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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Dr. Mario Pinto	DATE	December 21, 2010
FROM	Charles Eckman, Dean of Library Services and University Librarian	PAGES	1 of 1
RE:	Library and GIS		

At present there is no centralized or otherwise coordinated GIS support program at SFU.

The Library's current role in supporting GIS is focused on three areas: (1) managing campus-wide site licenses for GIS software; (2) providing wayfinding/navigation assistance regarding GIS resources at SFU; and (3) acquiring selective geospatial datafiles.

1) GIS Software. The Library's core GIS service consists of the purchase and support of campus wide software licenses for two GIS software suites – ESRI's ArcView and IDRISI – beginning in 2000 at an approximate annual cost of \$30,000. These GIS software suites are used by many faculty and students, especially those undertaking research in geography, criminology, health sciences, resources and environmental management. Information regarding how to acquire the software is available at <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/research-data-library/gis-services>.

2) GIS Liaison. Walter Piovesan, the Data Librarian, has a general familiarity with GIS software, but it is not sufficient to provide the more complex technical support often required by users. Some campus departments have internal expertise and GIS facilities that provide support to their researchers and students, but this is not always the case in other areas. Walter liaises and works closely with GIS experts and users in these areas in order to try to match needs to SFU resources.

3) Geospatial Data. The Library also has many data files (including geo-referenced files) in its collection that can be used for GIS application. The Library allocates limited collections funds available for the purpose of acquiring geospatial data; it does so on a case by case basis.

With regard to the future, the usage and diversity of GIS-based data and applications continues to grow. In order to provide support to this growing area, both for users and collections purposes, the Library is considering options for acquiring GIS technical expertise when budgets improve (it is worth noting in this regard that UBC has a GIS librarian). With more in-house expertise to assist users, the Library could also make more use of GIS systems as a way to provide access to digital maps and services.

There is some potential for collaborative activities in the GIS area, both internally at SFU and externally with other BC post-secondary sites. For example, the Library could assume a coordinating role in identifying key pockets of technical expertise around campus; bringing in

students on coop projects or other course assignments to develop more general "how to's" and instructional materials for GIS tools; and developing the necessary metadata and related descriptive information for GIS resources. Externally we have already made some significant progress with the Abacus platform for datasets, that same group could be a good basis for similar GIS initiatives.