

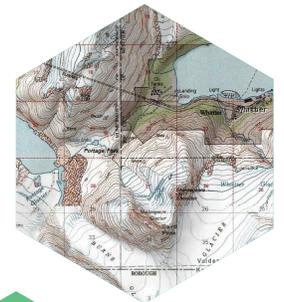
about

# HISTORY UP CLOSE



In 1969, Esri president Jack Dangermond and his wife, Laura, **founded Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (Esri)**, in Redlands, California, as a land-use consulting firm.

Esri's early mission was to help land planners and land resource managers make well-informed environmental decisions by organizing and analyzing geographic information. These studies resulted in maps that showed constraints and opportunities for development.





## From Projects to Products

In the mid-1970s, Esri developed the polygon information overlay system (PIOS) for the San Diego Comprehensive Planning Organization. This system digitized and reported overlay areas and was a precursor to the creation of a geographic information system (GIS).

To perform analysis for an increasing number of projects more effectively, Esri needed to automate mapping and analysis processes. To answer this need, **Esri built ARC/INFO, a rich toolkit for geospatial query and analysis that was released in 1982 as the first commercial GIS.** It represented geographic features as vectors or arcs and combined the display of those features—points, lines, and polygons—with a relational database management system that managed each feature's attributes.

A community of ARC/INFO users soon formed. This community met for the inaugural **Esri International User Conference**. The event has continued on an annual basis and has grown from 16 to 16,000 attendees.



## The Expansion of GIS

The value of a geographic framework for managing and analyzing data and disseminating information became apparent. Soon GIS was being applied to many other disciplines and industries, from utilities to public safety to insurance. **Governments at all levels, businesses, and researchers began using GIS.**

A global company from the beginning, Esri initiated relationships with like-minded companies in Germany, Japan, Australia, and Canada, forming the foundation of Esri's international network of distributors.

Esri's growth also led to additional offices to provide local support. Olympia, Washington, and Charlotte, North Carolina, were the first cities to house an Esri office, followed quickly by eight more locations.

Esri also began building relationships with organizations that wished to build applications on top of Esri software or support the software in specific industries. Today, more than 1,600 organizations belong to the Esri Partner Network.





## Building on Advances in IT

In the 1990s, faster and cheaper computers, the growth of the Internet, and new data capture techniques such as GPS spurred the growth of GIS technology. Esri's first desktop solution, ArcView GIS, opened up the possibilities of GIS to a whole new class of users.

During the late 1990s, Esri reengineered ARC/INFO and began creating a scalable GIS platform that would work not only on the desktop but also across the enterprise. The result was ArcGIS. The release of ArcGIS 9 in 2004 added server capabilities and a framework for developers. ArcGIS evolved into a complete platform that spanned desktop, server, and mobile devices and, with the launch of ArcGIS Online, the cloud. ArcGIS Online, with its vast collection of basemaps and shared layers, made Esri Story Maps possible. **A collection of templates, Esri Story Maps have let thousands of non-GIS specialists use maps to tell their stories and share them.** In addition, a robust suite of software developer tools were created to enable developers to incorporate geospatial functionality into all kinds of products and processes.



## Giving Back

With continued growth, the GIS community needed a way to increase awareness of GIS. Esri launched GIS Day in 1999 in collaboration with the National Geographic Society. The event has continued to grow and involves hundreds of organizations each year.

Following the devastating attacks on 9/11, Esri aided recovery efforts in New York City and at the Pentagon. Esri subsequently established a virtual team with disaster response and management capabilities that supports those affected by natural and manmade disasters.

As the number of users grew, Esri realized the need for more educational programs. Esri increased its support for GIS education in schools and expanded its own training programs. **In 2014, Esri gave \$1 billion dollars of software to US schools as part of the ConnectEd initiative.** ■

