

## **UCGIS Research Committee Report UCGIS Annual Symposium 2015, Alexandria, VA**

This report covers the activities of the Research Committee for May 22, 2014 through May 23, 2015, which includes the period immediately following the 2014 UCGIS Symposium in Pasadena, CA and leading up to the 2015 UCGIS Symposium in Alexandria, VA.

### **Committee Membership**

Jeremy Mennis (Temple University) is completing his first year as Chair of the committee after taking over from Chaowei (Phil) Yang (George Mason University) following the 2014 UCGIS Symposium. Mennis's term will run through the end of the 2017 UCGIS Symposium. Other committee members include:

Jochen Albrecht, Hunter College - The City University of New York  
Ross Meentemeyer, North Carolina State University  
Wenwen Li, Arizona State University  
Yongmei Lu, Texas State University - San Marcos  
Ming-Hsiang Tsou, San Diego State University  
Xinyue Ye, Kent State University

It should be noted that this list of committee members is primarily a holdover from the names listed on the website prior to Mennis's term as chair.

### **Recap of Recent Committee Activities**

#### **1. Geographic Information Science Research Priorities**

Mennis has been working closely with UCGIS President-Elect Libby Wentz on revisiting the topic of Geographic Information Science Research Priorities. UCGIS initially initiated the research priorities project in the early 2000s, which ultimately led to a book on the topic edited by Lynn Uery and Bob McMaster, and published by CRC Press in 2004. Given the substantial changes in GIS&T since then, developing a new set of research priorities is appropriate and can serve as a guide for GIS&T researchers and funding agencies. Note that the research priorities are not intended to be domains or subjects of knowledge (as with the content of the GIS&T Body of Knowledge) but rather are intended to be a set of research questions that should be solvable over short, medium, or long term time horizons. Wentz has spoken to Tom Baerwald from the National Science Foundation about the reception of such a project at NSF, which has been positive.

Mennis and Wentz have spoken regularly throughout the past year concerning how to proceed strategically in terms of 1) developing a strategic plan for developing the set of research priorities, and 2) developing an outlet for publication of these priorities. The issue of publication venue is also conjoined with the related, but separate, issue of publishing output from the UCGIS Symposium on a regular basis, and developing a coherent strategy for the dissemination of UCGIS research projects and initiatives.

Regarding publication outlets, Mennis and Wentz investigated book publishers as well as developing a UCGIS journal. These options were found to not be viable given the extent and timing of developing a book and the large number of GIS-oriented journals currently in existence, as well as prohibitive cost. It was decided that a special issue of a journal would be the most appropriate. Mennis spoke with John Wilson, editor of *Transactions in GIS*, about the possibility of publishing a special issue on the research priorities topic. Wilson was open to the idea, though he noted that there were many articles already in the queue for publication. The hold-up to developing a special issue would be getting all the articles in publication quality in a timely manner. However, Wilson noted another option was the editorial section that precedes the research articles in each journal issue, for which there is more leeway in terms of publication timing.

Wentz and Mennis intend to give the research priorities initiative further attention over the following year, as well as at the 2016 UCGIS Symposium.

## **2. Research Priorities Panel at the 2015 UCGIS Symposium**

Wentz and Mennis developed a panel session to address the topic of research priorities at the 2015 UCGIS Symposium. Panelists were chosen to represent different aspects of Geographic Information Science and for their previous research leadership. The panel is scheduled for Saturday, June 29, 10:30 – 12:00. Panelists include:

- a. Babs Buttenfield, Panelist (Univ. of Colorado)
- b. Steve Hirtle, Panelist (Univ. of Pittsburgh)
- c. Harvey Miller, Panelist (Ohio State Univ.)
- d. Nina Lam, Panelist (LSU)
- e. Bob McMaster, Discussant (Univ. of Minnesota)
- f. Lynn Usery, Discussant (USGS)

Panelists were asked to address the following questions:

- a. What do you think is a major research priority (not a topic of study, but a solvable research challenge...) in your area of expertise that can be addressed in the next 5 years? In the next 10 years?
- b. What needs to happen to address this research challenge, e.g. funding from certain agencies? Collaboration of GIScientists with researchers in other domains? Specific methodological, technological, or theoretical innovations?

## **3. Synthesis with other Research Domains**

Another task that has been considered has been to initiate forums for synthesis and collaboration with researchers outside of Geographic Information Science. Ideas have included developing pre-symposium workshops or other specialist symposia that bring Geographic Information Science researchers from UCGIS institutions together with other domain scientists. UCGIS has had some success in the past with this, for example, with the symposia for space-time GIS organized by May Yuan and Kathleen Stewart, which resulted in a 2008 book published by CRC Press. Because of the Research Committee Chair's prior collaborations with specialists in drug addiction research, Mennis has been in discussions with colleagues to develop a specialist meeting bringing together Geographic Information Scientists and addiction researchers. NIH offers a R13 mechanism to fund conferences such as this (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r13/>). This initiative is in an early stage of development – the viability of such a conference is still being assessed.

## **4. UCGIS Research Award**

Mennis convened an ad-hoc Research Awards committee composed of Rick Church (University of California Santa Barbara, Chair and 2014 Research Award winner), Yongmei Liu (Texas State University), Marc Armstrong (University of Iowa), and Shaowen Wang (University of Illinois). Two nominations for the award were received. The committee chose Harvey Miller (Ohio State University) as the Research Award winner, who was confirmed by the UCGIS Board of Directors. Miller will receive the award at the 2015 UCGIS Symposium.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Mennis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeremy Mennis  
Chair, UCGIS Research Committee  
May 24, 2015