Notes from Geospatial/GIS Meetup
April 15, 2025

Zoom

Attendees: Janet Reyes, facilitator

Via Zoom: Adam Grim, Bhawana Acharya, Canserina Kurnia, Carissa Suarsana, Corey Rizuto, Elizabeth Perez, Jay Spencer, John Epps, Leo Lerner, Lily Alvarez, Luis Barrios, Mike Cohen, Nan Li, Roland R, Ryan Bruellman, Sanaya, Tiffany Larrabee

<u>Announcements</u>

This meeting was recorded; video is available [here](). The passcode to view is bUY233&?

[CalGIS 2025]() is currently being held in Sonoma April 14-16.

Save the date: **Planet Imagery Day** will be held Friday, May 2 In Orbach Library, Room 122 from 9:00 am -12:00 pm. Octave Lepinard from Planet Labs will provide training; Canserina Kurnia from Esri will address using Planet imagery in ArcGIS; and two UCR researchers will present on their use of Planet imagery.

Janet will offer an **[Introduction to Google Earth]()** workshop on Thursday, May 8 at 2:00 pm in person in Orbach Library Room 122 and on Zoom.

UCANR will be providing the 9th annual **[DroneCamp]()** on June 23-27. Virtual participants will have live access to all the lecture presentations; in-person participants will additionally have flight workshops.

In San Diego in July, the **[Esri Education Summit]()** will take place from the 12th-15th; the **[User Conference]()** will be held from the 14th-18th. UCR has one complimentary pass remaining. Free virtual attendance is an option for many User Conference sessions.

Canserina mentioned that students can obtain a free one-day pass for the User Conference. She also mentioned two upcoming events: the [AI in Education: Realm of Possibilities]() webinar on April 24 at 10:00 am, and the [Esri Imagery & Remote Sensing Educators Summit]() virtual event May 14-15, with a variety of sessions occurring over a three-hour span each day.

<u>Panel</u>

Carissa Suarsana has been an Associate Business Analyst at Esri for about 5 months. In 2024 she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Computer information Systems from CSULA. She completed a [student assistantship at Esri]() in March 2024. Carissa applied multiple times to [Esri]() over the course of six months before being hired for her current position, which involves materials management in [SAP](), managing My Esri downloads, and supporting product releases. The hiring process involved 3 virtual interviews and one full-day interview at the Esri campus in Redlands. She also applied to other jobs via LinkedIn and [Government Jobs]().

Top among Carissa's tips and tricks for GIS job seekers is to keep applying! She also received advice to assemble one master resume that includes all your experience and skills, then pull relevant items from that to create a one-page resume customized for a particular position. Third, do what you can to get experience and to network. Carissa participates in Esri's [Young Professional Network](#).

Other tips include using LinkedIn to contact current employees of a place you're applying to, or who hold similar positions; do research on the company and the position before your interview; leverage AI in your job search; and reach out to Esri employees if you're interested in working there.

Carissa closed by sharing that Esri's corporate culture supports career growth. Use resources such as LinkedIn Learning or Coursera to develop your skill set. Openness to taking on new roles has enhanced the career path of many of her colleagues.

Adam Grim is a GIS Senior Analyst with the Riverside County Transportation Department in the Survey Division. In 2013 Adam earned a BA in Environmental Studies from Luther College in Iowa, where he had one class in GIS. At first he was overwhelmed by the technology aspects of GIS, but is glad he stuck with it. In 2020 he got a post-bachelor's certificate in GIS online from Penn State World Campus.

The majority of Adam's career has been in local government. He used GIS daily in his first job as a watershed coordinator for a soil and water conservation district. His next job was as a GIS technician for a small municipality in Kansas, involved with utility lines and stormwater infrastructure. Sometimes it involved field work using [Survey123](#). After earning his certificate he moved to California and landed a position as a GIS researcher for a private firm. From there he was hired by Riverside County's IT Department; last year he moved to the Transportation Department.

He agrees that customizing your resume and cover letter is a good idea, emphasizing the parts of your experience that match what the employer is looking for. Adam's job search involved many instances of not getting an interview or not getting hired after an interview; it's best to keep applying and not get discouraged. The ability to do critical thinking is important for GIS jobs (and other jobs), as well as the ability to adapt and learn as you go. Adam believes that having coding skills, such as in Python, and knowing HTML and similar, has been a plus in his job search. GIS is a broad field; jobs may be broad too, or more focused on a subset of GIS, such as AI or drone imagery.

Elizabeth Perez is the Campus Space/GIS Coordinator at UCR. Elizabeth attended Chaffey College before transferring to Cal Poly Pomona, where she graduated in 2018 with a BS in Geography, with a GIS option. She had switched her major from Environmental Geography to an emphasis in GIS after taking her first GIS class at Cal Poly. She didn't look for a GIS job until six months after graduating; in retrospect, that pause didn't serve her well because her confidence in the currency of her skills began to erode. She applied to jobs in technology, government, energy, and education before getting hired at UCR in Spring 2019.

In her role, Elizabeth keeps track of data regarding campus interior and exterior space. She also makes the GIS layers for campus infrastructure, safety, and utilities, and updates the campus map.

In her advice for job seekers, Elizabeth encourages networking and maintaining connections (including with professors); customizing resumes and cover letters; staying updated on industry trends and tools; and using LinkedIn to connect with others in your field (she knows of several LinkedIn job search success stories).

Elizabeth stays current with GIS via connections with GIS support staff throughout the University of California, by attending the Esri User Conference, and by using Esri MOOCs and LinkedIn Learning to learn new skills.

Shared links
Janet shared the following links:

IEGIS (local job postings): https://www.iegis.org/
GIS careers in 2025: https://ocpd.redlands.edu/blog/2025/01/27/geographic-information-systems-gis-careers-in-2025-trends-roles-and-preparation-tips/
https://research.com/careers/how-to-become-a-geographic-information-systems-specialist
https://gis.usc.edu/blog/4-reasons-to-consider-gis-as-a-career/
https://www.esri.com/en-us/what-is-gis/careers

Discussion
Janet mentioned that in customizing your cover letter, look it over carefully before sending; she has seen some cover letters where the applicant neglected to update the name of the place they were applying to.

The shared links overall indicate that GIS is expected to be a growth industry in the years ahead. The IEGIS website includes some national job boards in addition to local postings, which include internships. Janet also mentioned that the GIS community tends to be very supportive and willing to help job seekers.

Adam recommended checking the quality of what you're wearing to an interview the day before; he had an instance where one of his shoes came apart while he was waiting to be interviewed! Additionally, Janet cautioned against wearing clothing that will wrinkle excessively en route to the interview.

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