



Newsletter

June 2003

UNIGIS, 10 Years

1993, it is indeed 10 years ago that it all took a definite shape; UNIGIS, distance learning.

The academic chair of Spatial Informatics established on 1 January 1990 by the VU meant at the same time searching for suitable course material, international co-operation and structure. Now, 10 years after the start of UNIGIS, we can say that it has been a great success. I was able to sign 40 MSc diplomas from Austria last week, and they represent only a successful part of the approx. 2000 students who are active over the whole world. In the Netherlands at the moment there are 120 students studying. In the meantime, many students have graduated or have successfully completed a part of the course. It is extremely pleasing to meet up with the students and former students quite often. It is even more gratifying that they declare that they look back on all the efforts they made with great pleasure.

It was (and still is) worth the effort, for both the staff and the students.

Henk

Important dates to remember

28 July – 8 August 2003	Vespucci International Summer School 2003 – Italy Location Based Services & Spatial Data Infrastructures
14-19 August 2003	International Summer School 2003, Hungary GI in Land Management
September 5, 2003	UNIGIS 10 year lustrum Soesterberg
Nov 11- 12, 2003	GIS study tour “Grenzeloos Waterbeheer”, Netherlands / Germany
June 1 – 4, 2004	Workshop II Spatial Analysis
June 14 –17, 2004	Workshop III GIS and decision making
September 2004	Summer School India (Goa, InterGIS project)
November 2004	Autumn School (Austria / Amsterdam, InterGIS project)
February 2005	Map India



Joost

Many of you will have met our colleague Joost Buurman, who achieved his PhD (promotie) at the VU recently, after nearly six years as part of the Unigis team. Joost presented a model for the analysis and explanation of patterns in rural land pricing, based on at least 8000 land transactions in N. Brabant between 1998 and 2001. He concluded that although the government has no direct control over the land market, its zoning plans and other forms of spatial planning determine the cost of land to a great extent. Construction leads to considerably higher land prices, purchases for infrastructure cause a rise in agricultural land prices, while 'green' functions in contrast cause a fall.

We congratulate Joost on completing his study, and wish him a bright future as he returns to live in the Far East for a while.



Irene

My name is Irene Compte, I am 30 years old and born in Barcelona, Spain. Since 1992 I live in the city of Girona, in the very north-east of Spain, and work at the University of Girona. I graduated in Geography back in 1996, and since then I have been developing my career within the GIS discipline, for some years as a GIS lecturer at the University, and since 2000 as the Director of SIGTE, the GIS&RS Center of the University of Girona.

I am responsible for the daily management of SIGTE, with special interest in GIS

Education issues, and more specifically responsible for the UNIGIS Programme we organize as UNIGIS Spain. My involvement in the UNIGIS activities (ever since we started, back in 1998) has kept me challenged and busy up to today.

I am currently invited as *visiting staff* at the SPINlab, to work for 6 months in GIS Education projects. My main focus during this period will be the Unigis International Association on-going activities, but there are also other projects in which I am keen to participate, such as all the w-learning initiatives that the SPINlab is developing.

I hope this is going to be a positive and productive collaboration for all, and I want to thank all the team at SPINlab for the warm welcome in the group!

Christina, Eleni & Stefan

And there is also a person we have to see goodbye to, unfortunately. *Ms. Christina Eier*, who started working at the UNIGIS administration in September 2002, will stop her work at the Vrije Universiteit. We hope she recovers soon, thank her for all her work and dedication and wish her all the best for the future.

Ms. Eleni Koulouki will replace Christina, starting on July 1st. We are confident that the administrative support to you will be as good, efficient, fast, friendly etc. as ever and even better! You can mail her in Greek, French, Dutch, English and Italian, and this alone should make your life a lot easier.

Stefan Piet, UNIGIS student intake March 2003, started his 6 month internship at Intergraph / UNIGIS Amsterdam in May. He will work on the elaboration of UNIGIS module exercises using the Intergraph software, esp. Geomedia Grid. The gap between the introduction to Geomedia during the first workshop, and the actual use of the software in the course modules was too big. By providing students the possibility to work out the module 2 assignments with Geomedia, we have come a step closer to bridging this gap. We are happy to have him on the team and expectations are high.



