

# Opening the Door to a World of Opportunities in GIS



For those seeking professional support for their career in GIS joining the AGI is essential. Chair of AGI Council Abigail Page explains the early careers network, support for the chartered geographer accreditation and CPD.

This isn't 'new' news to anyone: in the last 15 years, we've seen tectonic changes in the geospatial industry. Hardware, software, disruptive technologies . . . our sector is changing at a pace that is both alarming and exciting, making it hard to keep up.

What hasn't changed, is the enthusiasm we're seeing among early career professionals. Geography has always been the discipline that opens the door to a world of opportunities – but we believe geographers of all kinds can benefit from having a structured approach to

their careers.

## Progress Depends on Talent

To maintain commercial momentum, and better still to actually *shape* new developments, every organization needs access to the best available talent. People with the enthusiasm, skillsets and ideas to change the world. This is part of what we do: the Association for Geographic Information (AGI) wants to support all UK geospatial companies and professionals, and help them make sure they're at the forefront of '*what's hot*' in geospatial.

In January 2015, we launched a scheme that provides additional support, training and advice to geospatial professionals at the start of their careers. We called it the Early Careers Network (ECN). One of our first forays for the ECN was a survey to our members:

- Approximately 51% of our ECN had less than four years' experience, and 37% of our public sector respondents said lack of opportunities impacted their careers.
- However, 75% were interested in voluntary collaborative projects to gain further experience.

Geographers want to learn: it's in our nature. The next generation of GI professionals will help us all to stay abreast of new developments; and companies always benefit from the introduction of fresh perspectives. We need to capture that enthusiasm, and support it in myriad ways.

## AGI Membership for Students is Free

Our ECN is aimed at those with less than 10 years commercial GI experience. It's for professionals and students alike, and AGI membership for students is free. Our goal is to create a vibrant community of early career GI professionals – making friends, identifying useful career contacts. Learning, all the time. We also provide a framework that supports those individuals' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in different ways: we offer a CPD track that sits alongside the CGeog route to recognition.

Becoming a Chartered Geographer (CGeog) is a mark of significant achievement: the RGS (IBS) qualification is the only internationally recognised professional accreditation for those with competence, experience and professionalism in the use of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills in the workplace. We work closely with the Royal Geographical Society, and we've been aligning our activities to provide better support on the route to that recognition of achievement.

## CPD - Two Ways to Track Progress

However, we're also seeing data scientists, analysts and business development specialists reaching out to us all the time. And with that in mind, it's worth remembering that a separate track of CPD attained through the AGI can bridge the "I have a record of working with ..." gap, which people may not want to fill with CGeog. Chartered status isn't for everyone. Some people aren't quite ready for it; others have different career paths in mind; different people learn in different ways, too. Advances in every sector depend on a variety of skillsets and approaches.

CPD recording through the AGI can help track personal development as well as maintaining the log needed for CGeog. In addition to receiving a well-respected certificate showing each year's personal progress, our CPD scheme is free to join – another good incentive to take part.

# One Ambition

Whichever path people choose to further their careers, however our industry changes, a structured approach says much about an individual's commitment to career progression. Working in tandem with the RGS (IBS), we'll be here to help anyone who wants geography to become their world.

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