

Chapter 19

Developing a Compendium of Ideas on Using the Retrospective Approach to Mine for GIS Nuggets: Initial Considerations

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ABSTRACT

The compendium of ideas paper addresses two needs: 1) Involving more people in the GIS retrospective program; 2) Creating an initial compilation of ideas which promote mining the various literatures – public, learned, popular (media), professional, etc. – for nuggets such as new ways to add to GIS technology, new reasons to add to geospatial information, and, new uses of GIScience research methods. Four design principles (connecting “ideas” and “nuggets”, using a modular approach, limiting modules to those critical to launch the project; and making it easy to modify modules) provide clear directions throughout the compendium-building process. And, each of the four modules (ideas about doing; ideas about objects of attention; principal GIS components as ideas and spawners of ideas; and, ideas as questions and questions as ideas) can be oriented to pursue general or particular interests that are held by all users of GIS technology and GIScience methods, techniques, and operations.

ORIGINS OF THE IDEA OF DEVELOPING A COMPENDIUM OF IDEAS ON USING THE RETROSPECTIVE APPROACH TO MINE FOR GIS NUGGETS

The idea of developing a compendium of ideas arose in part in response to two perceived needs involving the Colloquium on Using the Retrospective Approach to Mine for GIS Nuggets, and a potential conference on the same topic¹.

First, by design the colloquium is a small-scale vetting or pre-test project, and participation in the colloquium in 2015 is limited to 10-12 presentations and associated question-and-answer (Q&A) ses-

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sions. Similarly, plans for a seminar (in lieu of the conference) in 2016 presently call for 3-4 presentations and Q&A time.

On the one hand, these are reasonable numbers for initial meetings on a topic which to date has received limited public attention from academia, business, governments, or professional and trade organizations.

On the other hand, however, investigations and communications since beginning the “GIS retrospective” dialogue in 2013 suggest that numerous potentially pertinent ideas would not be duly considered, and might not receive as much as a mention even if we tripled or quadrupled the number of presentations made at both meetings².

The idea of developing the compendium of ideas was therefore borne in part as a way of overcoming organizational and logistical constraints. In brief, circulation of ideas about colloquium and conference presentations had been largely limited to communications with members of the *AutoCarto Six Retrospective* contact lists³, a sounding board of a half-dozen GIS and GIScience researchers, and several dozen potential contributors⁴.

Their exceptional experience and expertise notwithstanding, the fact remained that only a very small portion of the GIS and GIScience communities was involved in discussions about the colloquium and follow-on activities.

Fortunately, a similar circumstance had been encountered several years ago in my role as Distinguished Research Fellow, Transport Action Canada (TAC), and it was resolved by introducing the idea of a Transport Research Topics (TRT) Compendium⁵.

Constructive lessons learned from the TRT Compendium and adapted here are that developing a compendium which is digitally accessible serves an international audience, opens the door to more ideas being introduced to the discourse, and creates a “host” to which more ideas can be added.

Four tables in the following sections present initial thoughts on the contents of the GIS retrospective compendium, and are the basis for suggesting how the compendium could assist in identifying, prioritizing, and designing missions to mine the literature and other productions for GIS nuggets⁶.

Second, there is the matter of time, which is of paramount importance in the fast-changing fields of GIS and GIScience, as well as in the research, education, training, management, and applications aspects of using GIS and GIScience.

In the case of the GIS retro program, a colloquium in 2015 and a seminar a year later in 2016 means considerable downtime for persons not on the contacts list. Moreover, a year between public meeting events, bridged only by irregular status or event reports, would significantly inhibit receiving feedback from the GIS and/or GIScience communities.

Fortunately, again, previous experience with the TRT Compendium revealed that once the design is complete, a preliminary, indicative body of contents can be compiled relatively quickly from a mix of keyword-based literature searches, list serve inquiries, and surveys of experts, and posted. Then, updates ranging between incremental and comprehensive can be prepared as need requires and resources permit.

The idea of a compendium of ideas has the significant feature, therefore, of being a means to:

1. Achieve continuing visibility of the GIS retrospective program between the colloquium and subsequent activities; and
2. Enable interested parties to become involved in GIS retrospective matters as soon as the compendium is published, and to remain apprised of compendium developments, by subscribing to an email list maintained by B. Wellar, or monitoring <http://www.wellar.ca/wellarconsulting/>

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