Jaco

I'm Jaco de Kock, born and bred in Pretoria, South Africa - 23 years of age and PROUD to be South African.

During 2002 I have completed my Honours degree in Geoinformatics and was awarded with the DELTA bursary (Dutch Education: Learning at Top Level Abroad) from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) in The Netherlands. From December 2002 until August 2003, I am spending time working at the Spatial Information lab (SPINlab) on the GIPSY project, register for courses at the VU, and complete my Masters in Geoinformatics. My thesis involves an investigation into the utilisation of mobile GIS and location-based services (LBS) for field data management in land administration. Using mobile technology for fieldwork sessions can optimise data collection and improve data management.

I see my time in the Netherlands as a great opportunity to meet new people, study at the VU, and learn a lot from Nederlanders

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and I will be glad to answer them.

Read more about my work on my website <http://student.feweb.vu.nl/jkock/>

Greetings

Jaco de Kock



Kyle

My name is Kyle McDonald, I am 23 years of age and currently studying at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. I am originally from the city of Durban, South Africa but have been awarded a Delta bursary to study at the SPINlab (Spatial Information Laboratory) as an MSc UNIGIS student. I have been a UNIGIS student for the last couple of years during which time I completed the UNIGIS Post Graduate Diploma at the Port Elizabeth Technikon, prior to that I was a BSc student at the University of Natal in South Africa majoring in geology and environmental management.

I am currently planned to be in The Netherlands for a period of 9 months, until the end of August 2003. During my time here I am working with the SPINlab team on some internal projects as well as try to complete my MSc dissertation. I would just like to thank all involved for giving me this opportunity from both the SPINlab in The Netherlands as well as the Port Elizabeth Technikon in South Africa.

ACTIVITIES

Unigis Winter School 2003 – Madrid, Spain

For this year's Winter School, the Unigis Amsterdam students had to fly to Madrid, Spain. The Winter School, held on the subject of European aspects of Spatial Information, was hosted by the Universidad de Pontificia de Salamanca at their Campus in Majadahonda, Madrid. The facilities of the faculty were quite all right, we could use a computer room with new equipment, so every student had his/her own pc. We made

use of this opportunity a lot during the hands-on sessions on 3D-Visualization and Virtual Netherlands.

The second day of the Winter School, we traveled to the European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC), where some nice presentations on the activities of the Centre were given. The Centre has a team of experts who 'read' satellite imagery in order to generate as much information as possible about the area under study. They assist using this information during disasters, etc, both environmental disasters and war situations. I found it very impressive to see what these experts can do with satellite data and how they extract the information hidden in these images.



During the evenings, students and staff had dinner in the Madrid city center. The tapas were nice and the meals were good. We had time to catch up with each other and had a lot of good discussions too. The weather was bad during the first and final day of the Winter School. We even had snow! But in between, the weather was quite all right.

In general, everybody had a good time I think and we learned a lot. In retrospect, students would like to have had more information and discussions on the actual theme of the workshop (European aspect of GIS), and found that during the Winter School the focus was sometimes too divers. But it was very interesting indeed. I would like to thank Eric van Schijndel, UNIGIS student, for offering us the opportunity to come to Madrid to have the Winter School there and to see the EUSC. If only he'd been there himself ☺, he could have seen that we had a good time and gained more expertise in the field of GIS!

Jasper Dekkers

Between Madrid and New York

A choice to be made about a job, and within 2 days, what now???

Hallo, let me introduce myself: I'm Eric van Schijndel and a student of the UNIGIS course. During the June 2002 workshop, the idea of organizing a workshop in Spain was born; to be held at the European Union Satellite Center where I was then working as an image analyst. In July, during the summer school in Girona, various aspects were sorted out and I was going to organize the logistics side in Spain. During the ESRI meeting at the end of September, where UNIGIS was also represented, more concrete plans were presented, and the date of the workshop was fixed for February 2003.

Back at work in Spain on the following Monday, I had a phone call from New York. I had worked there once for a department of the UN, UNSCOM (United Nations Special Mission); this organization concerned itself with the resolutions applied to Iraq by the UN. (for more information: www.un.org/Depts/unscom).

