



# GISCorps – a URISA initiative for coordinating volunteer GIS services for communities around the world

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At the heart of volunteerism are the ideals of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world a better place.

...But far away from the spotlight, there are millions of generous individuals who, around the clock and around the world, roll up their sleeves and volunteer to help in any way they can.

...Volunteers do not ask, “why volunteer?”, but rather “when?”, “where?” and “how?”. These dedicated and courageous individuals are important partners in the quest for a better, fairer and safer world.

*Kofi Annan, 5 December*

**2003**

The world is changed by seemingly small ideas that are acted upon.

It sounds too simple, but it's the truth – we have a good idea and we act on it – that is how we create a better world.

*Jack Dangermond*



# Mission of GISCorps

Mission

Operating under the auspices of URISA, GISCorps coordinates short-term volunteer GIS services to communities worldwide.

Goals

Genesis

Model

Services

Beneficiaries

So far

GISCorps volunteers seek to enhance the well-being of less-developed communities by providing GIS expertise in areas such as humanitarian relief, environmental analysis, economic development, community planning and development, and health and educational related applications.



# Goals of GISCorps

Mission

- Help improve the quality of life in general

Goals

- Implement URISA's vision for advancement of spatial information technologies

Genesis

Model

- Supply highly specialized GIS expertise without exploitation or profit

Services

Beneficiaries

- Coordinate open exchange of volunteers with other agencies

So far

- Strengthen host communities spatial infrastructure by implementing best accepted GIS practices
- Foster development and strength of local spatial expertise



# Genesis of GISCorps

Mission

Goals

Genesis

- On Saturday October 11th, 2003, following a presentation given by Shoreh Elhami and Juna Papajorgji, URISA Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the GISCorps as an initiative under URISA's auspices.

Model

Services

Beneficiaries

- The GISCorps was discussed at three other events during the conference, at round-table luncheons where the GISCorps concept was presented to the audience.

So far

- The idea, a brainchild of Shoreh Elhami, was presented in a number of publications at URISA News, ArcNews, GeoWorld, etc.



## Model of GISCorps

- GISCorps operates under URISA.
- GISCorps serves as a coordinating body between sponsoring agencies and volunteers on a project-by-project basis.
- GISCorps is responsible for:
  - ensuring the professional competence of its volunteers by conducting vigorous evaluations
  - establishing relationships and partnerships with recognized agencies, such as UN, Peace Corps, USAID, World Bank, Red Cross, etc.
  - screening the nature of the projects in the host countries to make certain that they match the GISCorps' objectives
  - matching volunteers' expertise with project needs

Mission

Goals

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Services

Beneficiaries

So far



## Model of GISCorps - *continued*

Mission

- GISCorps does not sponsor projects directly

Goals

- GISCorps refers volunteers to agencies and vice versa, but volunteers deal directly with the volunteer agencies

Genesis

- GISCorps emphasizes service in developing countries, but does not exclude U.S. and Canada

Model

- GISCorps provides for service while avoiding competition with local interests or established public programs

Services

- GISCorps will not in any way promote the private interests or business goals of its volunteers or sponsors

Beneficiaries

So far



# Services of GISCorps

Mission

Goals

Genesis

Model

Services

Beneficiaries

So far

- Needs assessment and strategic planning
- Conducting technical workshops (i.e. URISA workshops) and specific training classes
- Developing web-based interactive mapping applications
- Preparing and implementing specifications and standards for geospatial data development and maintenance
- Assisting in the design of data models and data collection methodologies
- Engaging in exchange programs between US and host country professionals



## Beneficiaries of GISCorps

Mission

Goals

Genesis

Model

Services

Beneficiaries

So far

- *Communities in need* – sponsoring communities will be the primary beneficiaries of the highly specialized knowledge base provided by volunteers
- *URISA* - will expand to new frontiers in compliance with its ultimate goals and mission.
- *US Volunteers* - GISCorps will fill needs for international exchange, exposure, collaboration, opportunity, and professional growth
- *Partner organizations* – will advance towards their goals with specialized expertise and support



## Beneficiaries of GISCorps - *continued*

Mission

- *World at large* – GISCorps will help bridge the digital divide between developed and less developed countries.

