

AAPT NEWSLETTER

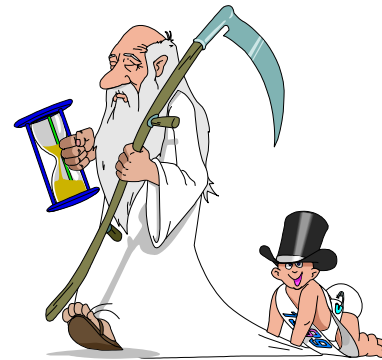


Atlantic Association of Planning Technicians

January 2003

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- Implementation of IMS at Halifax Regional Municipality
- News from COGS
- List Server and Web Site :
New ways of Communication with AAPT members
- AGM Minutes



Workshop 2002 Migrating from ArcView 3.x to 8.x

Who would have thought that so much could be packed into 2 ½ days. Once again, Mike Donnelly, Dave Raymond, with the help of fellow COGS faculty members Peirs Churchill and Ed Symons, presented a very informative workshop.

A quick start to Wednesday morning had everyone learning, "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly" of switching from ArcView 3.x to ArcView 8.x. When to switch and why is basically the question to be answered by the user. Choose the application that fits your environment and requirements. ArcView is scalable and depending on what you want to do and how much you want to spend, the functionality is there. For some of us, ArcView 3.x may be all we really need

but for those more advanced users who are looking to take GIS to the extreme, ArcView 8.x has enhanced cartographic production, has more built in GIS functions and extensions (costly, but there, e.g. Network Analyst is still an extra), has more customization tools and Avenue has been replaced by Visual Basic. Another big change from 3.x to 8.x was in terminology. The name convention change in ArcView projects in 8.x is now .mxd (map doc files) not .apr (avenue projects). If you are considering switching from 3.x to 8.x you may want to keep ArcView 3.2 just to be able to use the ShapeWarp extension as ArcView 8.x will not do rubber sheeting.

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Workshop 2002 Snapshots



Dave Raymond and Don Bickford

Day one: was this problem Good, Bad or Ugly?

The Gang at Break Time “ Networking ?”



Hospitality Suite Laughs

(sorry Lori and Jami)

Workshop continued...

You should also be aware that the coordinate system is ugly and the documentation under HELP is ugly. Given these few pointers, you really want to take time planning out what it is you want to do before you switch and while ArcView 8.x does have some really good changes, for some it will be like starting over.

The second day of the workshop, Ed Symons and Piers Churchill, presented a hands-on look at setting up a low cost web-based GIS server using MapServer, Apache and TOMCAT. There are lots of different products available that are functional and the cost is right (free). For some of us, it was quite a learning experience just to find out what a map server was and how it worked. Stepping through the presentation, one learned that the Web Browser (person requesting information) requests information through the Web Server. The Web Server searches for information on other computers, retrieves it and, sends it back to the Web Browser. While sounding simple, Web Servers are a bit more complex but are easily adapted to various environments. Web Servers such as Apache, MapServer and TOMCAT are able to handle various file formats, are customizable and, have built in features that are necessary in map generation. One of the best sought after feature is the GIS capabilities. Given the use of the Internet, map servers have become very useful because of the ability to access,

use and share data among users, clients and agencies. Both Piers and Ed were very helpful in stepping workshop participants through a hands on approach to setting up our own web server and applying a practical work related task.

On the morning of the 3rd day, and ending off the workshop, participants were provided with the new 2001 Census release - GeoSUITE Software, along with a very informative presentation from Mike Donnelly on the new digital products and how to use the web based mapping resources. The new GeoSUITE 2001 software has the ability to relate all of the geographic census codes used by Statistics Canada and has an excellent glossary for looking up the definitions on all features.

Population and dwelling counts are available by dissemination area and you can search either by name or UID (unique identifier) Code. Statistics Canada has referenced the geographic data to Latitude and Longitude coordinates and Lambert x and y. Under instruction from Mike, participants attempted to rubber sheet the dissemination area data with Provincial data and view the results in ArcView. This was a real hands-on look at using GeoSuite and ArcView together.

In closing, the entire workshop left us with lots to think about because of the amount of material covered in such a short time. Thank you to all the presenters for a job well done.

