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Dr Nick Bearman

GIS Trainer and Teaching Fellow in Geospatial Analysis

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Royal Geographical Society
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: GIS Trainer (self-employed)
Organisation: Geospatial Training Solutions
Location: Anywhere

Job title: Consultant and Teaching Fellow in Geospatial Analysis
Organisation: University College London
Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?
When I first came across GIS in my BSc Geography I knew that it combined two of my favourite subjects - geography and computer science. Little did I know it would take me to a MSc (GIS), PhD (environmental science) a range of post-doc positions across the UK, and now into self-employment.

During my PhD I did some demonstrating and discovered then that I really enjoyed teaching, particularly that moment when it 'clicks' for the student and they can see the possibilities of what they can do with their new skill. I teach GIS to a range of different students, both in an academic setting (at UCL) and across a range of universities, commercial and NGO organisations (through my self-employed training courses with Geospatial Training Solutions).

W: www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

Being self-employed is very different to working for an organisation and requires a different skill set. I find myself doing everything from promotion on Twitter, updating websites, creating, sending out and chasing invoices, as well as the actual preparing material and running training courses! There is a wide selection of support, depending on where you live, so make the most of it!

What do you do as part of your role?


I split my time between two roles and I really like the variety.

I spend two days a week working for UCL, teaching on their MSc Geospatial Analysis and being a personal tutor for some of the students on the course. Usually in term time one of these days a week is in London, so a very early train and a long day for me! The second day I do from home, preparing material, doing admin and marking when needed.

I spend two other days a week working for Geospatial Training Solutions, running training courses (about one a month on average), preparing material, promoting and arranging future courses, admin, finance and everything else required to run a business!

What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

I need to have the ability to talk to people and engage with people about the benefits of GIS. Running a training session requires a balance of making sure everyone can complete the exercises you have designed, answering people's questions and being level headed when the technology doesn't do what it was supposed to. Planning and organisation are key skills to ensure that all the pieces and people needed for the course arrive at the right time in the right place.



What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?

Make use of any opportunities that come your way and be open to new opportunities. Think about how geography could be useful in your area of expertise, and how would you explain it to someone who hasn't come across that before?

For teaching, experience is key. This doesn't have to be paid courses - it could be one-to-one help for colleagues or friends. Also make sure you record all of this in your CPD log so you remember what you did and what skills you learnt!

How does geography feature in your work/ what difference does it make?

Geography is fundamental to so many research questions, whether we are looking at population, health, social media usage, homelessness or climate change. Helping people understand how geography influences their area of work, and then being able to implement that in GIS, or be able to help them implement that in GIS, is key.

Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?

Geography covers everything. There are so many different paths through geography and sometimes that makes choices difficult. But it also focuses on links between these different areas and this is key to any job that you might be doing now or in the future.