

THE LONE STAR

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Letter from the President



Being busy does not always mean real work. The object of all work is production or accomplishment and to either of these ends there must be forethought, system, planning, intelligence, and honest purpose, as well as perspiration.

-Thomas Edison

Well, I can say for sure that we've been busy! And I know that's been translating to real production. 2017 was a great year for URISA Texas, but by no means are we done!

First and foremost, we become the URISA 2017 Chapter of the Year! What an amazing accomplishment for our Chapter! I have to give a huge thanks to our Board of Directors for stepping up and putting in the perspiration Edison referred to.

Our Monthly Speaker Series continues to offer webinars covering a wide array of topics, including asset management, TxDOT's use of GIS technologies, GISCorps volunteer efforts, new Esri solutions, the 2020 Census, sea level rise and flooding, LiDAR, and the Texas Emergency GIS Response Team. We already have a drone webinar lined up for March, and several more in the works.

We continue to hold Mappy Hours all over the state, as well as one at the Esri User Conference in San Diego. We'd love to have more, so reach out if you'd like to help coordinate a Mappy Hour in your neck of the woods!

We are starting to offer more workshops as well. We held three URISA-Certified workshops on "Asset Management: Planning, Strategy, and Implementation" in Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio. Look out for an advanced part 2 of this workshop coming soon, as well as open source workshop later in the year.

We jumped onto **social media** more this last year. Like/follow/subscribe to us down on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#) to stay connected.

Behind the scenes, we have worked to get URISA Texas **more organized**, by expanding our Board of Directors from 3 to 9 members, structured up our ongoing communication and planning efforts, and

Contents:

[Chapter President's Letter](#)

[2018 Chapter Board](#)

[DCS GIS Solutions Group: The resource you didn't know you needed!](#)

[An Interview with Mark Valentino, GISP – 20 years in GIS](#)

[Upcoming Conferences and Workshops](#)

[URISA Texas Events](#)

[Interesting Links](#)



activated several focused internal committees. 2017 was a year to really work on getting our feet under us better.

2018 should see even more activities take off, but first, we'll be sending out a **member poll** to have YOU tell us what you need from us. We want your input on our workshops, webinars, and other events. I look forward to seeing where we can go with you help.

To close out, I want to thank each and every one of the URISA Texas Board members over the last 2 years for their hard work. The great Packers football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." I truly tip my hat for all of their individual commitment to making URISA Texas successful. **Thank you, all.**

Happy mapping!

Chris Akin, GISP
URISA Texas President

Introducing the 2018 URISA Chapter Board:

President:	Chris Akin	Members-at-Large:	Patrick Young
Vice-President:	Sumant Mallavaram		Danny Haverlah
Secretary:	Olesya Powers		Dan Goldberg
Treasurer:	Tina Rust		Tina Hansen
			Brian King

See [*2018 Chapter Leadership*](#)

DCS GIS Solutions Group: The resource you didn't know you needed!

By: Michelle Swindle

Like most, when you hear DCS GIS Solutions Group you think it's a new GIS firm, but in actuality it's a statewide committee that leverages resources to local, regional, state, and educational agencies. The Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS), along with the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR), established the Data Center Services (DCS) GIS Solutions Group to help address the complexities of geographic information systems in the state. The Solutions Group provides a platform for sharing information and making unified decisions that

will better serve geographic information departments at state agencies.

Participating Agencies

Participating Members are from Department of Information Resources (DIR), (CSEC), Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Texas Water Board (TWDB) by way of Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS).





The Group also has Associate Members (without voting rights) from Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), and Texas General Land Office (TXGLO).

The Group makes decisions based on the consensus of its 7 primary representatives along with discussion of its 5 associate members, without voting authority. There are new positions opening up for regional and educational representatives to provide feedback on current and future projects.

Current Projects



The Group was founded as a way to manage the Google Imagery pilot project now called the Texas Imagery Service. Based on its success DCS decided it could bring other resources to agencies with little buying power.

Orthoimagery Program (TOP) imagery and approximately 16 times greater resolution than the 1-meter National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) imagery.

