**Blogging Basics**

By posting a brief description of weekly GIS assignments, students share their experience with fellow classmates, other GIS enthusiasts, and earn participation points in our GIS courses. By the end of their coursework, our students will have created a sort of GIS Journal or portfolio showcasing examples of work completed for all their GIS courses.

Utilizing a personal blog to share work is a great way to view classmate’s maps, see how others complete the same task (for style), provide feedback to fellow students’ work, build a sense of community, and ultimately help each other make better end-products. It is important for our students to practice communicating what they did, why they did it and what information is displayed on their map clearly and succinctly. In this guide we will help students make the most of their blogging experience with sections on how to make a blog post with an image, how to use a label gadget and some blog best practices.

**How to make a blog post with an image**

1. From your blog select “New Post” from the top.

2. Give your new post a title. Include a brief statement about your map.

3. Select the Insert Image Icon.
4. From here Upload, select Choose Files, navigate to your locally stored image, select it and hit open. Then OK.

5. Your image should appear with your text. Click on the image itself to change the image size and position if you would like to.
6. Before you select Publish, make sure to add a label to your posting. This should be either the class name or the class number.

7. Select Publish when you are finished.

How to use the label gadget

Blogs need to be organized so that instructors and visitors can find your posts easily by course. To do this, you need to use the label gadget.

1. After creating your blog, go to the ‘Layout’ menu.
2. Choose to ‘Add a Gadget’.

3. A new window pops up. Scroll down the list of basic gadgets until you find the ‘Label’ one. Click the + to add it to your blog.

4. Configure your labels and save

5. When you make a post, be sure to label your post for the appropriate class.

6. After you’ve made a few posts your label section will look similar to this.

Blog Best Practices

It is important to be able to communicate what you did, why you did, and what information are you displaying with your map. There is no need to write a five paragraph essay with your blog posts, but they should follow any special instructions given in the assignment for the post and summarize what you are learning in class that week and explain your map. Being able to explain what you did is important so your instructors know you’ve understood what they are teaching and it gives you practice so that when
you get a job in the GIS field, you are able to explain your work to your supervisor. Here are some examples of blog posts that we like:

In the title of this post, the student included the class, which Module/Week, and the title of the lab. In the post, the student began with a short introduction, moved into some of what they learned that week, and finished with what they did in class. A very good post! The student also included a label to the class it was for.

Module 12 - Cartography - Google Earth

In our final week of Cartographic Skills class, before we start our final projects, we more about Google Earth.

Many of us look at Google Earth and Street View all the time, to find out how to a destination, or just for fun. It has a lot of additional capabilities that we explore lab. For example, it is easy to export an ArcMap layer or map as a KML file, whic Earth's format, and open it into the appropriate location in Google Earth, complete data from ArcGIS.

Creating a tour is also a very useful and fun aspect of Google Earth. You can create place markers as you like (those little yellow push-pins), then zoom from one to the and even zoom in close to see 3D buildings and landscapes and street views. Or, create a path, then have the tour follow the path. It will be recorded as a video, you can add audio if you like. You can then save the video and share it to be view Google Earth.

Here are two views of First United Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida, tak Google Earth. On the left is a Street View photo, and on the right is a 3D photorealistic model o church. St. Petersburg is part of a Google Earth Tour made by students in Cartog Skills class at the University of West Florida, April 2014.
Again, this student included the class, week/module, and lab title in the title of the post. The student began with a brief introduction, told us why they were doing it, what they did, and what the end result is/what the map shows. Once again, the included a label for the correct class!

Week 11 - GIS - Vector Analysis II

A map created using buffering and overlay tools in ArcGIS

To identify the zones that are a certain distance from the roads and water bodies, the Buffering tool in ArcMap. Buffering involves drawing a line a specific distance point, line or another polygon. The area inside the line forms a new polygon; this is the buffer. In the case of this map, the buffers surround lakes, rivers and road distance of 150, 500 and 300 meters respectively. We want the campsites to lie buffers: they should be close to both roads and water bodies.

Use of the union tool combines all of the features of two or more layers, while the tool combines only those features that are common to both layers: that is, their intersection.

In this case, we used the intersect tool to identify the areas on the map that are buffers of both the roads and water layers: in other words, the areas that are within specified distances of both roads and water features, as given by the buffer operations described above.

Once this intersection layer was isolated, we performed one more operation with this tool: it excludes the features (or area covered) of a third layer, namely the Conservation Areas layer, from the layer created by the intersection of the water and road buffers. We then want the campsites to lie within these areas (shown in light green above).

The final result gives us possible sites for campsites, and shown in pink above.

FAQs

- **What if I don't do it?**
  Your participation grade assessed in all GIS courses will suffer each week/assignment you don't post to your blog.

- **How many blog sites do I need to make?**
  You only need one blog site.
Will I use the same blog for all GIS classes?
Yes, you will use the same blog for all courses in the Online GIS Certificate program. Just make sure your instructors know what the link is (and that it shows up on the main course blog after the first two weeks of class). Instructors share a blog list to help streamline this process.

How should I organize my blog so instructors and visitors can find my posts easily by course?
Add the label gadget to your blog. Label each post according to course title or course number it’s for.

I have accessed the design layout. I can add the gadgets to the design but when I go to view my blog, they don’t show up. Could there be something wrong?
The Labels option will only appear when you are publishing a post. Just write a test message and select a Label (or create a new one). Use “preview” to see the labels. Hit “Publish” when you are happy with your post.