

Final Report
Integrating GIS into the Liberal Arts Curriculum: Replicating
a Successful Program

submitted by David Kesler
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Summary

Three Rhodes College faculty and an undergraduate student introduced Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to the Millsaps College community during a workshop on February 1, 2003. These faculty members were Stephen Ceccoli, Carol Ekstrom, and David Kesler. The Rhodes student was John Bienvenu. This workshop was modeled after a similar workshop held at Rhodes College in the fall of 2002 that was also funded by an Information Fluency Grant. This original day-long workshop to Rhodes College faculty and staff was followed a month later with presentations given by participants. Like the Rhodes workshop, we asked the Millsaps participants for project topics several weeks before the workshop so that we could assist in finding data and base maps. We provided shape files on both Mississippi and the Jackson area. The Millsaps workshop was attended by 11 faculty members, three staff members, three invited students, and two student GIS assistants.

Each participant at the Millsaps workshop received a three-ring notebook containing printouts of PowerPoint presentations given by the Rhodes faculty and student. The first topic covered was given by Stephen Ceccoli who gave an introduction to GIS. John Bienvenu described an on-line GIS textbook at Rhodes, on-line GIS resources and sites, and cartographic and geographic resources. Each of the three faculty members gave a presentation about GIS that emphasized either data acquisition, data management, or data analysis. The notebook participants received also included projects successfully used by Rhodes faculty in their courses as well as a CD-ROM containing this information and other information on data available for use with GIS.

Participants then divided into three groups, one per Rhodes faculty member, and worked through a sample GIS exercise in a hands-on session. These groups were: “Kudzu,” a project emphasizing placing GPS-derived data on to a map (Kesler), “Census Data” emphasizing data management (Ceccoli), and “Ground Water” emphasizing data analysis (Ekstrom).

The hands-on portion of the workshop was followed by informal discussion over lunch about implementing GIS at Millsaps. As reported by Debora Mann in her April 23, 2004 final Information Fluency Grant report, “It was agreed that there is considerable interest among faculty and staff in using GIS and that a GIS course would be of great benefit to students in preparing them for graduate school and the workplace. It would also provide a pool of students proficient in GIS who could assist other students, faculty and staff in their use of GIS.” She concludes by saying, “The Rhodes faculty shared ideas and syllabi they use in teaching GIS in their courses.”

Outcomes

A month following the workshop given by Rhodes College personnel to the Millsaps College community, eight participants in the February 1, 2003 workshop met to discuss their progress on completing GIS projects. Three participants had completed their projects enough to give PowerPoint presentations. Again, according to Debora Mann, "It was agreed that GIS has great potential as a tool for teaching and research in the liberal arts and should be supported at Millsaps." Six of eight participants said they would use GIS in their teaching/research as a result of their experience with the workshop. There was clearly enough enthusiasm in continuing GIS at Millsaps that Dr. Stan Galicki initiated Millsaps' first general GIS course in which eight students enrolled for the spring 2004 semester. Millsaps sent two representatives to the January 2004 ACS/NITLE GIS workshop at the College of Wooster. We view this to mean that our daylong workshop provided a first step and the Millsaps group was following up on our lead by attending the January 2004 workshop. We are gratified to learn that the GIS workshop given by Rhodes personnel has stimulated the integration of GIS into the liberal arts curriculum at Millsaps College.

Recommendations

A month after the February 1, 2003 workshop the participants felt that a more extensive hands-on session during the workshop would have been helpful. It was not our intent during this workshop to necessarily develop a working facility with GIS, but instead to expose potential users to different aspects of GIS. This objective needs to be made clear in future workshops so there is a closer match of participants' and facilitators' expectations. The participants felt that a month-long interval between the workshop and presentation of projects was too short to fully develop these projects. While we sympathize with the participants in this regard, we feel that a longer period before projects are "due" would mean a loss of momentum. If the software can be installed in a timely fashion and adequate assistance can be given, we feel a month between the introductory workshop and project completion is an appropriate interval.

Budget

Proposed

\$2010.00	Stipend for three faculty presenters
\$292.00	Stipend for student assistant
\$460.00	Travel, food and lodging for three faculty presenters and one student assistant for the initial workshop
<u>\$155.00</u>	Supplies for seminar participants
\$2917.00	Total for Rhodes

Actual amount spent

\$2010.00	stipends (3)
\$292.00	stipends (1)
\$506.48	travel- mileage, 3 rooms, dinner, breakfast
<u>\$111.55</u>	supplies – notebooks, copying, printing
\$2920.03	Total spent