

Maritime Professionals Find Opportunities at Esri User Conference



There are vast applications for geographic information system (GIS) technology. Nowhere was this more apparent than the floors of the San Diego Convention Center, USA, during this year's annual Esri User Conference (Esri UC). The massive space was occupied by the many users, companies, government agencies and enthusiasts who benefit from Esri's ArcGIS platform. The showcase and

networking event was not geared toward expert users only, however, and nor is Esri technology limited to land applications. The event had dozens of maritime-related activities and was not exclusive to 'experts'.

There is a large group of users in the maritime field that consumes, rather than produces, GIS data. These are the decision-makers and policymakers, who engage in ocean sciences, coastal engineering, research and public service. While these individuals aren't experts in GIS, they benefit from the exposure to a technology vision and strategy, new advancements being showcased, and networking opportunities present at Esri UC, enabling them to make better-informed decisions upon returning to their organisations.



By Rafael Ponce, Esri Maritime Business Development, USA

I had the honour of chairing and organising three maritime tracks at the Esri Imaging and Mapping Forum and the special interest group meeting on hydrography. Both events were a meeting of minds and an exchange of ideas expanding the world of maritime GIS. The first track included the participation of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Esri is working with USACE to implement a combined workflow for bathymetric surveys and a federated bathymetric information system. Also presenting was QPS, explaining the paradigm shift in hydrographic analysis from early sonar systems rife with human error to the current automated GIS workflows that make charting much more accurate and efficient.

The second track showcased a presentation by Quantum Spatial on the USACE bathymetric modeling of St. Mary's River using airborne hydrography. IIC Technologies explained the science behind satellite-derived bathymetry and the value and reliability of bathymetric data obtained from outer space. Last, but not least, XPRIZE Foundation announced "The Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE: A New Era of Ocean Mapping"—a USD7 million prize for development of efficient and economical technologies for fast and high-resolution mapping and imaging of the complete planetary seabed. The third track included presentations from USACE on the national mapping programme update and from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) about climate change adaptation.

The special interest group meeting on hydrography provided users with an opportunity to connect with others who could benefit from ArcGIS for Maritime solutions. It included presentations from USACE on the implementation of bathymetric information systems and from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on its implementation of a nautical information system for chart production. Attendees included the Danish Geodata Agency (GST) via webcast, the US Naval Oceanographic Office, the Israeli Navy Hydrographic Office, the Finnish Transport Agency Hydrographic Office, DONG Energy, and many others. There was also a preview of new developments to come in ArcGIS 10.5 for Maritime.

There were more than 20 maritime-related events this year at the Esri UC, ranging from presentations and workshops to demo theatres. Coming out of these events, it is clear that the community of users within the field of maritime GIS is diverse in terms of how attendees use this data. While there were many representatives who were experts at creating the data used in hydrography and other marine sciences, the true value of the Esri User Conference for anyone in the maritime field is the exchange of new ideas and networking with peers. It is a chance for people who value this data—whether they create it or use it to do their jobs—to explore the advances in maritime GIS technology and make lasting connections with the people who help make those leaps forward.

The next [Esri User Conference](#) will be held from 10 to 14 July 2017, at the San Diego Convention Center.

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