

North Carolina GIS Conference, by the Numbers

| Year | # Exhibits | # Workshop Participants | # Full Registrants | % Local Government | # Full-time Students |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1987 | 46 | N/A | 537 | unknown | unknown |
| 1989 | 53 | N/A | 516 | 45% | 46 |
| 1991 | 58 | N/A | 844 | 38% | 50 |
| 1993 | 57 | 118 | 900 | unknown | unknown |
| 1996 | 41 | 208 | 674 | 45% | 68 |
| 1999 | 50 | 149 | 720 | 48% | 53 |
| 2001 | 56 | 94 | 659 | 51.1% | 64 |
| 2003 | 57 | 71 | 601 | 48.1% | 75 |
| 2005 | 42 | 80 | 719 | 49.3% | 65 |
| 2007 | 54 | 96 | 721 | 46% | 104 |
| 2009 | 51 | 70 | 728 | 44% | 90 |

Note: In 1996 the NC Center for Geographic Information and Analysis took over the financial management and administration of the NC GIS Conference. Prior to that, the conference was organized and managed by the Triangle J Council of Government, Research Triangle Park, NC.

A Brief History of the NC Geographic Information Systems Conference

A Beginning Vision

The First North Carolina GIS Conference was held in 1987 because of the vision of one man: Herb Stout. The late Herb Stout, a Wake County Commissioner, was a strong proponent of GIS and was instrumental in implementing the GIS for Wake County. He also championed this technology in his role as chair of the Board of Directors for the Triangle J Council of Governments (COG), a regional planning organization representing a seven-county area around the capital city of Raleigh.

It was through Stout's involvement with the Triangle J COG that it agreed to sponsor the first North Carolina GIS Conference. Mr. Stout served as Conference Chair for the 1987, 1989, and 1991 conferences. Staff from the Wake County GIS, the Orange County Land Records Program, and two state government agencies, the North Carolina Land Records Management Program and the NC Center for Geographic Information and Analysis, served as the core group on the planning committee for each conference.

The North Carolina Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (NC URISA) was added to the core planning group for the 1993 conference and agreed to sponsor pre-conference workshops. That affiliation has continued.

The 1987 conference was held in January at the McKimmon Center, a relatively small conference facility operated by North Carolina State University in Raleigh. It was a surprising success. The 500 participants and more than 40 vendor booths overwhelmed the available space.

The 1989, 1991, and 1993 conferences were held at the Raleigh Civic Center and nearby hotel.

Building on Success

Following Herb Stout's untimely death in early 1992, the Triangle J Council of Governments asked to withdraw as the financial sponsor for future conferences. Effective with the 1996 conference, the NC Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NC CGIA), the state government agency charged with coordination of geographic information in North Carolina, agreed to become the primary financial sponsor of the conference. The North Carolina Chapter of URISA assumed a larger role and additional financial responsibilities.

This financial and administrative change, combined with the inadequacy of the Raleigh Civic Center to host our expanding conference, precipitated a move to the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem in 1996. The Benton Convention Center and two adjacent hotels provided an excellent venue and were used for the 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2007 conferences. Construction of a larger Raleigh Convention Center and Marriott Raleigh City Center Hotel downtown marks a return to the state capitol for the mid-February 2009 conference.

Each conference builds on previous successes for program diversity. An early, and still effective, program decision was to exercise close control over the design of the program by inviting speakers instead of issuing a call for papers. The program committee is able to attract national and international talent to North Carolina. The program strategy offers a mix of in-state and out-of-state speakers. The program also reflects a commitment to provide a forum to discuss our GIS concerns as a state. By including presentations on North Carolina activities and applications, participants learn from their peers and establish important networks.