The Texas Imagery Service is a mapping service that is available on-demand. It is licensed, hosted, and served by Google. It offers 6-inch resolution imagery, which is four times higher resolution than the 1/2-meter Texas

The Service is a restricted license and is only for use by public organizations in the State of Texas (ie. state, regional, educational, and local governments). Contractors for any public organization are permitted to use the imagery as long as the project or program being



performed directly supports the public organization. Rights to use the imagery terminate upon completion of work by the outside entities. The sponsoring agency will need to request an imagery link on behalf of any contractor or outside 3rd party.

Making Google imagery available to all public agencies in Texas distributes the cost, making the imagery and the updates affordable to all.

For more information on the Texas Imagery Service click on the [FAQ](#) page.

Proposed Future Projects

The Group is looking to offer LiDAR imagery for the state similar to the Google Imagery Project. They are still looking for a partner for this project and defining the requirements. Another project they are exploring is a statewide database for parcel and address information. Other topics for future projects include Enterprise Data Storage and Access;

*Michele Swindle is currently GIS Manager at the City of Carrollton, TX, contracted via Conduent.
LinkedIn profile: [Michelle Swindle](#)*



interlocal data sharing solutions; and Disaster Recovery services.

How can you learn more about the GIS Solutions Group?

DCS has opened new seats for local, regional, and educational representatives to provide direction and insight to the state level representatives. I have been welcomed as the current local representative, and my term will expire at the end of that state fiscal year (August 31, 2018). If you are interested in being a local, regional, or educational representative, please reach out to me directly at Michelle.Swindle@cityofcarrollton.com. Currently, I am coordinating efforts with local and regional agencies to keep you up-to-date on the Group's objectives and receive user interest on future projects. I am looking to organize quarterly forums and/or email blasts based on user feedback.

Interview with Mark Valentino, GISP

By: Sherrie Hubble

Mark Valentino is a Senior Systems Administrator with Freese and Nichols, Inc., a multi-discipline consulting firm based in Fort Worth, Texas. Mark works in the Business Technology Department and provides technical support and instruction to GIS users throughout the company. I asked Mark if he'd be willing to sit with me for an interview. He's been a colleague of mine for almost eight years and is the most senior GIS professional in FNI. Mark's career spans almost twenty years, the last thirteen with FNI. As the company has grown, he's also seen a growing demand from clients for GIS services.

S: First question. How long have you worked in the GIS profession?

M: I started with ArcGIS 3.1, so I'd have to say 1998 or 99. Almost 20 years. I don't even remember, it's been that long.



S: When things were still command prompt?

M: No, with 3.1 it was the first graphic user interface.

S: But weren't some of the geoprocessing tools still using command prompt?

M: That would have been ArcInfo, but it was a completely separate product. It was all command line that worked with coverages. The big thing about 3.1 was the addition of shapefiles. When ArcGIS 8 came, that's when geodatabases appeared.

S: So what brought you into the GIS profession?

M: The people I worked with were too specific when I asked for general graphics on the scale of the state of Texas. I just needed rough locations to mark some points, and they never would give me what I wanted. So I learned the software to get what I needed. That's partly how I started.

S: And this was working for whom?

M: The Army Corp of Engineers.

S: When you were working for the Corp, you were overseas for a period of time, right?

M: Correct. I spent eight months in Afghanistan and four months in Kuwait and Iraq. During the invasion into Iraq, I was in Kuwait until they took Baghdad. After that I went to Baghdad to help restore power and rebuild poles.

S: How long afterward did you start at Freese and Nichols?

M: I started here January 3, 2005. I left Iraq in 2003. Memorial Day 2003 is when I came home.

S: When you came on board with Freese and Nichols, what was your formal job title?

M: GIS Coordinator.

S: So, you were GIS Coordinator until just recently, right?