Goals

It will strive for better quality of life, enhanced human understanding and cooperation to strengthen democracies throughout the world

Genesis

Model

- *Spatial Information Systems* – GISCorps will broaden and expand the use of geospatial data and information systems

Services

Beneficiaries

- *Volunteers' own communities* – GISCorps volunteers will return to their own communities with different perspectives and skills.

So far



## So far – what has been done

- *Master Database of Volunteers – 70 Volunteers, 220+ Friends Of GISCorps*

Mission

- Average of 10 years experience with GIS

Goals

- Over 50% have taught GIS

Genesis

- From many countries

Model

- From various sectors

- Wide variety of skills and expertise

Services

- *International Contacts*

- UN Habitat

- US - Turkey Red Cross

- Vietnam Veterans of America

- World Bank

- FAO (UN Food and Agricultural Organization)

- ICMA (International City/County Management Association)

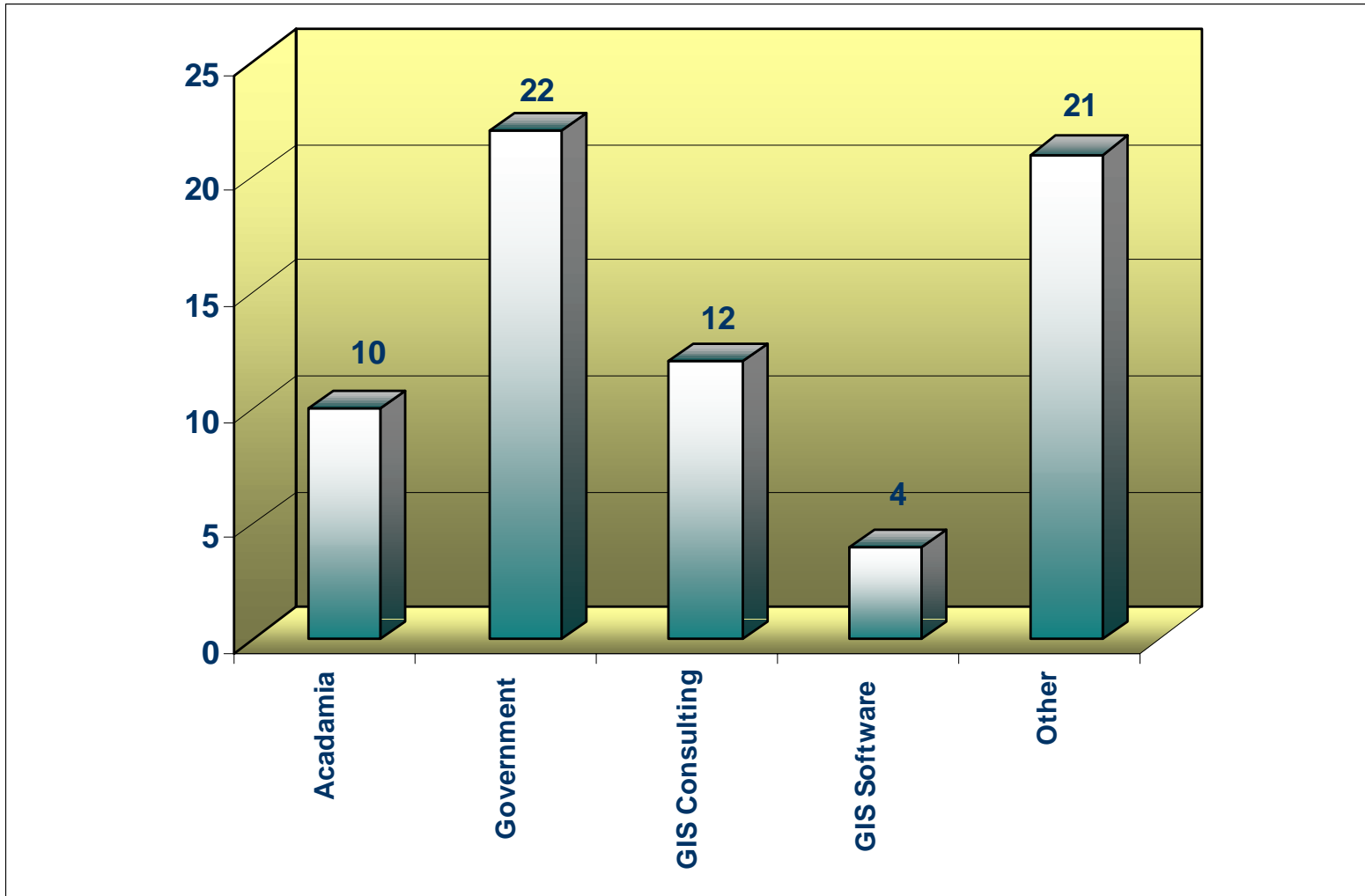
- Peace Corps