Atlantic Association of Planning Technicians was formed in September of 1975 in response to the need for a forum expressed by many of those working in the relatively new and growing occupation.

A basic objective of the Association is to establish and promote principles and standards of conduct and competence in the field. Ways in which it is best met are constantly under review and include:

- C the exchange of ideas and information between those working in various aspects of the field throughout the Atlantic Provinces;
- the encouragement of students in the Planning Technology Program at the Nova Scotia College of Geographic Sciences through the presentation of a Merit Award to an outstanding member of each graduating class;
- participating in reviewing compilations of course elements to keep abreast of current employer needs;
- C the establishment of educational programs designed to meet changing needs in Planning Offices.
- C the publication of an annual newsletter.

It is a goal of the Association to provide its members with a comprehensive, on-going educational program. Efforts are made to offer seminars in convenient locations and to keep costs to a minimum.

:excerpt from AAPT brochure

From the President

I mentioned to my wife the other day that it was time to put together another newsletter to the AAPT membership. This task has been hers for so long that I figured, why mess with a good thing? Then she said I had to submit a message. I told her it would be brief, she's the talker in the family as some of you know.

As you see by the size of this one, she has managed to dig up some interesting items and I would like to thank everyone who stepped up to the bat and submitted.

Technology is moving along in our shop at HRM with the upcoming move to Arc 8 in the planning department and the implementation of ARC IMS for GIS viewers in the organization. Sometimes it is a challenge to be ahead of all the changes and at this time I would like to say that more than ever, we need to continue to support our members in training for these changes so that they can face them with informed confidence.

We will be meeting as an executive in the spring to discuss ideas for the 2003 workshop and invite our members to contact us to help in deciding what to look at next. With the introduction of our new list server, ideas can be passed around quickly and we encourage all members to use it. Mark Hebert has spent a lot of his time getting this in place and it is nice to see people exchanging ideas and information.

I look forward to hearing from you about topics for the next get together. And wish everyone a happy and prosperous 2003.

How was that? Long enough dear?

Alden Thurston

**AAPT Annual General Meeting
June 13 2002
Centre of Geographic Sciences
Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE

Ruth Thurston, Past President
Alden Thurston, Nova Scotia
Representative
Peter Corbett, Acting Treasurer
and Membership Chair
Marlene Clements, Secretary
Mike Donnelly
Mark Hebert
David Raymond
Megan Burbidge
Lori Cook
Mike Thompson
Jeff Merrill
Adam Holmes
Brian MacCulloch
Piers Churchill
Britt Roscoe
Ed Symons
Cheryl Mackintosh
Jami Fay
Don Bickford

MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

It was moved by Mike Thompson and seconded by Mark Hebert that the minutes of the June 9, 2000 Annual General Meeting be approved.

Motion Carried

MINUTES
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Feature Article: IMS Implementation for the HRM

Submitted by: Frank King, GIS Systems Analyst,
Halifax Regional Municipality

Over the past two years, I have been involved with the HRM implementation of a software product called ArcIMS. This is ESRI's Internet Mapping Server software that allows you to view and query GIS data using a web browser.

IMS was implemented on the HRM Intranet in August 2001 after a lengthy period of procurement, design work, and development . We contracted the services of the local ESRI office to build the first application. The design work was done by numerous GIS staff members in terms of what layers were to be available, the symbology and scale dependancies, and selecting the tool set. The data was served using a product called, 'SDE for Coverages', which is a freeware product from ESRI that allows you to use graphic coverages over the network. This product was extremely slow, and did limit some of the query functionality. However, it was deemed to be the data solution, as the same data that was used in other GIS applications would be used in ArcIMS..Although this put GIS on the Intranet for everyone in HRM to use, the site was unpopular due to slow draw times.

This changed with the second incarnation of ArcIMS which occurred in April 2002. There were two sites developed, General and Planning, and the first application was discontinued. We changed the GIS data source from SDE for Coverages to shapefile format. This improved the draw times up to ten times, as the data was stored locally on the IMS server, rather than being served over the network by SDE for Coverages. However, this meant a duplication of data, and we needed to put a process in place to keep the data in synch with our other GIS applications that are still using coverages as the data source. Other factors that improved the speed were simple symbology, and cutting the amount of layers per site in half. From about twenty-five in the first application, to about a dozen each in General and Planning.