There was an urgent need for an Image Analyst to prepare for the inspections which were going to take place in Iraq, now by an agency of the UN , UNMOVIC (United Nations Monitoring and Verification), for more information:

www.un.org/Depts/unmovic

Was I interested? My question was, starting when? Answer: within a month - oops...

That evening it was discussed on the home-front and the decision was taken; let's go to New York.

And indeed I arrived in New York on November 5th. My assignment was to prepare for the inspections in Iraq, with the help of all available information: aerial images, satellite imagery, maps, and access to a hoard of database information, in short, all the data you could wish for was available, which is a real paradise for an image analyst. What the inspectors needed was digital maps and detailed information about the locations to be inspected.

It was soon clear that too much information can be dangerous, so standards were agreed and within a week the first projects began to roll out of the printer in the form of up-to-date digital maps, with inspection-related information added. Up-to-date maps were of great importance in a land like Iraq for a group of inspectors, many of whom were in this country for the first time. Such a multi-national group easily gets into difficulties (in the past it sometimes happened that inspectors simply got lost). The next step was to create a more detailed GIS environment for the preparation of the inspections, which meant that the infrastructure of, for instance, a suspect chemical plant had to be described at the level of each building and there were hundreds of sites to be inspected by UNMOVIC.

What is interesting about this job is that you are not only busy with GIS but also with remote sensing (change detection, image classification), image interpretation (finding new installations not permitted under the sanctions laid down by the UN resolutions on Iraq). In my opinion good work was done, and I think that if I say that I am not totally happy with the present situation in Iraq, I am not the only one. That is the news from New York, what remains is for me to explain that because I left Spain in such a hurry that I had no time to arrange things any further for the Spanish workshop, which meant that Mathilde Molendijk had to do a lot of work on her own (sorry Mathilde). But I have heard that it was an outstanding and sociable workshop.

Greetings,
Eric van Schijndel
schijndel@un.org

New Unigis project - InterGIS

A UNIGIS-based group of European GIS-Labs from Salzburg University (Austria), University of Girona (Spain) and the Free University of Amsterdam (Netherlands) are partnering with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Delhi, Goa University (both from India) and the University of Jaffna (Sri Lanka) in a two-year project aiming at

establishing improved GIS education. The InterGIS project is co-sponsored by the EC under the "Asia-Link" programme and provides resources for curriculum design and human resources development at partner institutions and beyond.

A Kick-off meeting held in Jaffna and at the University of Colombo May 8-11 set the stage for an ambitious development schedule for a standardized curriculum framework applicable on different levels and for various modes of delivery. The next get-together will occur during a major InterGIS-sponsored staff development workshop at JNU in early fall of 2003, where GIS instructors from higher education institutions will be offered a short intensive programme in the scholarship of GIS teaching and learning.



Information about InterGIS is available from www.gis-learning.net, with more details coming online as the project progresses. All project partners are looking forward to interacting with other institutions and individuals from academia and industry as it is anticipated that the InterGIS curriculum will have substantial long-term impact on GIS learning across many disciplines.

Mathilde Molendijk represented the SPINlab of the Vrije Universiteit at the InterGIS kickoff meeting; Irene Compte was also involved.



- Each partner sends 1 person from the project team & 1 student

(4) Train-the-Trainer & Final Project Meeting, Dehli, JNU (Dates: February 2005, 1st half)

- Dates to be decided depending on the MAP INDIA Conference
- Partners should plan for a 7 days event (including 2 travel days)

Information on InterGIS Project Summer Schools

(1) JNU Train-the-Trainer event (Dates: November 5-9th, 2003.)

- Expected 30-40 people (educators of Dehli area and project partners)
- 1 keynote from Europe, 1 from India
- Proposed the EuroGIS module of UNIGIS for use with the teachers & students
- The preliminary agenda should be on the web very soon
- Partners can also send a trainee (can be a PhD student)

(2) Summer School I, Goa University (Dates: September 2004, 2nd half)

- Each partner can send 2 students with expenses covered, but if they share costs, it can be up to 4 students per partner.
- They must be Doctoral students or UNIGIS students.
- Proposed to organize a wider "field-trip" experience around the SS event.

