

Geographical Information Science

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The meaning of the letter 'S' in the acronym GIS appears to have been the subject of some debate in the world of geographers over the last 20 years or so (Wright et al., 1997; Pickles, 1997). Geographical information science or geographical information systems? Goodchild (2010) describes geographic information as information which links an entity to a location on or near the earth's surface as well as to a specific point in time, he also quotes the definition of geographic information science put forward by David Mark: "The development and use of theories, methods, technology, and data for understanding geographic processes, relationships, and patterns." Geographical information systems have their roots in cartography. Schuurman (2004), who broadly describes geographical information science as the theoretical basis for GIS, points to the instance of Ian McHarg in 1962, who was tasked with planning the route of a road through an area with several different types of land cover. He set out to pick the route that would cause the least amount of disturbance to the habitats in the area. In order to do this he devised a method called overlaying which involved drawing each piece of land cover on a separate sheet of tracing paper and laying them over each other. This formed the foundation for spatial analysis and provided the basis for what would later become the layers we now use today in GIS. Another early example mentioned by Schuurman is that of John Snow, who located the source of a cholera outbreak in London by making a dot

density map of each individual case. The spatial data this provided him with allowed him to narrow down the source to specific water pumps in the city. Though both of the above examples are far more simple than w..... middle of papergraphic information science. International Journal of Geographic Information Science, 26(12), pp. 2227-2237. Pickles, J., 1997. Tool or Science? GIS, Technoscience and the Theoretical Turn. Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 87(2), pp. 363-372. Schuurmann, N., 2004. GIS: A Short Introduction. Oxford: Blackwell. Sengupta, R. and Yan, C., 2004. A Hybrid Spatio - Temporal Data Model and Structure (HST - DMS) for Efficient Storage and Retrieval of Land Use Information. Transactions in GIS, 8(3), pp. 351 - 366. Wright, D. J., Goodchild, M. F. and Proctor, J. D., 1997. Demystifying the persistent ambiguity of GIS as "tool" versus "science". Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 87(2), pp. 346-62. Wright, D. J., 2012. Theory and application in a post GISystems world. International Journal of Geographic Information Science, 26(12), pp. 2197-2209.

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