When a memo was sent to all HRM employees about the new and improved site, the response was extremely positive for the limited amount of people that tried it. However, the majority were sceptical due to the failing of the initial site, and the intimidation of trying a new product. However, this was changed by a series of on-site training sessions offered by the GISS section in June 2002. Also, a user's guide was created to demonstrate how to use the software. Between these two events, the web sites became very popular, as the user community felt more comfortable with the software. Also, word of mouth was more far more effective than a memo sent via e-mail.

There are numerous benefits to using this software. First and foremost is the common platform that users can access this geographic information. By using a browser, the client does not need any additional software to view or query GIS data. This reduces licensing costs, as no other GIS software is needed, nor is any X-terminal emulation software required. PC administration is also reduced, as the user only requires a recommended web browser that comes packaged with the operating system. From a customization perspective, the programming languages are industry standards such as HTML, XML, and JavaScript. This was not always the case with GIS software that had it's own native languages. However, the amount of custom programming we do is limited due to a conscious decision within the GISS section, and ArcIMS' excellent out of the box functionality.

FEATURE CONTINUED:

The IMS implementation has been rewarding, but has been by no means, without its problems. It is still a relatively new technology. Bugs are being discovered as new development takes place. Also, working with web software has introduced other variables where things could go wrong, as IMS is not a stand alone product. Currently, the biggest challenges are sharing resources on the server with other software, and network speed. We have migrated the data that IMS uses towards ArcSDE, a product that allows GIS data to be stored in an RDBMS such as Oracle. Although this is an improvement over SDE for Coverages and shapefiles, there is still a longer wait period on the first draw as IMS connects to Oracle over the network. However, this has eliminated data duplication and the administrative overhead of uploading shapefiles to the IMS server, and has provided us with a more robust data environment.

How does IMS impact planners? The Planning IMS site was the first web site specifically targeted for a user community to show data that is relevant to their business practices. This site allows users to view and query planning specific layers such as zoning lines, and plan areas, in addition to standard layers such as parcels, streets, and civic points. To date, this site has received an average of 60 hits per week, and has enabled P&D staff that did not have access to GIS in the past, to view GIS data without incurring any additional cost to them.

The GISS section is currently developing more IMS sites, each one designed for different user communities. In the past two months, we have added the following sites: Call Centre, Topographic, Transit, and Sewer. As for existing sites, enhancements are made, such as new symbology, new tools, and additional GIS layers. It should also be noted that these IMS sites are not a one person operation. In the past six months, everyone in the GISS section has been involved in with some aspect of IMS. The cartographers define the symbology of the GIS layers; the manager and co-ordinator meet with clients to discuss their needs; while the analysts do the custom programming and administrative functions.

Overall, it has been a very rewarding experience with all of the growing pains we have gone through. We are at the point where numerous employees in the HRM rely on this technology for their day to day work. Either by doing zoning queries on parcels, to telling HRM residents what solid waste collection area they live in. I believe that web-based technology will be the medium to access geographic information in the future.



News From COGS

**Planning and Land
Information Technology,
Nova Scotia Community
College, Lawrencetown**

So, I'm sitting in my office doing something or other, when the phone rings, and a voice says, "hi, its Ruthie, and my husband tells me I have to get a newsletter out; can I have an article?"

So this is it, it's the news from COGS, fall 2002 edition.

Well, Phil's back at work (me). After a year off, all I can say is that I now have a wife who wants to spend all her holidays in the mts. of southern Spain. As nice as it is, and I can recommend it, I'm not too sure if I see this as a step forward. And Mike isn't at work this year. As of the writing of this, he has made it to Winnipeg to visit his and his wife's families, but within a few days of arriving, is reported to have gone into shock as he woke up to snow and had to condition his van for it. The plans are still to head south for the next 5-6 months; rumours of the Gulf Coast and maybe Central America circulate. I saw the van as it left and it was covered with sail boards, etc.