(3) Summer School II, Salzburg-Amsterdam (Dates: November 2004, 1st half)

- Same participants as (2), but focusing on Asian students
- Local participants are very welcome



MSc students

We have at present a large group of students who are busy working for their Master of Science degree. As many of you know, in the past any of our Unigis diploma students who wanted to continue on to the Master's degree had to be officially registered at one of our English Unigis universities, because the degree could only be awarded through them. The work and supervision were handled by us here at the VU, but the dissertation was ultimately judged by the examiners in the UK.

But now that the Dutch higher education authorities have changed to a bachelor/master structure, we are able to offer a Master's degree from the VU. The MSc students who are now working on their dissertations will be the first to qualify under the new system. We held our annual 'MSc Seminar' last November for new MSc students, to get everybody together to make

presentations about the proposed research plans.

We have a hard-working group of students, who turn up from time to time in the Unigis office on a Friday to discuss their progress. Some students started out on an MSc last September, others are just getting started on their research now. Then there are the students from South Africa who spend a year with the GIS group as part of their academic experience; the two students from last year are now back in South Africa concluding their dissertations and the two who are with us now are busy with their research; they have introduced themselves elsewhere in this newsletter.

The MSc students have a dedicated page on our Unigis website, only accessible to them. This shows a list of current students, and gives access to their MSc webpages, so that everyone can get some idea of the progress of the others.

We are looking forward to holding our first Master's degree ceremony here at the VU later this year.

Workshops

Workshop III, took place at the VU from 12-15 mei 2003, on the theme of GIS and decision-making, organised by Alfred Wagtendonk, Nancy Omtzigt and Marjan van Herwijnen. The seven students were divided into 3 groups, representing the interests of: farmers, the nature-lobby or recreation-seekers, and they were asked to study the Vechtstreek area and produce plans for the redesign of the area according to these special interest groups. The workshop included an excursion to the Vechtstreek for field work with GPS devices and digital cameras to collect some extra data. Students worked in ArcView and used the BOSDA decision-making system developed in IVM to present their plans for review on the last day of the workshop. As usual, it was a very interesting few days and the time passed too quickly!

Workshop II, with the theme of Spatial Analysis (case study coral reefs in Indonesia), took place 19-22 June 2003 with 18 participants.

International Summer Schools 2003

Vespucci

Florence, Italy, 28 July – 8 August 2003

The Vespucci Initiative for the Advancement of Geographical Information Science announces the 1st Annual Summer School in Pratolino (Florence), Italy. The Summer School 2003 will focus on two topics: Location based services & Spatial Data Infrastructures and e-Government. The Summer School is aimed at researchers from the university, commercial, and government sectors. It provides an inspiring and productive opportunity for peer-to-peer interaction with leading international experts in the field. See www.vespucci.org.

GI in Land Management

Székesfehérvár, Hungary, 14 - 19 August 2003

In 2003 the International Summer School in GIS will be organized by UNIGIS Hungary (the University of West Hungary, College of Geoinformatics), promoted by UNIGIS International and coordinated with the European Masters in Geographical Information Science (EMGISc) ERASMUS project. Based on the success and experiences from previous Geoinformation International Summer Schools (GISS), a new course will be organised in 2003.

This year GISS will focus on the area of GIS applications in Land Management and by widening the practical perspective towards land administration, cadastre, land use planning, land consolidation, land development, data integration, change detection and analysis, environmental management and nature protection. Special emphasis will be given to the impacts of the EU accession.

(more detailed information can be found on our website)

GIS tour

Last year, we organised together with Esri Nederland and the Dutch Association for Cartography, an interesting GIS study tour in Belgium. Since this experiment resulted to be quite a success, we decided to repeat the event and investigate what's happening in GIS in Germany. Theme of the tour is: Watermanagement without borders ("Grenzeloos waterbeheer"). Date: November 11 – 12, 2003. Deadline for registration: August 25. More information can be found on included brochure.

Happy holidays

Henk Scholten and Bart Kusse

LUSTRUM CONFERENCE

In September 2003 UNIGIS Amsterdam will celebrate its 10th anniversary with a conference on

Geo Virtual Environments.

During this conference we will (of course) look back at the past 10 years of GIS and Unigis, BUT more important we will look at the next 10 years and beyond in this ever interesting scientific and practical area.

We realised that 10 years is a major milestone and therefore we have reserved a whole day full of lectures, opinions and discussions, but, most of all:

PARTICIPATION!