- Rotary International

Beneficiaries

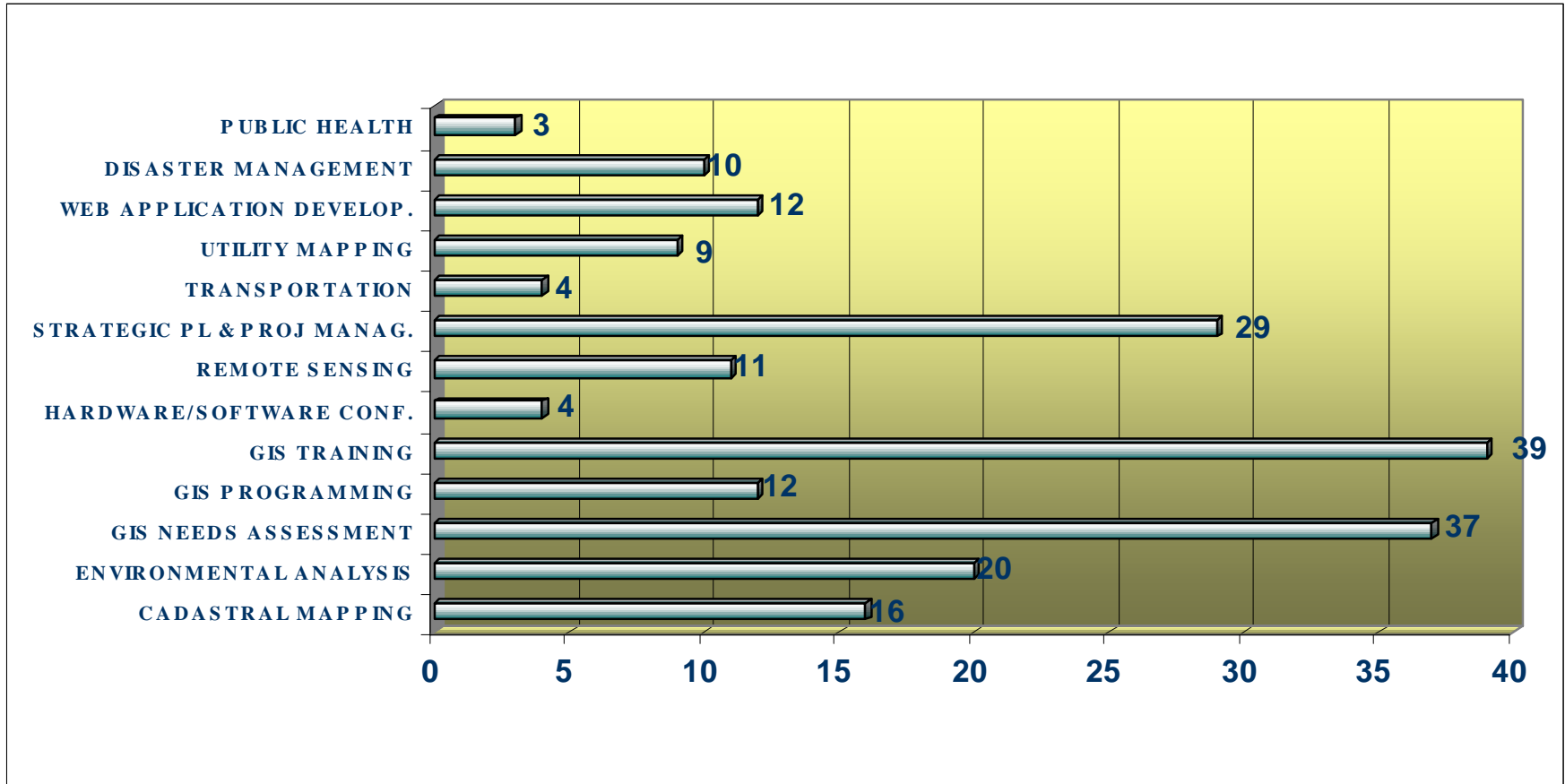
So far

# Volunteer Statistics: Current Employers

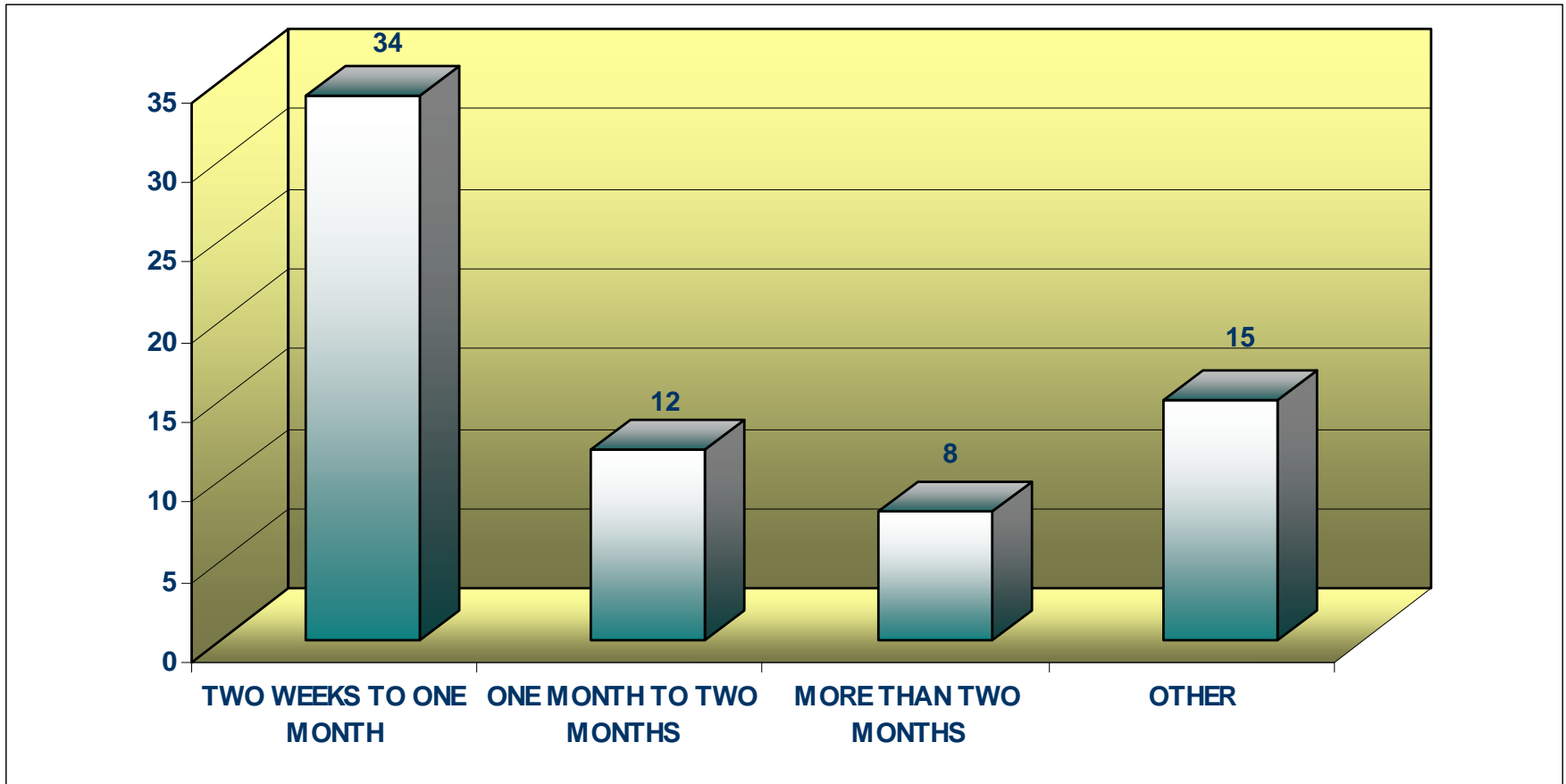




# Volunteer Statistics: Areas of Expertise



# Volunteer Statistics: How Long They Can Serve





# So far – towards 2004 goals

Mission

Goals

Genesis

Model

Services

Beneficiaries

So far

## • **Goals Achieved**

- Strategic Plan / Operational Plan endorsed by URISA Board of Directors
- Established the GISCorps web presence