Meanwhile, back at COGS, the year has started up in a somewhat different fashion than normal. Only a few years ago we were telling administration we were over capacity (too many students). Now we are in a position of very few students. As a result, last year the program was restructured (partly to meet College requirements) and we are 'testing out' the new version. A proposal was also made to continue the changes; Mike has this on our web site www.cogs.ns.ca and you are invited to review it and pass comments on to me.

A sad note is that Giselle Winchester, (graduated 1998) died in early Nov. after a prolonged struggle against the cancer that she had lived with for many years.

Ed Symons (who was me last year) is Mike this year. The continual (almost 1 1/2 terms so far) teaching of courses new to him is keeping him on his toes, and for those of you who can remember my office, is creating a challenge as to whose desk is buried the deepest. With two young daughters at home I'm not too sure whether he finds work or home quieter or more disruptive.

Other than that we're into the project development phase of our second year research projects; all having a component of GIS in them. Working titles and clients so far are

- Background for Secondary Planning Strategy for Coldbrook, Kings County,
- Recreation Study for Wolfville,
- Identification of potential wetland restoration sites (Annapolis valley) for DNR,
- Tourism Potential Modelling for the Geomatics Centre,
- Right whale habitat identification for the WWF,
- Analysis of Potential Wind turbine sites for NB Power, and Reclassification of forest types for DNR.

In late Oct., the class attended a URB hearing in Wolfville as part of their law class and was exposed to what one described as well, "it was interesting, but it gave me a headache", probably a common experience to those of you who've had to attend, never mind participate in one of them.

First year is busy learning the basic tools right now and trying to figure out what it's all about. Both classes are composed of the usual mix of direct entry high school, people with other post-secondary education, and those who've been working for awhile. In spite of the normal faculty attempts to drive them crazy with a heavy workload, their spirits appear to be

high.

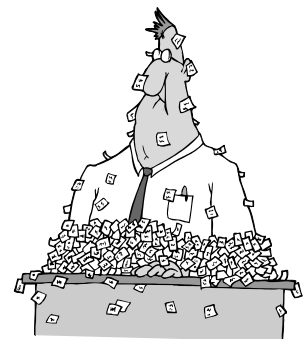
Last year's grads have once again spread across the country, from Calgary to the NWT to Berwick. The employment mix was 3 public sector (NS, and NWT), 2 private sector (NS and Alberta), 1 at U of W furthering his education in planning, 1 unrelated work, and 1 currently unemployed. Last spring's AAPT award winner, Brian MacCulloch, is working in the Annapolis Valley with a consulting firm.

So, once again, a highly trained, capable group of potential grads will be bugging you in a few months for employment contacts., or in the case of first year, for summer jobs (we're still a co-op program). Remember when you were in their shoes, and if you can, lend a hand

Phil Hore, Instructor, COGS

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AGM MINUTES CONTINUED
FROM PAGE 3

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM
MINUTES**

AAPT Bylaw Review

The AAPT Bylaw was not discussed at this meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ruth reported that a letter was received from Grace Proszynska requesting her name be removed from the AAPT email list.

A letter was received from Hillary Campbell discussing an error with depositing membership renewal fees and is attached to the Financial Report for June 2002.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The June 2002 Financial report was distributed showing a balance of \$ 4547.12. Ruth Thurston reviewed the financial report for June 2002.

NEW BUSINESS

Adobe Acrobat Purchase

Mike Donnelly outlined some of the benefits of Adobe Acrobat. He explained that the files can be made available on the AAPT website possibly with an assigned password for AAPT members only. The software costs approximately \$249 US. It was moved by Mike Thompson and seconded by Don Bickford to purchase the Adobe Acrobat Software.

Motion Carried
AAPT Website

Ruth Thurston mentioned that Mark Hebert has taken over the duties of updating and maintaining the AAPT website. Ruth thanked Mark for the great job, and stated that the website was looking good.

