



WELCOME

Welcome to South Africa, Cape Town and FOSS4G 2008. Thank you for participating. To the FOSS4G stalwarts from around the world, 2008 promises everything you've come to expect. To newcomers from afar and especially southern Africa, this is not your average GIS conference. This is the first time Open Source Geospatial is being presented in a big way in Africa. The essence of 'FOSS4G 2008, incorporating GISSA 2008' is exposure, communication and constructive debate around two major themes: How is Open Source Geospatial an Option for the Developing World? and How can the Open Source and Proprietary 'worlds' best meet? Thanks to a fantastic response to the Calls for Workshops and Presentations, we have a rich and diverse programme that hopefully offers something for everyone. Developers and hackers, academics, Government officials, business people, students and the many GIS users that drive our industry. FOSS4G 2008 has been tailored around all of you. Find your own mix of hands-on classes and presentations. Get the most out of the technical programme but don't forget to watch some live demonstrations in the demo theatre, attend a Birds-of-a-Feather Session and do some intense networking and socialising. The Monday icebreaker and Wednesday Gala dinner at Moyo should bring most of us together but there are also Tuesday and Thursday evenings to do your own thing – we'll recommend some pubs and restaurants to meet. Developers and those of you interested in the workings of an Open Source project, don't forget the Code Sprint on Saturday.

From a South African and general developing nation perspective, we'll be looking to our international guests to have our eyes opened to the possibilities of FOSS GIS and to learn about alternatives. We'll also be looking for insight into what our Government's Open Source and Interoperability Policy means to us as geospatial practitioners and decision makers.

Thanks to our sponsors and exhibitors, who have helped tremendously to make this conference possible. See their adverts, exhibition stands and click on their web logos!

Lastly, a huge Thank You to the Organising Committee who have worked tirelessly and voluntarily for the past year and particularly in the crunch-time leading up to FOSS4G, and to PeopleSA, who have done a professional job behind the scenes with facilities and accommodation and have been our 'front-of-house' for registration.

Gavin Fleming

Conference Chair

GEO-INFORMATION SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA



The Geo-Information Society of South Africa is a voluntary organisation, and consists of people with varying levels of interest and expertise in spatial information. The unifier is Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the technology having changed substantially since it first became commercially available many years ago. Improved hardware capabilities and software functionality results in the release of new version by the developers. An inevitable topic of discussion when GIS practitioners get together is what software they use, which version, and why. Issues such as cost, functionality, training and alternatives are part of the discussion, with open source software now being added to the debate.

As in most countries, proprietary software has dominated the South African market, and our industry would not be where it is today without their support. Due to recent legislation requiring government departments to use open source software, and a growing desire among our members to know more about the subject, GISSA felt that it was time to provide a platform for a national debate about the role of Free and Open Source software in developing countries.

But software alone does not determine the success of a project, its use is affected by many factors such as data quality, properly trained personnel, software support and acceptable standards. With this in mind, the theme of the conference was decided. What are the challenges facing the developing world, and what options are available to address them?

Co-hosting the FOSS4G conference has enabled GISSA to provide a platform for its members to address the geospatial challenges facing the country, to network with like-minded people from around the world, and meet with industry leaders in both the proprietary and open source software arenas. This forum will enable developing countries to make informed decision with the input and assistance of international experts. Open source is a software reality that all users will have to address at some stage, and their decisions need to be based on sound and realistic information, arrived at through a vigorous debate.

Carrin Martin

National Chairperson

Geoinformation Society of South Africa (GISSA)

OPEN SOURCE GEOSPATIAL FOUNDATION



Tools To Use – Platforms To Build On

The Open Source Geospatial Foundation is proud to welcome you to FOSS4G 2008!

OSGeo's mandate is to support and promote the development of Free and Open Source geospatial software. The annual FOSS4G event is one of the main ways we help tell the world about the many great projects being used and developed today.

Whether you are a user, developer, architect, administrator or hobbyist, you will find something of interest here this week. You can learn about many new Tools To Use in your daily work. You can also meet many of the developers of the projects, who are creating Platforms to Build On for your future projects.

I hope you have fun and enjoy the many networking opportunities that FOSS4G provides. We look forward to meeting you at our booth and wish you a splendid week.

Tyler Mitchell

Executive Director, OSGeo