## • **Goals in Progress**

- Strengthening relations with partner / sister agencies
- Implementing two pilot projects / **one in process**, seeking more...
- Registration of GISCorps' trademark
- Establishing a comprehensive database of partner agencies, potential sponsors, and other established similar programs



## Frequently Asked Questions

- What do I need to do to become a volunteer?
  - Fill out the application form at [www.giscorps.org](http://www.giscorps.org)
  - Tell us as much as possible about your skills, languages, travel and work experience
  - Update your resume and profile as often as there are changes
  - Be sure to keep your contact information current



## Do I need years of experience?

- Not necessarily
- Many opportunities require specific combinations of a skill, perhaps a certain language, or experience within a given country or region—you may be the one person with that combination!
- Become a certified GIS Professional (go to [www.urisa.org](http://www.urisa.org) to find out how)



## Do volunteers have to pay anything?

- In general, host agencies will pay for travel, lodging and meals (although this may mean staying with co-workers' families rather than in a hotel)
- Volunteers must obtain passports, visas and health requirements at their own expense
- Personal expenses while on assignment are the responsibility of the volunteer



# Does GISCorps distribute software or hardware to projects?

- GISCorps cannot accept any donations of software or hardware for distribution to projects
  - URISA is vendor neutral
  - URISA is a 501c3 organization and cannot become commercial in nature, nor be seen as a marketing representative for any product
  - Export licenses are required by the US Government to provide software or hardware outside of the US
  - Notice of sponsored projects will be provided on the GISCorps website, allowing URISA members who have business interests to contact the host/sponsor and determine if products may be needed. However, the volunteer cannot be the go-between, or deliver any product even if purchased by the sponsor/host.



## What about product-specific training or development?

- GISCorps volunteers can work on projects where a sponsor has chosen a specific product or system, and can provide training, support or assistance for that product
- GISCorps volunteers can work with sponsors to develop requirements for specific products, and assist them in identifying sources for those products



# Why not projects in the US or Canada?

- URISA has many business and corporate members who would experience unfair competition in their primary markets (it's hard to compete with free services)
- Projects in the US/Canada will be considered when there is an overriding need, such as a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other significant factor, or where no potential source of the service is reasonably available to the requesting agency.
- Financial hardship will not be a primary reason for determining whether a project in the US or Canada will be undertaken



## What if I don't want to go abroad?

- Work on a project in the US for partner agencies providing services to developing countries (no travel involved)
- Volunteer for GISCorps—help with project evaluation, volunteer evaluation, etc.
- Donate to GISCorps—funds are used to facilitate contacts with volunteers and sponsors, you can also Shop at our online store [www.cafepress.com/giscorps](http://www.cafepress.com/giscorps) where a percentage of your purchases will go to GISCorps
- Help find project sponsors and volunteers
- Host a person from another country in your organization –let them see first hand how you do GIS



# The first pilot project

- March 2004, Sacred Valley of the Incas in Peru
  - Martha Lombard, URISA Past President, worked with the World Bank's Project Leader to bring this project to the GISCorps. The team included representatives from the National Geographic Society, Peruvian organizations, and an eco-industrial group from Canada.
  - The World Bank's mission was to evaluate existing GIS capabilities, and to design a methodology for street addressing of the many towns in the Valley.
  - The team visited the main villages in the valley, and the Machu Picchu Sanctuary, hiked a portion of the Inca Trail to view the status of the campgrounds and the trail.
  - GISCorps volunteers will be an integral part of the on-going project, to increase community capabilities with GIS, for training and support activities in addressing and GIS.

# Transforming GIS into: Giving International Service ?



[www.giscorps.org](http://www.giscorps.org)

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