

Opportunities and Challenges for the GIS Industry in 2018



Welcome to the first edition of GIS Professional in 2018! Having contributed numerous articles over the past 12 months, I am now delighted to take on the editorial duties for this established and well-respected publication.

Like many professionals who now work in the GIS field, I am a later convert to the industry, having initially focused on a career in Urban and Regional Planning prior to exploring the world of maps. Nevertheless, it is for this reason why I am fully convinced that geospatial technology is the most exciting that exists today, and I am optimistic that it can help decision-makers to both prepare for and overcome the major challenges which our planet faces.

Despite the obvious strengths and advantages of the GIS discipline, I also believe that it faces a number of challenges going forward. Although locational data has been popularised over the past decade thanks to the likes of Google Maps, Bing and apps such as Uber and Airbnb, the GIS technology which underpins these systems is largely misunderstood by the digital masses. For this reason, the wide field which is GIS could, one day, be left by the wayside by a competition which is more specialised in its focus.

Another challenge to the industry, along with the profession, is the fact that the industry is changing at a significant pace, thanks especially to the growing prevalence of open data, cloud computing, and machine learning.

My efforts, therefore, as Editor of GIS Professional, is to help the industry to communicate its news, ideas and perspectives, to better understand itself and its challenges, and to thereby redefine itself as and when it is required.

In terms of content in this edition, we have lots of quality writers from around the world involved, including the UK, USA, South Africa, and New Zealand. Article topics include: the relevance of FOSSGIS for enterprise, insights on GIS careers in government, and an analysis of opportunities in the emerging Agtech sector. We also have an interview with a professional who specialises in mapping underground utilities, and the results of a survey on where the employment opportunities exist in today's GIS industry. As always, this edition includes quality perspectives from our regular columnists, Adena Schutzberg of Esri and Abigail Page of the AGI.

In terms of news and updates in the industry, we also have lots to mention, including: engineering firm Fugro's environmental award for its use of mapping technology, the generous donation to The Nature Conservancy by Esri's own Jack and Laura Dangermond, as well as updates on acquisitions, mergers (and shutdowns!) within the industry.

Before moving onto the content, I'd like to thank you all for your continued support and readership of GIS Professional. I look forward to sharing great news, updates, and ideas with you throughout 2018!

This article was published in GIS Professional February 2018