

First eduGI.net summer school

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The first eduGI.NET summer school took place in Muenster, Germany from July the 28th until August the 6th and was organised by the Institute for GeoInformatics of the University of Muenster. During this period, lectures, discussions, and classroom workshops focused on the state-of-the-art in Geographic Information research. Participants came from all over Europe.

The contents of the Summer School, focused on research methods and selected topics in GI Science (Usability and Utility of Geographic Information), were targeted to Masters students (or final year students of diploma programs) and PhD students. This gathering of faculty and students meant to allow closer cooperation within eduGI.net (International Network for Education in Geographic Information Science) through joint teaching and advising in a high-quality international course. The announced objectives of the summer school (<http://www.edugi.net>) were:

- Cover the state-of-the-art in selected topics,
- Teach methods of scientific work,
- Train publication and presentation of scientific results,
- Provide practical experience in writing papers for a reviewed conference and project proposals,
- Train cooperative work in an international context,
- Expose students to a multi-cultural environment.

The group of the participants consisted of 14 master and PhD-Students mostly/most of them from Europe (3 Lisbon, 1 Zurich, 2 Athens, 1 Klagenfurt, 1 Vienna, 1 Cagliari, 1 Concepcion-Chile, 4 Munster). A session was held for the presentation and discussion of the participants' ongoing PhD and Masters theses to get to know each other's research interests and background. It was good experience to talk in English, and without any native English speaker among the participants the barrier to doing so was not so high.

There were three main lecturers, who participated all the week and joined also the working groups (Prof. Dr. Kuhn (University of Munster), Dr. Sabine Timpf (University of Zurich), and Dr. Stephan Winter (TU Vienna)) and four guest lecturers (Dr. Piotr Jankowski (University of Munster), Dr. Emmanuel Stefanakis (Harokopio University), Fernando Bacao (New University of Lisbon) and Bart Hoogenraad (Intergraph corporation)). The program was split in lectures and exercises. The contents were distributed across the field of Geo-informatics. The lectures treated

- Navigation,
- Experimental Design,
- Data Bases and XML,
- Data Mining and
- Spatial Cognition.

The main part was methodologically oriented, separated in tutorials and exercises. Tutorials, as is shown in the following list, were largely focused on writing and presenting one's research. For this reason, lab activities were mainly centered to implement the outlines of these tutorials.

- Science as a Problem Solving Process,
- Writing Skills,
- Communication and Presentation Skills,
- Proposal writing and
- Paper reviewing

The three main lecturers along with Dr. Jankowski shared with us their experience concerning writing papers, writing proposals, reviewing, presenting and organising work. This was quite useful, because it is encouraging to hear, that also researchers who are well known and appreciated for their writing and presenting skills, have sometimes problems to write and to motivate themselves. The outcomes of this discussion were two useful points. The first one was the idea to write every day for at least half an hour. This means a lot of work that may turn out to be of no use, but in the end, when you have to write a paper or a proposal you have already a base to build on. The second hint was that one should write

so-called 'one-pagers' to outline the problem before beginning a greater topic so that one stays focused on one's initial research question. So, as an exercise, participants were asked to write a one-pager about their thesis trying to apply the outlines of presenting research questions.

In our opinion the most interesting part was to write a proposal. Three days after getting together we formed groups of maximal 3 students to present an idea for research. We all had just met each other and we had only a rough idea about the research topics of the other participants from their presentations and discussions. First of all we needed a nice idea what could be of interest. Then we had to share our knowledge, not in our mother language, in a short period of time. One day later was the deadline for the first one-pager outlining the proposal. Overall we had 4 days time to write a proposal of ca. 10 pages and to prepare short five-minute presentations. The results were five different proposals. The topics covered a wide range of research areas like spatialization methods, self-organizing maps, ontologies, and way-finding. At this point, we thank the three main lecturers for offering to all the groups their help, experience, useful comments, and their ideas of improving our proposals.

The social aspect of the summer school was quite important. We were all accommodated in different parts of Munster, some in private accommodations, some in a hotel or in the youth hostel. Besides the official evenings like a reception at the castle and barbecue party we had really funny evenings in the pubs of Munster with cultural exchange and sharing experiences not necessarily concerning the research or the university.

As an overall account of the first eduGI.net summer school, we would like to point out that in spite of having to spend long hours in a classroom and all the hard work that had to be done in a short period of time, participating in a summer school of a cross-cultural nature turned out to be an interesting experience. We had an amazing time in a nice town, and still we learned so much in so little time. We all improved our English, learned something about teamwork in an international community, and got to know other opportunities for research. Last but not least, a few words about the local organizers. The people of the University of Muenster, who organized the whole event, were very helpful and friendly to us all and we are grateful for that. Their efforts, also contributed, to the first eduGI.net summer school being a success.

For more information on the objectives behind the eduGI.net and the summer school itself, visit www.edugi.net/
www.edugi.net/summerschool