



**Interview with Tripp Corbin, CEO and Instructor for EGIS Associates
Conducted by Alissa Bickar of GeoSpatial Training Services (alissa@geospatialtraining.com)**

Recently I had the privilege of catching up with Tripp Corbin, who is the CEO and Lead Instructor for EGIS Associates. He has over 20 years of experience in the GIS industry and is highly regarded as an industry expert. Tripp's insights will not only inspire you but help you to squeeze the most out of a career in GIS. Let's find out what path he took to become the entrepreneur and educator he is today.

Alissa Bickar: What is your education background?

Tripp Corbin: I attended Southern Polytechnic University majoring in Engineering and Surveying. I have also completed all course work required for Georgia Land Surveyors Exam and License and have taken a bunch of Esri and Autodesk courses as well as several URISA Workshops, Management Courses and so on.

AB: What GIS Certifications have you earned?

TC: Certification Title: GIS Certified Professional (GISP) from GISCI, Esri Certified Trainer (Esri), Esri Desktop Associate (Esri), Certified Technical Trainer (CTT+) from CompTia, Microsoft Certified Professional, Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) State Association of Floodplain Managers.

AB: Do you feel your education has properly prepared you for your current career in GIS by giving you all the training and knowledge you needed?

TC: No

AB: Why not?

TC: My land surveying education has been a tremendous help in my GIS career but was only part of what I needed. My continuing education in other fields and software including IT, Drafting, Database Admin, and Leadership combined with surveying have rounded out my education.

AB: Would you have done differently with your education path to better prepare you for your career in GIS?

TC: If I had known I was going to be a GIS Professional and not a surveyor I would have taken additional computer science and geography classes. They did not have GIS degrees when I was coming along.

AB: Do you have any advice for those currently pursuing education in GIS?

TC: Think long term. Look into other skills related to GIS such as IT, Surveying, Planning, Management and so on. These skills are becoming critical to GIS operations and career building. Get involved in the local GIS Community. See how the technology is being used in outside the classroom.

AB: Have you taken any training courses outside of your current employer or education and if so have they been helpful to you and your careers?

TC: Yes. All the time. They have been extremely helpful but I am a bit biased as I also teach similar classes

AB: What led you to a career in the GIS Industry?

TC: I kind of fell into it. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a relatively new profession and did not exist when I was growing up. I had originally planned to make the Navy a career but after getting married I decided that was not a good idea. So I planned to follow in my dad's footsteps as a Land Surveyor. I had worked in that field during High School and it is something I had enjoyed. This is what I went to school for, to become a Professional Land Surveyor. While I was going to school, I was also working full time for Keck & Wood, Inc., a Civil Engineering and Surveying company. I worked on their survey crews for about two years. Then I was transferred to their mapping department. This was my first taste of what would later become GIS. I worked in this department for about another 2 years, when I was made the company Network Administrator and IT Manager. During this time GIS had started to enter mainstream application. It combines maps with databases so you can ask questions from the map using the underlying database and spatial relationships. For example you can find all the streams that cross a road or all the property owned by John Smith and the results of these questions are shown on the map. After a few years as the IT guy at Keck & Wood, they were looking for someone to head up their GIS group (formerly the mapping department). Since GIS combines, mapping, surveying and IT technologies, they were looking for someone with experience in all three. There I was. The only one in the company with experience in all three areas. I got the job as head of the GIS group and my career in GIS was started officially though looking back on it I had really started my career in GIS back when I was in the Navy where I digitized paper charts into our combat information system. I just never realized it was GIS.

AB: What were some of your likes/dislikes as a member of the survey crew?

TC: The weather was always a factor. Getting attacked by dogs and people was not fun either. Oh yea and being shoot at was no fun. I loved the ever changing nature. Each survey was different.

AB: What is your current position?

TC: CEO and Co-Founder of eGIS Associates

AB: Could you describe a typical day at your job?

TC: Wow that is a loaded question. Each day is different. On some days I am teaching classes either online or in a classroom. Others I am writing proposals for new projects. Some days I am providing support to clients and managing projects. While others I am doing marketing and sales. The one thing that is consistent is after 8 hours my day is not finished. I put in at least 10 to 12 hours each day and even on the weekends.

AB: What are some of your likes/dislikes as the CEO and Co-founder of EGIS Associates?

TC: Being a part of eGIS Associates is amazing. We have some of the best and brightest GIS professionals I have ever worked with. It is a dream team. Of course being a small startup business right now, we don't have the capital resources of larger companies. So that means long hours, no paid vacation and less company paid benefits. But I am working for myself and am my own boss so it is more than worth it. My stress level is a lot less than it was when I worked at a larger more well established firm.

AB: What is your level of satisfaction with your career in GIS?

I love what I do. I cannot think of another field that would give me the pleasure and satisfaction I get from working in GIS. I look forward to doing what I do each day. It allows me to exercise my interest in surveying, computers, making maps, solving problems and so on. I love to share what I know with others and speak in public. I do both of these on a regular basis by being a Certified Esri Instructor and Comptia Technical Trainer.

AB: Could you share some insights on the path you took to get where you are today?

TC: Honestly I think my varied experience with IT, Surveying, engineering, mapping and lastly GIS has been the greatest asset to getting me where I am today. All of the knowledge and experience for all those areas have helped me develop my career and reputation. I love to learn new things. I recognized a long time ago that no one person can know everything. Someone always knows something you don't. So I am always open to hearing how and why others do what they do in GIS. You would be amazed at some of the insights you can gain from even the newest GIS user.

AB: Do you have any advice for those pursuing a career in GIS

TC: Get active in the profession. Join GIS groups such as URISA or GITA or your local GIS Users group even if you have to fund it yourself. This will allow you to build up a network of professional friends that can help you when you need it. As I said above no one knows everything. Having friends that might know something you don't always comes in handy. In return share your knowledge with others.

