

Model Professional Self Evaluation Professional

Since the commencement of my professional career dating back to 1988, I've been wholly focused on the pursuit of geography and cartography, as a personal passion as well as a vocational endeavour. As a foundation to my core interests in geographical science, I've been committed to a path of learning and continued education, realising that ultimately the discipline of geography demands this constant pursuit as the complexity of the physical and social systems of this planet are far beyond one person's lifetime to grasp and yet I have found within myself and fellow geographers this core passion to know and to explore the limits of our understanding. My pursuit of geography was initially a corollary to other academic interests; however I eventually succumbed to the realisation that geography and cartography were in fact my core interests, my best areas of skill and in fact my intellectual passion. I think that my constant drive for professional development, and focus on a geographical career are best exemplified by retracing the steps I took to arrive at my current position.

While working towards my undergraduate degree, I explored several core areas of geographical study – from population geography to biogeography to geomorphology – but maintained a primary focus on the cartographic sciences. After completing my BA degree in Geography and my Certificate in Cartography, I was eager to be a working cartographer, thus my immediate stint at a well-know mapping firm. The job was rewarding, yet just working in the vocation was not enough. As my desire was to find applied uses of geography, I soon partnered with a lab which had been recently established for geographic information. This pursuit took me into a study of cognitive psychology, environmental perception, orienteering and other related topics to explore how the human mind receives and processes spatial information. This became the topic of my Master's degree thesis which was completed in 1991. The topic was compelling, thus I decided to continue my graduate education towards a PhD with the intention of realising a prototype 'virtually-integrated GIS' that would use virtual heads-up displays of spatial data in a mobile setting with real-time GPS referencing.

It was around this time when working towards my doctorate that a colleague and myself were contacted by a large international computer company, seeking a cartographer who could develop their multitude of maps required for an encyclopaedia. I became a full-time employee in 1995. Up until this time I had always had a strong interest in political geography and geopolitics, particularly applied to maps, because it emphasises the differences in perception of reality – instead of the sensory reality I discussed in my MA thesis, it was a political/cultural reality that varied from country to country, region to region. As a team of one, I developed guidelines, an internal web site, and processes for keeping our spatial data 'correct' and current. Around this time, I was asked by a University to teach a principles of cartography course for their extension students, and gladly obliged. This was in addition to guest lecturing I've conducted at the University as well as local community colleges.

As I continued this consulting work, I started to receive many geopolitical queries from around the company, from all kinds of products, asking things like correct country names, current political conditions etc. In 1997 I developed a proposal for the creation of a new team. In 1998 I was given the opportunity to start a Geopolitical Strategy team at work, which I did, illustrating my commitment to the promotion of geography. I have managed this team since that time, and over the past 6 years we have dealt with a very wide variety of corporate geopolitics issues. These include: direct interaction with governments to resolve content concerns; management of PR crises; assisting executives on their external messaging to be more globally inclusive; training company personnel on geography awareness and impact; performing content review across all Microsoft businesses; and travelling to subsidiaries worldwide to understand their issues and risks.

I became so fascinated by the interaction of information technology, the dichotomy of local vs. global, and the role of political/cultural content in this mix that I restarted my PhD program in 1999 and am due to complete in late 2004, despite the difficulty of accomplishing a PhD on top of a full-time job. I feel this reflects my longstanding commitment to personal development. For my doctorate I'm narrowing the focus to a phenomenon that I've observed in my work, which is how information technology affects the perception of state sovereignty and national spatial identity in worldwide markets exposed to such information. It addresses how new representations of sovereignty and the enforcement of perception of sovereignty is enabled via information technology and transnational corporations who propagate such technology. I call this phenomenon 'information geopolitics', an idea that discerns the motivational relationship between state and corporate action built upon the illusion of geopolitical representation.

I feel that I have demonstrated my commitment to geography within and beyond the requirements of my work and demonstrated how I am applying my geographical skills and knowledge. I wish to be a Chartered Geographer as I believe it would provide the independent verification of my skills and achievements, which is necessary for me to continue to promote geography and structure my own professional development in an effective way.

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