Mike Donnelly requested that all members keep him informed on any email changes and to forward current email addresses to him if necessary.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Ruth Thurston put forward the names from the Membership Committee Report for the Executive as follows:

President – Alden Thurston
Vice-President – Mark Hebert
Secretary – Marlene Clements
Treasurer – Peter Corbett
Nova Scotia Representative – Megan Burbidge
PEI Representative – Alton Glen
New Brunswick Representative – Lori Cook
Newfoundland Representative – vacant
Membership Chair – Peter Corbett

Ruth explained the role of the Education Committee and expressed the hope that Ed Symons would take the place of Mike Donnelly, who is taking a year off. Ruth offered to serve on the Committee as well. Ruth then asked for other volunteers. The following people offered to serve: Mike Thompson, Don Bickford, and Jeff Merrill.

All positions were filled by acclamation.

It was moved by Ruth Thurston and seconded by Mike Thompson that the following nominations be appointed as the 2002-2003 AAPT Executive.

Motion Carried

OTHER BUSINESS
List Server for the AAPT

Jeff Merrill suggested the possibility of establishing a list server similar to the NSPAD for AAPT members. After a brief

discussion, Ruth asked Mark Hebert to investigate and bring forward the findings at the next Executive meeting.

Canadian Institute of Planning Technicians

Jeff Merrill questioned the relation of the AAPT to the CIPT, and if joint memberships to both organizations was a possibility. Ruth explained that this had been considered in the past, and it was discovered that it could be fairly expensive and would require revisions to the AAPT bylaws.

Atlantic Planners Institute

Mark Hebert questioned if an AAPT Executive member attended the Atlantic Planners conference. Ruth stated that a member has attended in the past, and it would be possible to send a member if someone was interested.

Presenter Gifts

Ruth thanked the four presenters, Mike Donnelly, Dave Raymond, Ed Symons, and Piers Churchill for the great job. Ruth then presented each with a gift.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mike Thompson and seconded by Don Bickford that the meeting be adjourned at approximately 4:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Marlene Clements



Web Site and List Server

New ways of communicating with AAPT members

Submitted by Mark Hebert

Over the past year the AAPT has gone through several changes in the way it does business. Additions to our website and the implementation of our list server have enhanced our ability to communicate within the association. These valuable tools will help take the association into the future by making it easier for new members to join, see where we have been and where we are going.

Our Web Site , www.aapt.ca was launched a couple of years ago. During the past year I was asked to update the site and make some modifications. If you have visited the site you will notice that it has the same "look and feel" as it previously did, however, new content and additional pages have been added. For example, our bylaws and new membership application forms are now available for download in a variety of formats. In addition, it has proven to be an excellent source for e-mail addresses and names of current members.

Big news this fall was the AAPT list server. It was officially launched on August 2nd 2002. John Mersereau and Grant Cooke, from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations played a vital role in setting us up. Since the server is owned and provided by the Province of Nova Scotia, it was necessary to have a provincial contact. This person is Alan Simpson, a long time member of our organization.

The list server is easy to use, as administrator I am responsible for adding, deleting or editing members. If you wish to subscribe all you have to do is send an e-mail to me at mhebert@rcbplan.ns.ca or visit <http://lists.gov.ns.ca/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=aapt> and pick **Join aapt** . Enter the requested information and a request message will automatically be sent to me. Once added, you will have full access to the list server, by e-mailing aapt@lists.gov.ns.ca . Every person on the list will get the message, so remember, if its personal you may want to send it regular e-mail. If you wish to view previous messages you may do so by accessing the message board via the web site listed above, and entering your e-mail address. No members have a password so leave this field blank. Once you are logged, on pick the Messages button and previous discussions will be visible. Attachments are not saved so you may want to contact the originator of the message, if you think there is one.

To unsubscribe log onto the server and select the unsubscribe button. This automatically removes you from the list. You can also send me an e-mail and I can take you off. To be added again, you may request using the initial subscription method. If you plan on being away you may wish to unsubscribe for the duration.

To date the list server has been used for several discussions such as questions about MapServer and building permit tracking software and notices of updates to the website. We are looking forward to continued use as our members become more aware of its benefits.

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

consists of all executive members
plus:

Mike Donnelly- Centre of
Geographic Sciences,
Mike Thompson- Pictou County
Planning Commission
Don Bickford- Halifax Regional
Municipality
Jeff Merrill - Municipality of
Lunenburg
Ruth Thurston - Halifax Regional
Municipality

Submissions

Articles or ideas for this
newsletter may be forwarded to :
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EDUCATIONAL