

April 2021

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April 2021 Newsletter

Dear NYS GIS Association Member,

Here are a few items of news.

- Professional Development Webinars & Call for Panelists
- Monroe Community College Offers GIS Micro-Credential
- Meet Association Member Brian Tomaszewski
- Upcoming Opportunities & Events



Read on and enjoy,

The NYS GIS Association Communications Committee

Professional Development Webinars & Call for Panelists

The Professional Development Committee is offering two learning opportunities for us in May! Read on for details and links to register. **Share your expertise by serving as a panelist for one of these webinars.** [Click here](#) if you are interested.

- Wednesday, May 12 at 12 PM | **The Value of GIS Skills in the Work Place** | Panelists: To be announced | [Click here](#) for more information and to register.
- Wednesday, May 26 at 12 PM | **GIS Student Project Showcase** | Panelists: To be announced | [Click here](#) for more information, including guidelines and deadlines for submission, and to register.



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MCC Offers GIST Micro-Credential

Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY now has a brand new 3-class (9-credit) GIST micro-credential. The 9-credit micro-credential is geared toward GIST professionals and covers skills in database acquisition, data management, Python for GIS, and web mapping.

The first course in the micro-credential, *Geospatial Data Acquisition and Management*, will be offered this Fall 2021 semester.

MCC also offers our popular 24-credit [GIST Certificate](#).

If you would like to learn more about the program or are interested in enrolling, please feel free to reach out to Catherine DuBreck at cdubreck001@monroecc.edu or Professor Jon Little jlittle@monroecc.edu with any questions.



Meet Association Member Brian Tomaszewski

1. What made you interested in taking up GIS/geospatial technology as a career, and how did you end up in the field of GIS?

I've always had a love of history and geography as far back as elementary school. As an undergraduate at SUNY Albany, I had wonderful experiences doing field archaeology in Mexico and New York State. Mapping is a fundamental part of archaeological investigation. So, in 1999, I was able to get

working in the information technology sector for a few years, I found that I really was missing GIS, so I was able to get a job in Buffalo as a GIS programmer analyst. This was when Visual Basic 6 and Esri Map Objects were the cutting-edge technology. I also did some of my first writing about GIS that was published in Esri's ArcNews. So, the combination of working with GIS technology and writing about GIS led me to pursue a GIS/geospatial technology career in academia.



2. What is your educational background?

I have a BA degree in Anthropology and Mediterranean Archeology from SUNY Albany. When I was in my early thirties, I decided to go back to school to get a master's degree and received an MA in Geography from SUNY Buffalo. Initially, I thought that would be the end of my schooling as I went after the master's degree to advance my career in the private sector. However, after getting a little taste of academia, I decided to go on for more and completed a Ph.D. in Penn State's Geography department where I studied Geographic Information Science and Visualization.

3. Can you explain your job and what you do there?

I'm an Associate Professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). My job is a mix of teaching, research, and service. For teaching, I've created a series of undergraduate and graduate classes related to GIS topics that range from introduction to geospatial technologies, how to use software tools like ArcGIS Pro, and more specialized topics such as spatial algorithms and problem-solving and geographic visualization. I also developed one of the first general education immersion experiences in GIS, which exposes students to the possibilities of GIS in a wide range of fields from Civil Engineering to Digital Humanities to Imaging Science. My research activities primarily center on the use of GIS in disaster management and international humanitarian crisis situations. My work has been funded by the US National Science Foundation for research such as developing serious GIS-based games for disaster management, understanding the capacity to use geographic information for disaster management, and forced displacement and refugee issues. I am actively engaged in international GIS research in Europe, Africa, and Asia on these topics. I recently published the second edition of my book, *Geographic Information Systems for Disaster Management*, which was highlighted in this [Newsletter](#) in January. My service work involves helping RIT develop its international educational presence. I also share my expertise with organizations such as the National Science Foundation by reviewing scientific research proposals. I also review scholarly publications submitted to academic journals.