M: It's all semantics, but people have certain skills and they had to find a title to better describe my responsibilities than just GIS Coordinator, so I became the Senior Systems Administrator. Primarily, I still oversee all the enterprise parts of the GIS day to day, but I still show the how-tos to keep everyone current on that. I do the systems, the SDE, databases, servers, ArcGIS Online, and engineering software integrations.

S: You have a lot of responsibilities, but can you walk me through a typical day -- like what percentage of the time you spend troubleshooting with other analysts or engineers or how much time you spend on the phone with clients or support, etc.?

M: I spend hours on the phone. There's no day that's typical, because I handle all the VMWare and the farm that has all the engineering modeling software that integrates with GIS and maintain that. I handle all the licensing -- not just ESRI -- but AutoCAD and all these other very expensive software packages. But, my knowledge of ESRI's licensing helps with the rest and I try to teach others. With whatever happens during the day, I try to keep everything secure and keep everybody going. Today I'm editing topologies.

S: Which is more of the technical stuff than an analyst would typically work on?

M: That's correct. It's for 911 and it's just every time I try to hand it off, our analysts get busy with other projects. It takes time to learn the concepts with this kind of data. I've been doing it since I came to work here 13 years ago.

S: So, you've said your day-to-day is never typical. Is this an aspect of your job that you particularly enjoy -- new challenges and problems to solve?

M: Yes.

S: What are some other aspects of your job that you enjoy?



M: I just like the variety of it – working with all the large datasets, the applications, some of the modeling and the databases. We’ve come up with different ways to work through these extremely large models that integrate with GIS and put servers on the back-end resources to help with processing. I also do troubleshooting on multiusers with the engineering models to find why they’re not working. I don’t necessarily know what all the results mean, but I know how to run and monitor them to make recommendations on what it really takes to run it.

S: Freese and Nichols is primarily an engineering firm, but we’ve become more involved lately with standalone GIS projects and services. Is there a project that you’ve been involved with at FNI that has been one of your favorites or something that you found you gained the most experience from?

M: Actually, the regional 9-1-1 that I’ve worked on has been enlightening on how the city planning and city council names and numbers roads and ranges, all the bureaucracy that goes with that, and how it’s done. It’s not a simple as, “This is what the name is.” There are a lot of people involved. There are some cases where a city official will tell you a street name is wrong, and we then find different systems we check have different names. Then when you go to the physical location you find the wrong sign was put up. So, nobody *really* knows where they live.

For one other project, we were cataloguing water meters and valves. I probably collected almost all of them, but I had to find patterns to locate errors because we were questioned about inconsistencies within the data. It appeared no one on the subcontractor’s staff had tracked the changes and once we made comparisons, we found that users were finding duplicate IDs and just adding extra digits to them. They were nine or ten digits depending on the number they started with.

S: So you did the field collection on that project?

M: I did field collection. I did all the attributing and others helped with field collection, too.

S: Was this standard GPS, ArcPad or other collection method?

M: Just GPS. There wasn’t really the technology there, just a Trimble. This was in 2005.

S: It’s amazing how far things have come along just since 2005. During your time at FNI, you’ve done some presentations on GIS, CADD and their integration. Can you tell me a bit about the topic you presented with Mike Gardner, our CAD coordinator?

M: At Autodesk University, which is their equivalent to the ESRI User Conference. We presented how to bring GIS data directly into CAD without having to convert or translate it. So, we could use the GIS contours and layers and CADD users could generate their surfaces. They could use connectivity of their CAD work and utilities to bring it in with all the attributes and it’s all spatially-referenced, along with the precision of CAD.

We did that two years in a row and it went well. I think the room had a hundred people in it, sharing computers. It was a hands-on lab and we had an hour and a half to go over the different parts.

S: I know one of your missions in life is to try to get as many ESRI certifications as possible. So how many certifications do you now have?

M: The way it was working was based on the version of the software. I have a total of five. They’re for versions 10.1, 10.4 and Enterprise Associate in Administration. I have taken almost all the exams and yes, I have not passed them all. Anybody who has taken the tests and passed, I know they really know GIS. They must have a broad knowledge of every aspect of GIS.