This will take place both during lectures and "field work", organised by our local and international colleagues.

The vision for the future (your vision) will therefore be based not only on concepts and theory, but also combined with hardware, software and new datasources.

The SOCIAL aspect of this conference will have an important place, so this will be an excellent opportunity to meet your fellow students and alumni.

This conference will be a 'once in a lifetime' and in GI-terms 'multidimensional' conference.

We hope to meet all of you on the Friday September 5th, 2003 in Soesterberg.

Look at the UNIGIS website for the final programme (on August 1):

<http://www.feweb.vu.nl/unigis>

Puzzle

There are some words which people often confuse in their assignments. To confuse you a bit more, I have put some of these words into a puzzle (the puzzle is on the next page)! The solution is on the last page.

Clues:

- 1 D A woman who could cast a spell on you was called a _____.
- 7 D Tell me _____ book I should buy for your birthday.
- 2 A You must pass the test this time: this is your last _____
- 2 D To get some dollars you will have to _____ some euros
- 3 D He always _____ his lunch at 12.
- 8 A There are 3 of us sharing 150 euros, we shall get 50 euros _____.
- 4 A He was very rich and his sister had nothing but he never _____ her any money.
- 10 D I need to borrow a car – will you _____ me yours?
- 5 A You can _____ money if you travel out-of-season.
- 15 F It may not be _____ to walk alone in this city at night.
- 6 D We _____ waiting for you at the bus stop, but you never came.
- 12 A _____ are you going to meet him? In the park?
- 7 A Can you tell me _____ the meeting will be in the Newton Hall or the Darwin Hall?
- 11 D It may rain or snow; we have to check the _____ forecast.
- 9 D The process _____ of several steps: preparation of the cloth, application of the colours and a fixing routine.
- 13 D There has always been heated discussion between atheists and believers about whether God _____ or not.
- 14 A Will you please _____ me some money through the post; I am completely broke.
- 16 A No, I already _____ you some last week.

A = across or horizontal

D = down or vertical

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Alumni Forum

I'd like to give you an update on the alumni-network and to say that we "finally" (some might say) have found the additional effort to set up the Unigis Alumni network for the Vrije Universiteit (UAV).

Of course the need for this network was already indicated a few years ago both by the students and lecturers and the alumni network of UNIGIS Salzburg is an excellent example to us. Also due to the same success of the Unigis courses, the increasing number of Unigis graduates and also the educational spin-off (in specific meetings and additional courses), we realised that we had to offer you the possibility to be a member of this unique alumni-network. And we have found the resources to run this network, so we can make it work.

The results of the letter we sent out in February to all our currently known 'former students' were quite satisfactory, so we now have a basis of 25 alumni to start with. The benefits we can offer you via this network are for instance:

- Access to the Alumni-part of the Unigis-website with specific information for, and about, alumni;
- Invitations to (international) Unigis workshops to stay up-to-date with the developments in the field of (Uni)GIS;
- At least once a year an Alumni meeting with interesting speakers and the opportunity to meet in an informal way.

Currently we are looking into additional 'features' like: books, software, subscriptions to magazines or other. So please provide us with your ideas and wishes to make the network work for you. Remember that active participation (in any form) from your side helps us to provide you with the information you need and search for ways to make the UAV even more attractive.

I certainly hope to meet you all in September when we will celebrate our 10th anniversary with a big meeting from which point the alumni will start to meet. Till then we will keep you informed via the UNIGIS website: www.feweb.vu.nl/unigis

Bart Kusse
May 2003

puzzle solution:

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Note from the editor:

It is always the same story with newsletters; everyone thinks that they are a good idea, but no-one has time to write anything. So this newsletter took much longer to come together than you would expect, and there is some time difference between the first contributions and the last. However, I would like to thank those who responded quickly when asked to write something, and I would say to those who were not so quick (you know who you are!) – start writing now, for the next deadline will be very soon! And what else do you have to do over the summer anyway?

Happy holidays to all, Margaret

In future editions of the newsletter we would like to include input from all our readers: students, ex-students (alumni), staff. So please write to us if you have anything to say relating to Unigis or the GIS world – we shall be happy to hear from you.

Send the input to unigis@feweb.vu.nl under the subject 'newsletter'.