

GIS in the Real World: An Interview

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, an *informational interview* is “the bedrock interview of job searching” (2012) and therefore a great tool with which y’all should be acquainted!

The goal of this activity is to give you an opportunity to become acquainted with informational interviewing, and through that the variety of professions and job prospects in the geographic information sciences. You will interact with GIS professionals, and see how they use many of the same skills we have used/discussed throughout the semester in this course. And, for the benefit of *your* local “GIS network” (*your classmates*), you will share your findings in class.

The Interview

1. Peruse the articles below (or others of your choosing) to become acquainted with this device called an *informational interview*. What is its purpose? How might you use it to *your* best advantage? What are the key types of information you’ll want to be sure to collect?
2. Find a good interview candidate*, a person that performs a professional “gis job”. You might consult gis-specific search engines/services (e.g. www.gisjobs.com or <http://socialgis.org/> or <http://edcommunity.esri.com/Careers/career-videos> or <http://www.careervoyages.gov/geospatialtechnology-gis.cfm> or Esri’s site <http://www.esri.com/what-is-gis/jobs>) for ideas. In the past, students have had good experiences tracking down GIS professionals using www.Linkedin.com. I’d be curious to know whether Esri has identified *your* subject’s job title in their list.
3. Set up a time to visit with your interview subject at their workplace.
4. Use the internet to familiarize yourself with their company before you meet.
5. Prepare a list of questions, but be prepared also to go “off script” - the best information usually comes out of a *conversation*, when both people are relaxed. I have found that most people are open to sharing information about what they do - they were in your shoes at some point in their lives - looking for a career, a job, an internship, being a student.

At minimum, collect the following twelve (12) pieces of information from your subject:

- Name of the person interviewed.
- Job title and description.
- What duties and activities does his/her job entail?
- How does his/her job influence the environment/the world around us?
- What special techniques or equipment are used? (e.g. computer mapping, GIS, remote sensing, GPS, field sampling equipment, programming, software/hardware)
- What education/training is required?
- How are individuals hired?
- What are the *general* salary ranges (people may not be open to telling you their exact salary!)?
- *According to your subject*, what is the most interesting aspect of his/her job?
- Based on what you’ve heard from your subject, would ***you*** recommend this job to your classmates?
- Are student internships possible?
- Who is the contact person to find out more?

Report

Based on your interview and library/internet research, prepare a short (approximately 3-4 typed pages) report. Be sure to answer the above list of questions, but feel free to expand on that list. Additionally,

provide some basic information about the company for which your interview subject works (How large is the company? What is its primary objective? Etc.). Cite your sources (company website, GIS salary survey, <http://www.gisjobs.com/survey/> perhaps). And be prepared to share your findings with the rest of the class. **(Assignment Due Date: Monday, December 10, 2014)**

If you have ANY questions, do not hesitate to ask. I'm more than happy to clarify!

And HAVE FUN with this. Think of yourself as an explorer. You are simply gathering information. Be gracious and polite, and who knows you might get an internship or a job out of this experience!

References *(in no particular order)*

<http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2012/07/26/what-is-an-informational-interview-anyway>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/12/11/how-to-land-and-ace-an-informational-interview/>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/infointerviews/a/infointerview.htm>

<http://career-advice.monster.com/job-search/professional-networking/informational-interviewing/article.aspx>

http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

* Some examples of these professions (*no GIS/Geography Instructors, please***) include:

Private or Public Sector Personnel:

Conservationists

Wildlife Managers

Water Quality Inspectors

Environmental Engineers

Environmental Consultants

Business Professionals

Ecologists/Biologists

Environmental Health & Safety Personnel

Policy Analysts

Urban Planners

Law Enforcement/Fire Personnel

etc.

** I mean it!! *The purpose of the assignment is to get you to go **outside** of the school setting!*