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AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT FOR COMPUTER-ASSISTED MAP ANALYSIS

J.K. BERRY

Yale University/School of Forestry
and Environmental Studies
New Haven, Connecticut

POSITION STATEMENT

In response to the increasing interest in the use of computer-oriented geographic information systems, academic programs in many fields have begun to recognize the need for more effective ways of presenting spatial data analysis techniques to students with a wide diversity of backgrounds. The most commonly used approach is the case study coupled with a limited exposure to computer mapping software. An alternative approach is one which relies on the development of a fundamental analytical theory coupled with extensive exercises which demonstrate the practical application of that theory. This deductive approach is effective in providing students with a basic knowledge of map analysis techniques and enables them to extend this knowledge to potential applications of their own design.

A paper in Session 7 describes the academic structure and experience of such an approach. The approach has been used for six terms in a graduate-level course at Yale University. Software support for the course is provided through the use of the Map Analysis Package (MAP). This package is a set of programs that provide for the encoding, storage, analysis and display of cartographic data. MAP has been acquired by over 150 organizations throughout the world. The course has been implemented at several other Universities and serves as the basis of a two-day workshop for professionals. Acquisition of software, course materials, and lecture notes can be arranged.