

Above: OSGeo workshop at University of Nottingham during OSGIS 2014.

stories of the free and open source movement are attracting increasing attention from end users, developers, businesses, governments, educators and researchers around the world. The goal of the initiative is to promote and enhance education, research and service activities carried out by these stakeholders. By combining the potential of FOSS geospatial software, open data, open standards, open access to research publications and educational resources the initiative will enable the creation of a sustainable innovation ecosystem to advance the discipline. This is vital to encourage wider geospatial education opportunities, to accelerate new discoveries and to help solve global cross disciplinary societal challenges – from climate change mitigation to sustainable cities.

Spreading geospatial knowledge FOSS geospatial technologies are critical for both developed and developing countries because they lower access costs for education, government and industry applications and enhance research and teaching in geospatial science and technology. They also enable more research and development into spatial data infrastructures and help improve the transparency, accessibility and long term sustainability of the applications. There is little doubt that the healthy competition with proprietary software will also be to the long term benefit of the industry. Government organisations, universities and private companies are all turning to FOSS to carry out their missions. For universities and educational institutions, open geospatial science and applications are especially important because they help to empower students and help with capacity building. FOSS also helps to create openness in geospatial education which in turn develops students' creative and open thinking. This is critical for building open innovation and contributes to increasing open knowledge for the benefit of society future generations.

Geo4All can claim to have achieved several objectives since the signing of the MoU in 2011 thanks to the efforts of our colleagues:

Right: The Open Source Geo Lab founding meeting at University of Nottingham (June 2010).

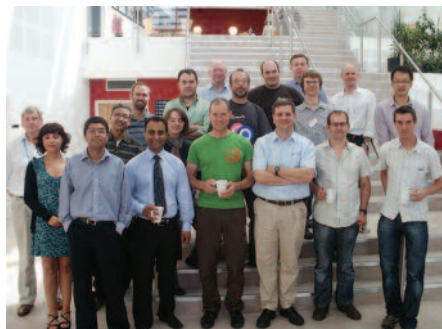
- Established Open Geospatial Science as a discipline (academic journals, journal special issues, conferences, proceedings, etc.)
- Enabled Openness in Geospatial Education (university programmes, MOOCs (massive open online courses), summer schools, training programmes, etc.)
- Establish Open Source Geospatial Labs in universities worldwide to build firm foundations and expand the discipline.

As part of our next stage of expansion of Geo4All, we want to focus on using the Open Geospatial Labs in universities worldwide to expand research by bringing together colleagues from other departments in the universities. We will address three particular areas where the focus is on 'big data' research and development (urban data science, transport science, environment and climate science). This will help expand our established research labs and establish new labs internationally specialising in these themes and building on 'open' principles (open data, open software, open standards, open access to research publications, etc.). For new universities that wish to establish Open Geospatial Labs, details can be found at <http://www.geoforall.org/>

Geo4All participants believe in empowering people with spatial decision making tools to help build a better society for all of humanity. Combining the potential of free and open source software, open standards, open data and open education resources, we are now offering opportunities to nurture and develop open minds for students everywhere to help achieve a better planet and a better future for all. We look forward to working with colleagues – both present and future – to make geospatial education, software and opportunities accessible to all.

Acknowledgements

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About the author

Dr Suchith Anand is the founder of "Geo for All" initiative and working for establishing Open Source Geospatial Labs/Research Centres in key universities worldwide as part of the Open Source Geospatial Foundation- International Cartographic Association MoU. He is charter member of the Open Source Geospatial Foundation and chair of ICA's Commission on Open Source Geospatial Technologies. His mission is to build up open source, open standards, open data research for bridging the digital divide.