

.....

Damien McCloud

Associate Director

.....

**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Associate Director

Organisation: Arup

Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I did a physical geography degree at the University of Sheffield and then went on to do a Land Information and Mapping Masters, essentially a GIS Masters, at the University of Portsmouth. Excluding contractors and temporary jobs, I worked at the Environment Agency, Transport for London, and an oil and gas exploration company. I then went on to work at Halliburton KBR (now known as KBR) which is quite a multidisciplinary company before moving on to British Telecom and then a transport consultancy. All of the roles at these companies have been related to GIS and then for the past 12 years I have been at Arup.

What do you do as part of your role?

I have two or three roles at Arup. I lead a team of 45 which is a mix of data analysts, data engineers, GIS and geospatial professionals, remote sensing professionals and software developers, to help the company deliver their business to clients.

I am also a Global Skills Leader for our skills

W: www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals

network which is a community which I help set the learning agenda, create learning paths and materials, and fund projects to help get everyone moving in the direction the industry is going. Arup has approximately 16,000 people and is currently going through a digital transformation at the moment, so that's a big part of what I do.

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

I made the decision pretty early on in my career that I wanted to have a lot of domain knowledge and so I wasn't too fussed early in my career about looking like I was job jumping as I wanted to get the body of experience of lots of different disciplines under my belt. This allowed me to ultimately get the job at Arup and then deliver and diversify from then on.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

What I enjoy about my role is building a team and getting people to understand the value of the skills that we have. The geoscience and geospatial community have never felt empowered and I enjoy articulating the value of my background, and the backgrounds of those in my team, to show that geographers are relevant and making sure that the geospatial element is a core piece across the work that Arup do.

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

We have done a variety of projects from hydrogen through to electric vehicles, it's so broad, the common theme is location and being able to understand the questions you're asking and its application. This is where geography has a lot of value because it gives you an understanding of the world you're applying this to.



What gives you the most satisfaction out of your career?

I think it's about working on major globally relevant and UK relevant projects like the Olympics or HS2 - those projects really give you a sense of achievement.

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

Download software and just play.
More and more I think that we are going to move away from an industry driven by qualifications and we will recruit by experience over qualification. As geospatial becomes taken into the big data world, experience will become really important. So get work experience, get your hands on the data, and look at apprenticeships too. Also find out what interests you and get as much experience as you can and don't hold yourself to a tight career path.

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

I chose it because I enjoyed it! I had no preconceptions about where a geography degree could take me, but there is a huge diversity of careers that people go into. Geography is about understanding the world and understanding how to ask questions of it and understanding data. If you've got those skills then that's half the battle for anywhere and that's really important.