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Andrea Sibilìa

Assistant Geospatial Specialist

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**

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Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Assistant Geospatial Specialist

Organisation: WSP

Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

Currently, I am an Assistant Geospatial Specialist of the Smart Consulting team of WSP, which is comprised of GIS analysts, software developers, and IT solution architects.

Prior to this I spent 5 years in an environmental company in Italy covering the roles of Environmental Consultant (2012-2015) and GIS Technician (2015-2017). Through these roles, I managed several monitoring programmes in order to collect and process spatial and/or GPS data, becoming the main contact for the GIS related topics within the company.

In 2018, I achieved a new specialisation by completing a Masters in GIS at University College London. Throughout my whole experience, I had the opportunity to develop and enhance my GIS skills, carrying out several projects related to different fields such as ecology, nature conservation and transport planning.

W: www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Early on in my career I enjoyed getting out and about as a surveyor. But nowadays, what I enjoy most is seeing something work better, be more efficient or effective, a better decision, or a whole new application as a result of using geography. There are many who see the meetings involved in policy and engagement as tedious but it is often only through extended conversations that change actually comes about.

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

The Masters in GIS I did at UCL certainly helped me to acquire the basic knowledge required to be successful in my role including technical skills related to programming for data analysis (R and Python), database management (SQL, PostgreSQL and PostGIS) and web mapping (JavaScript and HTML)


What do you do as part of your role?

As an Assistant Geospatial Specialist I mainly provide technical support on a wide range of projects. Several tasks are usually related to map production, however every week there are challenges related to data conversion, data standardisation or data processing.

Often, colleagues from other teams (e.g. ecology or transport planning) have specific requests relating to spatial analyses and/or network analyses, so I am always encouraged to think about efficient and feasible methods to provide them with a solution.

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

Precision is a basic requirement in this work. Everything you provide is used by other specialists to make their decisions, therefore the data you supply needs to be as accurate as possible.



Problem solving is also an extremely useful characteristic in this work. Every day there are challenges to overcome, so it is important to know how to search for a solution.

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

I play an important role in terms of decision supporting in all the projects I take part in. The outputs I provide are used by engineers, transport planners or other specialists to make their final choice and the simplest tasks, such as mapping trees in a certain locations, can lead to significant decisions related to social, economic and environmental factors - that's the "power of location".

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

At the beginning of your career I suggest to get a broad overview of the different aspects of GIS. It's good to have at least a basic knowledge of different GIS software (QGis/ArcGis) and techniques to carry out spatial/network/3D analyses. I would say that it is essential knowing how to automate data processing (i.e. using Model Builder) and also learning to code. It's good to know a bit of Python, HTML and Java Script for web mapping, and R. This gives you much more chances to get a first job, then during your career you'll have the opportunity to specialise yourself in your main field of interest.

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

We are constantly surrounded by geographic information and by solving geographic problems, we solve real life problems.