

A Time full of activities



H.E. Ali Bin Mohammad Al-Khater
Minister of Municipal Affairs & Agriculture



Qassim M. Al-Ghanim
Head of The Centre for GIS

This issue comes at a time when a lot of interesting events are taking place in our GIS community. The most important event is the First Middle East GIS Education Workshop which will be held under the patronage of H.E. Ali Bin Mohammad Al-Khater, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Agriculture. The other event that took place last week was receiving the approval from the ISO 9002 external auditing committee for awarding us here at The Centre for GIS The ISO 9002 Certificate. I will leave the details about the ISO 9002 certificate to articles written by Mr. Adeb Hiasat, The Manager of the auditing company and Mr. Samer Jalal, from our consulting company for ISO certification.

The workshop is a milestone in our continues endeavor to promote GIS education and training activities in the area and the Middle East in general. The need for education and training in GIS are long felt by the CGIS management and accordingly, CGIS has been giving more importance to this activity. The training center in CGIS has now become CGIS Regional Training certified by the world's leading GIS vendor ESRI of the United States. CGIS has been providing in-house training to staff and users from time to time besides organizing specialized training programs with the help from outside.

Qatar University has a well-established GIS unit and lab. The university now provides regular three-year diploma courses in GIS. The second batch of students is in process at present. There are now efforts to include GIS subjects in High School curriculum in schools to bring more awareness among the new generation towards GIS and encourage them to take it as a profession. All these programs were sponsored by the CGIS.

Some advanced degree and postgraduate courses in GIS and Remote sensing for the nationals are also planned in coordination with ITC Netherlands and an agreement was reached with this regard with ITC.

In this venture, UNESCO, Qatar University and ESRI - the pioneers in GIS and mapping solutions have lent us cooperation and support. Furthermore CGIS crossed hands with UNESCO to establish a GIS Education Forum to support the development of GIS education in the region, under the leadership of CGIS. Furthermore, ESRI and Qatar University lend us cooperation and support to make this endeavor a successful one.

The workshop is a part of CGIS efforts to provide assistance to academic institutions to develop GIS courses, programs, materials and infrastructure for the advancement of education in the field of GIS. CGIS also hopes to build personal relationships and ongoing contacts among teachers, professors, researchers and administrators involved in GIS for framing an unified GIS educational system throughout the Middle East.

As we step into the new millennium, scientists and technologists are foreseeing the effect GIS

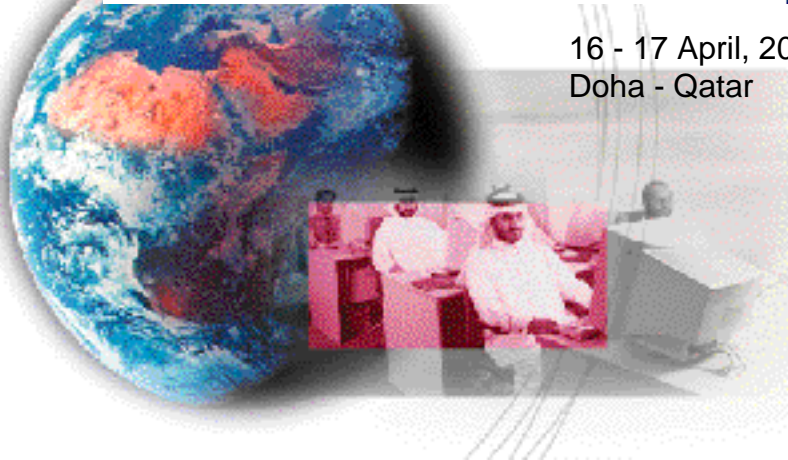
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is going to have in the field of development. Professionals in every field are increasingly aware of the advantages of thinking and working geographically. The ultimate goal is to get the Earth's surface, and all the things on it, into a computer format where you can view, manage and analyze all the features. That's every mountain, river, earthquake fault and flood basin and all the infrastructure that go with it. And to do all this, the world is going to need a lot more people trained in GIS, which is where the education workshop comes in. If proper strategies are not framed to meet the growing demand, the world is going to face an acute shortage of GIS trained personnel in the coming years. This is evident from the fact that a developed country like the US has allotted a grant of 800,000 dollars to train the professors at Cypress College, a GIS training center in the US.

