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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the inaugural issue of JOSIS: the Journal of Spatial Information Science. In this short editorial I will set out, as best I can, the philosophy underlying JOSIS and the motivation for its development.

JOSIS is an online publication and all articles are free to access for any person.

This one sentence really expresses a large part of the philosophy behind JOSIS. The Internet now provides the mechanism by which scientists can communicate with each other in the form of camera-ready scientific papers, data sets, announcements, letters, etc. The traditional approach through print and mail is no longer necessary. Yet publishers are still adopting an approach which requires authors to freely submit their papers, reviewers to freely provide their critiques, and readers to spend exorbitant sums of money to access the results, while as often as not the copyright on the work is retained by the publishers. In the days when print and post were the only mechanisms by which such work could be communicated, there was justification for this process; there were substantial costs in hard-copy journal production and communication. But now the justification has been all but removed, and new technologies provide more appropriate options.

Of course, the utilization of the Internet as a means of communication does not necessarily imply better distribution models. For example, there is a proliferation of so-called “open-access” journals that are free to readers, but not free to authors. JOSIS is a truly open-access journal in that neither authors nor readers are obliged to pay. We rely on open source software as a platform for JOSIS, time that we willingly give, and the freely offered services of the academic community. Of course, there are some costs associated with this enterprise, and we very much appreciate any donations from members of the community to defray running costs.

So, we have the means of production and communication. We have a community of excellent scientists who to a greater or lesser extent share our philosophy and are willing to act as our editorial board and reviewing community. The time is ripe to move the process on.

Many of you have commented on the importance of, and need for, an on-line and open-access journal in our field. Well, now we have one. Our aspiration is to make this the best journal in our field, not only in terms of the technical quality of its papers, but also due to its novel format. For example, papers may be discussed before being formally accepted, and under Announcements there is room to post conferences, vacant positions, courses, and other news, as well as major discussion points in the area of spatial information science. However, if this journal is to be a success, it needs you. In the first instance, it needs you to submit one or more excellent papers to it. The second task will then be to submit timely reviews.

The old approaches still dominate, with academics trapped by research assessment procedures linked to old technologies. This is a trap that we have set ourselves and from

which it is in our power to escape. So, in conclusion, I commend this journal to you, and hope that you will support it by visiting and contributing to the various components of the web site, joining in discussions, sending us notices, submitting scientific papers, and contributing your time by providing timely reviews when requested. We are new, and so are open to any comments or suggestions you have about the web site, or any other aspects of JOSIS. By supporting JOSIS, we will all be making our contributions to moving scientific communication into the 21st century. JOSIS is open for business!

Mike Worboys
University of Maine, USA, July 2010