



## Interview with Crile Doscher – GIS blogger

Rachel WILSON

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RACHEL WILSON: We should probably start with your name and position here at Lincoln University.

CRILE DOSCHER: I'm Crile Doscher, Senior Lecturer in GIS - Geographic Information Systems.

RW: Great. Now, why did you decide to start a GIS blog?

CD: Well... that's a good question. It was mainly because I know there are a lot of people out on campus who use GIS, but they don't necessarily know about each other. So it's kind of trying to build up a community. And we've tried various things over the years to do this, and we just thought this would be a nice way to try and bring it all together. 'Cause a lot of the time I get lots of questions, lots of similar questions, so if I can answer them in one go - it makes my life a bit easier. I don't have to say the same thing over and over again. And it's already working, which is good. I guess ultimately we're trying to bring GIS users on campus together.

RW: So it's trying to build connections.

CD: Yeah. Yeah, it is.

RW: And where can we find this blog?

CD: So it's on the Lincoln website, [www.lincoln.ac.nz/conversation/gis](http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/conversation/gis).

RW: How do you get the word out about it?

CD: Basically by email. I've got a list of people, and whenever I update it, I send a message around to them - and the list is basically

just people who I know are GIS users, or who have an interest, or who would like to be interested. So whatever gets updated, I just send it on to them.

RW: What programs do you use for it? Is it mainly the Arc programs, ArcMap and so on?

CD: Yeah. I know there are some people out there who don't use it - I mean it's mostly about Arc GIS, but I try and keep the blog mostly generic. I use mainly the ArcGIS suite, yeah; but some people use R, some do what they can with Google Earth, Google Maps, and there are others around... I'm open to anything. But since most of what we teach is Arc GIS, it makes sense to use it on the blog.

RW: Just out of interest, how many GIS papers does Lincoln have?

CD: Two undergrad and two post grad. Erst 202 and 310, and then 606 and 607. I take 202 and 606, and then Brad Case and I - he's over in Ecology - we take the other two.

RW: And with the blog, do you collaborate with other people, or is it more an individual thing?

CD: I try to collaborate, I mean it's still early days. Brad's really busy right now, once he gets some things out of the way he'll probably start doing more. And I'm hoping we'll get guest bloggers on. I try and update once a week, I'm going to try and maintain that. The blog's only been going about five weeks, so it's early days yet.

RW: Okay, so it's only started up this year?

CD: Yeah, just recently.

RW: Right. And what's your aim with the blog? Are you wanting to inform people, or just show off your skills...?

CD: Well of course that's part of it. \*Laughs\* No, it's really just... I see GIS as a really valuable tool for a lot of people, and so I'm trying to see this as a way to facilitate people using it, really, and as I said to try and hopefully bring people together a bit. There really are a lot of people out there using it. I can do one blog post and it tells people how to do something, and then everybody knows. So I'm hoping that eventually it'll be people going, "Can you talk about this?" and that way I know that I'm responding to what people are interested in. So the aim I guess is just to make GIS more accessible.

RW: Sounds good to me. But you do like showing off your skills with GIS.

CD: \*laughs\* Well, I don't know how much I'm showing them off, really. But I certainly - I mean if I can do it, anyone can do it.

RW: You have more experience, though.

CD: Yeah, true.

RW: On the blog, is there a section for comments? Questions?

CD: Yeah. There is, yeah. So if people are having trouble with it, they can come back to me and say "I've run into a problem here, what do I do?" I think that would be great. 'Cause then everybody gets to see it. And in fact on the last post, somebody put a comment in saying "Oh, can you talk about this," and that's great, that's - I want to see that happening.

RW: So you are getting conversations started.

CD: Hopefully, yeah. It's fairly small still, fairly new.

RW: True. So what projects do you have on at the moment?

CD: Oh, gosh... Heaps. The beauty of it is there's all sorts of stuff in all different areas. We've got one project on teen smokers, one looking at the activity of schoolchildren, we've got a big project on about Lake Forsyth, a whole lot of stuff about internet mapping, yeah, there's a fair bit going on.

RW: Do you have a pet project?

CD: They kind of come and go, you know... Flavour of the month type thing. Projects are intense for a short time, and then they tail off and another one comes up. It changes from week to week. Which is kind of the beauty of GIS, really, we're working in geomorphology, engineering, social science, health science - it's all over the place.

RW: That teen smokers project - tell me a bit about that.

CD: I'm working with a colleague down at Otago, looking at the relationship between tobacco outlets and secondary schools, if there's any correlation in the locations, schools with outlets near them vs. schools without outlets, and if there's any impact there. Trying to reduce teen smoking. Do we need to have zoning regulations in place to say you can't have a dairy or a tobacconist within a certain distance of a school, that sort of thing. So we know where the schools are, we can map where the outlets are, and factor in a walking distance, what the smoking rates are, and look at the relationships there. We're looking right across the country.

RW: So there's actually a lot of practical applications: it's not just a gimmick, a party trick.

CD: Absolutely. Anything where you might need a map to understand it, GIS can help. The question is where doesn't it help.

RW: So it's pretty much unlimited.

CD: Yeah, I think so. 'Cause it goes beyond just a map, and you ask questions, look for relationships, try and understand what's happening.

RW: Okay. Cool. I think that's all my questions.  
Did you want to say anything else?

CD: Well, just that I hope people find it useful, and if they have anything they want to see on the blog, let me know. Email [crile.doscher@lincolnuni.ac.nz](mailto:crile.doscher@lincolnuni.ac.nz).

RW: Excellent. Thank you for your time.

CD: Thank you.