

The logo for FOSS4G 2006, featuring a stylized red and white graphic that resembles a ribbon or a stylized letter 'G'.

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The Role of Open Source GIS in Education & Training

There are many reasons why people demand to learn about GIS and several different types of careers and professional activities involving GIS; spatial data is among all our daily life and most business services. This diversity of demands leads to a broad range of educational needs that makes it difficult to design unique GIS curricula to meet the needs of all these people. Also, there are several educational programs for professionals including: formal courses, introductory seminars, workshops and distance learning. GIS education has many different approaches to suit different levels of learners, for disparate student populations and for various objectives.

GIS Education incorporates scientific concepts, SW and HW practicing, experiments, research and development applications. This paper examines the role of open-source GIS SW in two main different approaches; GIS Education and GIS Training. The latter is measured by what you can do when you've completed it. Training improves performance on GIS tools (SW), such learning is primarily passive. Education, on the other hand, seeks to have the student learn GIS concepts and science and acquire analytical skills and to understand why actions are taken. However, all education must include training to ensure the concept understanding, such learning is an interactive process.

Open source GIS (Free GIS) can be quite adequate in the two approaches, as its bottom-up nature suits the training needs as a requirement of the society. However, the education approach which will only be available to few specialists who will also prefer open source GIS (Free GIS) due to the ease of obtaining and customizing its tools which facilitate the research activities and the professional development. This paper will also present the Information Technology Institute experience with open source GIS in post-graduates studies through a 9 month diploma, preparing its graduates to be a full professional GIS specialists fit for the local and international markets and providing the awareness of GIS development in Egypt taking a Open source GIS / Free GIS approach.

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