

## UCGIS POSITION ON MAPPS v. UNITED STATES

23 January 2007

In June 2006, the Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS) and three other professional engineering societies filed suit against the United States government, on behalf of its Federal Acquisition Regulation Council (FAR Council). The lawsuit alleges that federal procurement policy conflicts with legislation known as the Brooks Act, which establishes that “surveying and mapping” are “professional services of an architectural or engineering nature,” and which mandates that federal contracts for such services will be negotiated “on the basis of demonstrated competence and qualification...” (Public Law 92-582). Current federal procurement policy exempts mapping services that are not connected to traditionally understood or accepted architectural and engineering activities from Brooks Act requirements. Nominally, the MAPPS lawsuit seeks to change the FAR such that “qualifications-based selection” will be used to contract any and all surveying and mapping services. The case will be heard on February 2, 2007, in federal district court in Alexandria, Virginia.

UCGIS believes that the intent of the MAPPS lawsuit is to ensure that federal government agencies which procure mapping services will give preference to state-licensed architects, engineers, and land surveyors. Of greater concern to UCGIS member institutions than the proposed changes to procurement policy is the implication that the practice of mapping (broadly defined), like the practice of land surveying, should be subject to state regulation.

UCGIS is committed to the advancement of geographic information science and technology (GIS&T) through multidisciplinary collaboration. UCGIS objects, therefore, to the MAPPS lawsuit insofar as it incorrectly implies that licensed architects, engineers, and land surveyors are most qualified to provide all mapping services. In fact, only a fraction of the 329 topics defined in the *GIS&T Body of Knowledge*<sup>1</sup> pertain to architecture, engineering, or surveying. Geospatial technology professionals working in a wide range of unregulated fields demonstrate their competence on the job every day. In light of the diversity of GIS&T applications and practitioners, UCGIS believes that the current exemption in the FAR should be retained.

An important further implication for UCGIS member institutions is that state-regulated professions like architecture and engineering typically require university degree programs to be formally accredited by organizations like the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). Recognizing that most of the diverse GIS&T programs offered by its member institutions are not subject to, or even amenable to such regulation, UCGIS is on record as opposed to accreditation.

UCGIS' tripartite mission includes promoting the informed and responsible use of geographic information science and geographic analysis for the benefit of society. UCGIS believes that the MAPPS lawsuit represents an attempt to disenfranchise many competent practitioners and educators. A ruling in favor of MAPPS and its co-plaintiffs has the potential to stifle multidisciplinary research, development, and applications of GIS&T, and thereby to undermine the effectiveness of public policies and programs related to GIS&T.

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<sup>1</sup> DiBiase, D., DeMers, M., Johnson, A., Kemp, K., Taylor Luck, A., Plewe, B., and Wentz, E. (Eds.)(2006). *Geographic Information Science and Technology Body of Knowledge*, 1st Ed. Washington DC: Association of American Geographers.