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Prof. Carlos Reynoso
Universidad de Buenos Aires - CONICET
Buenos Aires
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Dear Prof. Reynoso:

Please let me introduce myself.

I am currently engaged as a GIS consultant by the Cultural Unit of UNESCO's Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and I am presently working on the implementation of a GIS at the Hue World Heritage Site in Vietnam.

As you may be aware, the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (The World Heritage Convention), to which there are now 140 states parties, was ratified by the UNESCO General Conference in 1972. The Convention provides that cultural or natural sites that meet specific criteria including those of authenticity, uniqueness, or having a quality that is representative of or associated with ideas of universal significance, can be inscribed on the World Heritage List. States parties to the Convention, can submit applications to the World Heritage Committee for inclusion of a particular natural or cultural site, on the List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. To date there are 440 sites globally (326 cultural, 97 natural and 17 mixed) on the World Heritage List, 107 of which are in the Asia Pacific region.

Although inscription on the List confers certain privileges on a site, in terms of international protection and recognition, there are also additional obligations in terms of site management and protection, that are placed on the state party under the terms of the convention. For a site to be included on the List, the World Heritage Committee must ensure that there are in-place, suitable management and monitoring policies and procedures, together with the institutional capacity to implement and where necessary enforce the policies and thus effectively manage the site.

In the field of cultural heritage management during the past few years, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of integrating natural and cultural resource management.

Partly in response to the increased awareness of the importance of integrating natural resource management into the process of cultural resource management, and partly due to the rapid advances in and reduced prices of PC based GIS solutions, cultural resource managers are now showing considerable interest in the use of GIS.

A GIS pilot study was undertaken by UNESCO in Cambodia, to aid the Cambodian Government in defining the Angkor monument complex prior to its inscription on the World Heritage List. The GIS was used initially to record baseline natural and cultural resource data of the area. Additional map layers such as archaeological value and ecological value of archaeological sites and habitats respectively, were derived and by means of overlaying the derived layers and carrying out multivariate analysis, the site management team were able to investigate the impacts of alternative protection zoning strategies, and therefore define the most appropriate zoning plan.

Due to the success of the Angkor project, UNESCO is actively pursuing the goal of GIS implementation as a tool for World Heritage site management elsewhere in Asia. I am currently working on a GIS project at the Hue World Heritage site in Vietnam and there are plans to implement GIS at other World Heritage sites such as Pagan in Burma, Luang Prabang in Laos and the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal.

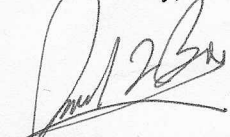
I am hoping to carry out, in collaboration with archaeologists at various World Heritage sites, further research using the data generated to support resource management GIS applications.

I was very interested to read your article in the Archaeological Computing Newsletter, describing VB-GIS release 1.0. I would be very grateful if you would send me more details about the software, and if possible a copy of the software, if there is a shareware version of it available.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you in the very near future.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Box
GIS Consultant,
Office of the Regional Advisor
for Culture in Asia and the Pacific