

Bozeman GIS Users Group Meeting September 23, 2015

“Centimeter to Meter: What’s the Difference?” On September 23rd the South Central Chapter of MARLS and the Montana Association of Geographic Information Professionals (MAGIP) co-hosted a public informational function billed as a collaborative meeting between Survey and GIS Professionals at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman.

Planned and organized by Henry Hanson (Park County GIS Department) and Molly Hirschi (Stahly Engineering & Associates), the meeting was very well attended with approximately 80 people in attendance. The demographic was fairly equally split between Montana State University students and area professionals, with the student attendance slightly outnumbering that of the professional community. There was also a very good mixture of GIS professionals and students with Professional Land Surveyors and Surveying students. A big “thank you” goes out to Doug Smith and Stuart Challender for offering surveying and GIS students extra credit to attend the meeting.

After enjoying pizza and refreshments, the meeting was kicked off with Dan Stahly speaking about why SCC MARLS and MAGIP are collaboratively reaching out with a focus on MSU students. Stahly spoke about the overlap of the two professions and how important both have become in the private engineering and land surveying industries. Emphasis was given to the students attending that they will be better prepared going into the workforce if they have taken classes from both departments, no matter what the degree, so they can have a good idea of what professionals in the industry specialize in.

The meeting then progressed with a Question and Answer session for a panel of six representatives of the GIS and Land Surveying Community. Three representatives for the GIS community were Hunter Lynn Simpkins (Robert Peccia & Associates), Tony Thatcher, GISP (DTM Consulting), and Jon Henderson, GISP (City of Bozeman). Representatives for the Land Surveying community were Barney Hallin, PLS (Hallin & Associates), George Bornemann, PLS (CTA Architects Engineers), and Dan Stahly, PLS (Stahly Engineering & Associates). Some questions presented to the panel were:

- *What scale/accuracy do you work at?*
- *What's the most fulfilling thing about your job?*
- *What is your opinion on the relationship between gis and surveying now and in the future?*

Feedback received after the meeting has been very positive. It is encouraging to see MARLS and MAGIP working together to raise educational awareness in the communities in which we work and live. It is my sincere hope that at least one student in the audience with a GIS Major fill up some electives with land surveying classes or vice versa. The vision is that department administrators will recognize the overlap and relevance of the two curricula and adjust their programs appropriately. Doing so will equally benefit the two professions by providing graduates that are educated enough in both areas to appreciate the need for collaboration and bring another level of public awareness to what both industries have to offer.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Stahly
MARLS President-Elect
Past MARLS President