Most tests I’ve taken are betas and they are looking at different ways of wording the questions and there are twice as many of them.



Sometimes there are a few that are not quite right, but that's the whole point. They are always finding new methods and ways to improve the questions. But you have to keep on top of things because the technology will pass you by.

S: Based on changes and how fast things are moving along, what are one or two things you're excited about for the future of GIS?

M: Well, most of them are already here, but it's the use of ArcGIS Pro and ArcGIS Online and advanced features that are being added to both of them. We can be at a disadvantage because we have to wait for third-party applications to work with ESRI before we can fully implement Arc Pro. Even though we still use Arc applications immediately when they come out, that integration working from the start would make it easier.

S: I'm sure it's at least helpful for our analysts to use it where they can until it's fully implemented, right?

M: Yes, and it processes so much faster and is more ideal for geoprocessing tasks. It is *so* much faster – stuff that Desktop can't do.

S: This is last question and we'll wrap up. How do you feel about the cartographic functionality of Pro?

M: It's better because you can have multiple layouts. You could do this in the ArcGIS 3.x series – have multiple layouts – and you can now do that again with Pro. You can also use those multiple layouts to have windows where you can pan in one and the other will move with it.

S: Thank you so much for taking the time to sit down and talk with me, Mark.

Sherrie Hubble is a Senior GIS Analyst with Freese and Nichols, Inc., Water/Wastewater Modeling and Master Planning Fort Worth, TX



Mark Valentino is Senior Systems Administrator, with Freese and Nichols, Inc., Business Technology Department Fort Worth, TX



Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Conferences

GIS/CAMA Technologies Conference

Houston, TX, March 19-22, 2018 For more information visit: <http://www.urisa.org/gis-cama-technologies-conference/>

ESRI FedGIS Conference

Washington, DC, March 20-21, 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.esri.com/events/federal>

Annual SCAUG Conference

San Antonio, TX, April 10-12, 2018
For more information visit: <http://open-scaug.opendata.arcgis.com/>

AAG Annual Meeting

New Orleans, LA, April 10-14, 2018
For more information visit:
<http://annualmeeting.aag.org/>

Esri Southwest User Conference

Denver, CO, April 10-12, 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.esri.com/events/southwest-user-conference>

TNRIS 2018 GeoRodeo

Austin, TX, May 4, 2018
For more information visit:
<https://tnris.org/georodeo/2018/>

NCTCOG Regional GIS Meeting

Ft Worth, TX, May 15, 2018
200 E. Weatherford St, Tarrant County Family Law Center
For more information visit:
<http://gis.nctcog.org/meetings.asp>

Esri User Conference

San Diego, CA, July 9-13, 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.esri.com/events/geodesign-summit>

GIS-PRO & CalGIS 2018, Annual URISA Conference

Palm Springs, CA - October 9-12, 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.urisa.org/gis-pro>

Workshops & Training

SCAUG Lunch & Learn / Meet & Mingle

Brookhaven College & Addison Ice House, Farmers Branch & Addison, TX, March 21, 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.scaug.org/event-2851261>

Webinar: Women in Geospatial

Hosted by GITA; Thursday, March 22, 2018 at 1:00 pm CT
For more information visit: [Women in Geospatial](#)

Slice of Py – Python for GIS Workshop - A one-day only Free event!

Austin, TX, March 31, 2018
For more information visit:
<https://www.meetup.com/Austin-GIS-User-Group/events/248547111/>
[Workshop details](#) and [Registration](#)

URISA GIS Leadership Academy (1 of 2)

Columbus, OH, April 9-13 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.urisa.org/education-events/urisa-gis-leadership-academy/>

URISA GIS Leadership Academy (2 of 2)

Salt Lake City, UT, July 23-27 2018
For more information visit:
<http://www.urisa.org/education-events/urisa-gis-leadership-academy/>

TNRIS Education and Training

TCEQ Computer Training Lab, Austin, TX, March 21, 2018
For classes and schedule visit:
<https://tnris.org/training/>



URISA Texas Events!