4. How has your job changed since the onset of the COVID pandemic?

Having been engaged in international research for many years, I was already very comfortable using tools like Skype and Zoom and engaging in relationships using virtual meeting technology. If anything, the pandemic has created the opportunity for new research and awareness of how mapping and geospatial technology and data can support this new form of disaster.

5. How have you shared your expertise in GIS with others in NYS either formally or informally?

I mostly interact with the NYS GIS community through GISNY-L. I used that forum to share YouTube videos from my teaching with the broader community. I am also actively engaged in my home area of Rochester New York/Finger Lakes. We have a wonderful GIS Special Interest Group ([GIS-SIG](#)) that holds an annual conference that I often attend, have been honored to be the keynote speaker for, and often bring my students to attend.

6. What is the most interesting project that you have worked on and why?

The most interesting project I worked on is the Refugee Geographic Information Systems or [RefuGIS Project](#). This project was funded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and was the world's first innovation project to empower refugees to use GIS to improve their lives. I co-created this project with an excellent team of collaborators from UNHCR in the Za'atari refugee camp of northern Jordan. The refugees who I work with on this project are perhaps some of the best students I've ever had. They are motivated, quick to learn, creative, and deeply appreciate the opportunities this project provides.

7. What do you like most about mapping?

I enjoy both the technical and artistic/creative aspects of mapping. Over the past 4,000 years with maps, we've gone from cuneiform tablets to android tablets, but the same ideas exist - capturing and graphically representing data about the world we live in through a map. With my background in field archaeology, I've always enjoyed the process of mapping: being out in the field, gathering data, and creating knowledge from that data. For me, maps can also inspire a sense of curiosity, introspection about the historical context of places, and inspiration for travel destinations.

8. What place have you visited that has made the most lasting impression on you and why?

I have traveled all over the world, so this is a difficult question to answer. However, a few places do jump out to me, ranging from very dark experiences such as visiting Auschwitz in Poland and seeing the actual bodies of 1994 Rwandan Genocide victims at a memorial site to standing next to the Moai stone heads on Easter Island, to the magical sense of place that one experiences in the Faroe Islands. I also had an amazing [trip](#) in 2019 on a 30,000-ton freighter ship

definitely made an impression on me.

9. If you could one other place in the world, where would it be and why?

I've always had an armchair-traveler interest in going to Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories of northern Canada. This might come from what I would call "cartographic voyeurism." What I mean here is looking at a map of Northern Canada and just pondering all of the vast wide-open space that exists and wondering what it would like to be there.

10. Do you have any specific advice or philosophies from working in the GIS world?

In addition to staying current in the field, it is important to remember that the world is not points, lines, and polygons - maps have discursive power. For example, during the pandemic, a polygon that represents X number of cases in a County is blurring away the individual realities that people are facing. Try to use GIS to bring context and perspective to the people that you are mapping.

Upcoming Opportunities & Events

- NEARC Community Event | Mapping Inequality Workshop | 29 April 2021, Noon to 1:15 p.m. | [More Information](#)
- NYS GIS Association Webinar | The Value of GIS Skills in the Work Place | 12 May 2021, 12 p.m. | [More Information](#)
- NEARC Spring Conference | 18 May 2021 | [More Information](#)
- NEARC's Spring Social Mappy Hour | 18 May 2021, Post Conference (Exact Time TBD)
- Mapping USA: Spring 2021 | 20, 21, & 22 May | [More Information](#)
- NYS GIS Association Webinar | GIS Student Showcase | 26 May 2021, 12 p.m. | [More Information](#)
- Education Summit @Esri UC | 10 - 13 July 2021 | [More Information](#)
- Esri User Conference | 12 - 16 July 2021 | [More Information](#)
- NYGeoCon | Tentatively scheduled for 20 - 21 September 2021
- URISA's GIS-Pro Annual Conference | Baltimore | 3 - 6 October 2021 | [More Information](#)
- NEARC Fall Conference | 17 - 20 October 2021 | New Haven, CT | [More Information](#)



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