Will Craig Named UCGIS Fellow

William J. Craig, associate director of CURA, has been named a fellow of the University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS), a consortium of more than 70 U.S. universities that focus on research and education related to geographic information systems (GIS). Craig was honored along with six other newly named fellows in a ceremony held on February 4 in Washington, D.C., as part of the UCGIS annual winter meeting. According to the organization’s website, the title of fellow is bestowed on “a geographic information scientist, engineer, or practitioner of unusual professional distinction, with outstanding and extraordinary qualifications and experience in the field of geographic information science and technology.”

Craig was one of the early pioneers in GIS as project director (1973–1975) and systems director (1974–1977) of the Minnesota Land Management Information System (MLMIS) at the University of Minnesota. Along with the Canadian Geographic Information System and New York’s Land Use and Natural Resources Inventory System, MLMIS was one of the world’s early operational GIS. The MLMIS research and development project was fully developed and transferred to the State of Minnesota in 1977.

In addition to his work in Minnesota, Craig has been active at the national level, having served as president of three of the major GIS organizations: the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA; 1986–1987), UCGIS (1995–1996), and the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC; 2009–2010). He was UCGIS’s second president, leading the largest growth in the organization’s history. Subsequently he chaired UCGIS’s Policy and Legislation Committee (2000–2003), organizing meetings in conference (1988), a multiorganizational conference that ran for a decade. He chaired the Association of American Geographers’ Census Advisory Committee (2006–2007) and helped transform it into the Government Data and Employment Committee. He led NSGIC’s Address Work Group (2006–2008), focusing on the release of the U.S. Census Bureau’s master address file, especially its geographic coordinates.

He has served on the National Research Council’s Mapping Science Committee and two of its study committees, most recently producing National Parcel Data: A Vision for the Future.

Professionally, Craig has led many significant efforts in the GIS field. His 2002 book Community Participation and Geographic Information Systems, edited with Trevor Harris and Daniel Weiner, was the culmination of two decades of organizing, practicing, and writing on public-participation GIS. His 1993 URISA Journal article, “A GIS Code of Ethics: What Can We Learn from Other Organizations?” led to his chairing the committee that developed the GIS Certification Institute’s code of ethics, which closely aligns with Craig’s interpretation and organization of material taken from those other organizations. His 2005 URISA Journal article, “White Knights of Spatial Data Infrastructure: The Role and Motivation of Key Individuals,” documents the value of individuals in achieving the National Spatial Data Infrastructure and, more importantly, makes recommendations on how to encourage such behavior in others.