors was brought up, and Noah agreed it would be great to have financial help with the food that is always provided at the day-long Mapathons (participants stay for however long they choose). VCGI will help round up some sponsors!