URISA Texas hosts Mappy Hours all over the state! Watch for announcements – there may be one soon close to you!



URISA Texas' January 2018 Mappy Hour in North Austin at Red's Porch



URISA Texas' January 2018 Mappy Hour in Irvin

SPEAKER SERIES:

URISA Texas will be hosting the next webinar in its 2018 series on March 27, 2018. The March topic is *“Lessons Learned Developing a UAS Program for Local Government.”* The presenter is Mark Buie, GIS Coordinator for the City of Mesquite:



MAPPY HOURS:

March's Mappy Hour will be in Corpus Christi at the Brewster Street Ice House. For details and to sign up for this fun and relaxing event, visit our [events page](#).

April's Mappy Hour will be in Austin at Red's Porch Quarry. For details and to sign up for this fun and relaxing event, visit our [events page](#).

SCAUG! Join us April 9th in San Antonio for a special SCAUG Conference Mappy Hour at The Friendly Spot. Check out our [events page](#) for more details.

Keep an eye out for these upcoming events:

- 2018 Mappy Hours
- 2018 Monthly Speaker Series

Visit our [events page](#) for more details.



Interesting Links

URISA Texas members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Their paths often allow them to come across interesting material. We are pleased to share the following with you in hopes that it may be of help or interest to you.

The Newberry is a renowned independent research library located in Chicago. It's open to the public without charge and is home to a broad array of collections and research materials. Among its program offerings is an online interactive map with data on U.S. historical county and state boundaries, early 1600's-2000. The Atlas of Historical Boundaries data, in shapefiles and KMZ formats, are available for download by state and for the entire U.S. See it at <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html>

The Atlas of ReUrbanism is the result of an initiative by the National Trust of Historic Preservation to build the successful, inclusive, and resilient cities of tomorrow. The Atlas is a tool for urban leaders and advocates better understanding and leveraging the opportunities that exist in American cities. It takes the massive amount of data currently available about cities and makes it more accessible, allowing for the exploration and discovery of connections between older buildings and economic, demographic, environmental measures. Check it out at: <http://forum.savingplaces.org/act/pgl/atlas>

We've just experienced another hour jump with Daylight Saving Time (DST). So, maybe you'd be interested in the entry by Andy Woodruff, web cartographer and blogger, that he calls "*Where to hate daylight saving time and where to love it*". Woodruff decided to take a closer look at this twice yearly change in our clocks. He created an interactive map where you can see the effect over the continental U.S. of moving sunrise and sunset times. See the effects of DST as currently observed, if DST were abolished, and if it was always in effect: <http://andywoodruff.com/blog/where-to-hate-daylight-saving-time-and-where-to-love-it/>

The Geologic Atlas of Texas (GAT) is a series of 38 hard copy map sheets depicting surface geology for the entire state of Texas at a scale of 1:250,000. In October 2002, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), in cooperation with the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS), embarked on a project to digitize all 38 GAT hardcopy map sheets and compile them into a single, stand-alone geodatabase. Completed in 2007, the project resulted in a rich, digital dataset containing more than 145,000 geologic features in Texas and portions of neighboring states. The Texas Geology Web Map Viewer allows you to explore all of the rich data at a touch of a button. You can find it here at <https://txpub.usgs.gov/DSS/texasgeology/>.

[2017 ESRI Storytelling with Maps Contest winners](#)

URISA's GISCorps just launched a new website! It focuses on the GISCorp mission of coordinating short term, volunteer-based GIS services to communities in need worldwide. The website includes a map that show where its volunteers are located and a map that identifies its missions from 2004 to today. Check out its Featured Projects section that highlights GISCorps volunteers activities. <https://www.giscorps.org/>

Podcast discussions on [geography & geospatial technologies](#)



Thank you to our Sponsors!

URISA Texas would like to thank Dunaway Associates, Esri, and AllTerra Central (Formerly Western Data System & Martin Instrument) for their generous donations.



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Would you like an article, event, or GIS related group included in the Lone Star? Contact us at info@urisatexas.org.