Mapmaking and geographic analysis are not new, but a GIS performs these tasks better and faster than the old manual methods. GIS has made geography both practical and refreshing. GIS will give you the power to create maps, integrate information, visualize scenarios, solve complicated problems, present powerful ideas, and develop effective solutions like never before. Today, GIS is a multibillion-dollar industry employing hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. GIS is taught in schools, colleges, and universities throughout the world. One of the most important things is to bring up a new generation of GIS professionals to take the challenging assignments. The goal has been set to educate 3 million children and adults worldwide on GIS technology through geography with an aim to bring this new breed of GIS skills into contact with the GIS veterans of today.

1st Middle East GIS Education Workshop

16 - 17 April, 2000
Doha - Qatar



Objectives

The workshop is a forum on the status of GIS education in the Middle East and the development of GIS educational programs, curricula and infrastructure. Objectives of the workshop are to:

- Assist academic institutions to develop GIS courses, programs, materials and infrastructure for the advancement of education in the field of GIS.
- Develop a comprehensive picture of current and planned GIS education and training programs, courses and facilities available through academic, government and private sector organizations across the Middle East.
- Explore GIS educational and training opportunities in the Middle East.
- Build personal relationships and ongoing contacts among teachers, professors, researchers and administrators involved in GIS throughout the Middle East.

Leaders

The workshop leaders are Prof. Duane Marble and Dr. Michael DeMers. Prof. Duane Marble has been a professor since 1959 and is well known for his work in GIS education and spatial analysis. In 1997 he was awarded ESRI's Legend in Leadership Award for lifetime achievement in the field of GIS. Prof. Marble currently serves as Chair of the Model Curriculum Working Group of the sixty-member University Consortium for Geographic Information Science and is a member of the International Review Panel for the GIScience curriculum of the ESRI Virtual Campus.

Prof. Marble is one of the major developers of the first Bachelor degree programs in GIS Science at Ohio State University.

Dr. Michael DeMers, currently at New Mexico State University, has been a GIS professor since 1983. He is the author of one of the leading introductory GIS textbooks (Fundamentals of Geographic Information Systems), a book of Exercises in GIS and is currently writing a new book on GIS Raster Modelling.

Issues that will be discussed during the workshop

The workshop will be an interactive, 2-day event that will bring together academics, researchers, administrators, professionals and students from across the Middle East to share their GIS educational experiences and tackle such questions as:

- Are there sufficient GIS technical and university level programs to meet the demands in the Middle East?
- How to develop GIS curricula and supporting teaching resources?
- Should non-GIS specialists and students be educated in GIS science?
- Should there be a unified GIS curriculum developed for the Middle East?
- What should the curriculum for a Bachelors level GIS program contain?
- Is there a need for professional certification? How can interdisciplinary educational programs be accredited?
- How do government, industry and educational institutions achieve a lifelong learning environment, given the technological nature of GIS?

Active group members

Coming from outside Qatar

Bahrain - Dr. Abdulla H Sabt, University of Bahrain

Bahrain - Dr. Waleed Khalil Al-Zubari, School of Graduate Studies
Arabian Gulf University

Egypt - Prof. Moustafa Ahmed Baraka, Faculty of Engineering, Cairo University

Egypt - Dr. Nabil Said, Information & Decision Support Center (IDSC)

Egypt - Dr. Boshra Bakr Salem, University of Alexandria

Jordan - Dr. Nedat Al-Hanbali, Balqa Applied University

Jordan - Dr. Salman Duheisat, Royal Jordanian Geographic Center College

Kuwait - Dr. Fahd Al-Harbi, Head of KISR

Kuwait - Dr. Mohamed Aziz, Kuwait University

Lebanon - Dr. Kamal Azar, American University of Beirut

Morocco - Prof. Mohamed AIT Belaid, Royal Center for Remote Sensing

Oman - Dr. M D Joshi, Sultan Qaboss University

Oman - Dr. Mohammed Salim Al-Barwani, Sultan Qaboss University

Saudi Arabia - Dr. Baqer Al-Ramadan, King Fahd University

Saudi Arabia - Dr. Abdulla Al-Qadi, King Faisal University

Sudan - Dr. Saeed Musmar Al-Awad, University of Al-Nelain

Syria - Dr. Nabil Ades, University of Aleppo

Syria - Dr. Yarob Badr, Tishreen University, Faculty of civil Engineering

Tunisia - Dr. Kamal Hamrouni, University of Tunis

UAE - Dr. Saif Salim Al-Qaydi, UAE University

UAE - Mr. Ahmed Saleh Massasaty, UAE University



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